

*Mille simul leti facies: The Allusive Battlefield of Punica 4*

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**Abstract**

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This dissertation examines the two major battle scenes in book 4 of Silius Italicus' *Punica*, Ticinus and Trebia, focusing on the poet's intricate, purposeful, and programmatic use of inter- and intratextual allusion on the battlefield. I argue that a close and unprejudiced reading of these battle scenes reveals a level of artistic skill and planning not previously associated with combat narrative in Silius. I use detailed analysis of *aristeiai*, necrologues, and other type scenes, as well as an examination of Silius' many sources, including primarily Vergil, but also Statius, Lucan, Homer, and (in historiography) Livy, to discuss themes that are integral to the entire poem. Major themes include the compression of history, confusion of identity, self-destructive or suicidal ideation, civil war violence, and theomachy. The first two chapters examine the battle of Ticinus and focus on the establishment of these themes, first through a close analysis of four short death scenes, and then through larger, escalating scenes in the second half of the battle. The second two chapters examine the battle of Trebia and investigate how Silius uses meaningful and varied repetition to establish a pattern of mistakes that looks back to events in the *Aeneid* and anticipates later scenes in the *Punica*. Through this reading of *Punica 4*, I show how Silius' use of allusion on the battlefield is surprising, inventive and highly significant.

# Table of Contents

Introduction: Silius Italicus, the Flavians, and the Epic Battle Scene .....	1
I. Silius Italicus: Consul and Poet.....	1
II. Silius Italicus and the Flavian Renaissance.....	4
III. The Epic Battle Scene: From Homer to the Flavians.....	6
IV. Silian Poetics and the Allusive Battlefield.....	20
V. Silius and the Historiographical Tradition.....	23
VI. Dissertation Thesis, Goals, and Methods .....	27
VII. Dissertation Structure.....	34
Chapter 1: Caedemque accepit ab hoste: The Battle of Ticinus, Part I .....	39
1.1.0: Ticinus in History.....	39
1.1.1: Structure and Interpretation .....	41
1.2.1: The Death of Catus ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 131 – 142) .....	45
1.3.1: The Death of Tyrrhenus ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 167 – 174 and 5. 7 – 23) .....	63
1.4.1: The Death of Quirinius ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 192 – 215).....	74
1.5.1: The Death of Crixus: Celtomachic, Homeric, Gigantomachic Combat ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 248 – 310) .....	80
1.6.0: Celtomachy: Ticinus’ First Half.....	100
Chapter 2: Heroes, Brothers, Sons: Ticinus, Part II ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 310 – 479).....	102
2.0.0: Structure and Interpretation .....	102
2.1.1: Enter Hannibal ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 311 – 54, 2. 208 – 214, 4. 430 – 444).....	105
2.2.1: <i>Tergemini Fratres</i> : Brothers at War ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 355 – 400).....	117
2.3.1: <i>Consul</i> and <i>puer</i> ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 401 – 479) .....	145
2.4.1: Ticinus: A Microcosmic <i>Punica</i> .....	166

Chapter 3: <i>Iam superest consul</i> : The Battle of Trebia, Part I ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 480 – 569) .....	171
3.1.0: Trebia in History .....	171
3.1.1: Scholarship on the Trebia .....	174
3.1.2: Structure and Interpretation .....	175
3.2.1: Transition and Repetition ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 480 – 497) .....	180
3.3.1: <i>Infelix animae</i> : Hannibal’s Speech before Trebia ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 498 – 511) .....	186
3.4.1: The Land Battle Begins ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 512 – 569) .....	201
3.5.1: Hannibal and Gracchus: Competing <i>aristeiai</i> ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 529 – 553) .....	218
3.6.1: The Death of Allius ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 554 – 569).....	233
Chapter 4: Down in the Flood: The Battle of Trebia, Part II ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 570 – 721).....	238
4.1.1: Phase Two: The River Battle ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 570 – 621) .....	238
4.2.1: <i>Mille simul leti facies</i> : Romans in the River ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 573 – 597) .....	240
4.3.1: <i>Ecce per adversum</i> : Scipio versus the River ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 622 – 666).....	251
4.4.1: <i>Genitum ad fatalia damna</i> : A Foreboding Epilogue ( <i>Pun.</i> 4. 702 – 721) .....	278
4.5.1: Trebia: The End of the Beginning.....	283
Conclusion: The <i>Punica</i> : An Epic of Battles .....	290

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## Introduction:

### Silius Italicus, the Flavians, and the Epic Battle Scene

*“Silius’ Punica has been rarely read but commonly disparaged: somewhat unjustly, for, despite its many and obtrusive blemishes, there is in it much that is not despicable. It is, however, too optimistic to expect that many readers should feel impelled to sift the seventeen books of the Punica in quest of its better passages”*

D.W.T.C. Vessey, 1982.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Silius Italicus: Consul and Poet

Tiberius Catus Asconius Silius Italicus was born around AD 26 in the reign of Tiberius, likely in the region of Patavium.<sup>2</sup> He lived virtually his entire life within the Imperial setting of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and was close to many of the era’s most important events, including the death of Nero in AD 68, the same year Silius was consul,<sup>3</sup> and the abdication of Vitellius to Vespasian

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<sup>1</sup> From the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature, Volume 2: Latin Literature*.

<sup>2</sup> The full name is found on an inscription from the temple of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias in Caria, amending the name ‘Ti. Catus Silius Italicus’ found in the *Fasti sodalium Augustalium Claudialium*; see Campbell 1936 for a discussion of his name and birthplace and Littlewood 2017: *intro.* for the most recent summary of his life.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 3. 7. 9-10: *utque novissimus a Nerone factus est consul, ita postremus ex omnibus, quos Nero consules fecerat, decessit. Illud etiam notabile: ultimus ex Neronianis consularibus obit, quo consule Nero periit.* Littlewood 2017: *xiii* n. 12 remarks that Pliny may have intended “significance, even malice” in his repeated allusions to Silius’ position as Nero’s last consul.

in AD 69, a meeting at which he was personally present;<sup>4</sup> by the time of his death in the first years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Silius had seen three dynasties rule Rome, from the fall of Nero and the Julio-Claudians, to Vespasian and the rise of the Flavians, to, at the tail end of his life, the ascensions of Nerva and Trajan.<sup>5</sup>

Our two most important sources for Silius' life are the poet Martial and Pliny the Younger, whose letter (Plin. *Ep.* 3. 7) provides the majority of the details of his life and death. Both authors speak of a distinguished forensic career and a reputation for wisdom and diplomacy that earned him respect in the time of the Flavians.<sup>6</sup> Silius became consul with P. Galerius Trachalus in AD 68 and was deposed by Nero not long before the emperor's death. After the chaos of 68 – 69, he was given the prestigious appointment of proconsul of Asia in the early 70s.<sup>7</sup> His long career was not, however, without some early pitfalls, and Pliny notes that he damaged his reputation as an informer under Nero (Plin. *Ep.* 3. 7. 3: *Laeserat famam suam sub Nerone (credebatur sponte accusasse)*), an association that perhaps explains the undercurrent of criticism in the letter writer's obituary.<sup>8</sup> All in all, Littlewood summarizes, "the combined testimony of Pliny the Younger and Martial provides a convincing character study of a well-respected senator-poet sufficiently astute and level-headed to survive the unpredictable *imperium* of Domitian."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3. 65.2: *Saepe domi congressi, postremo in aede Apollinis, ut fama fuit, pepigere. Verba vocesque duos testis habebant, Cluvium Rufum et Silium Italicum.*

<sup>5</sup> We are told by Pliny that Silius did not attend Trajan's arrival in Rome (Plin. *Ep.* 3. 7. 7: *seque in Campania tenuit, ac ne adventu quidem novi principis inde commotus est*).

<sup>6</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 3. 7. 4: *fuit inter principes civitatis sine potentia, sine invidia*; Mart. 7. 63. 5 – 8: *hunc miratur adhuc centum gravis hasta virorum / hunc loquitur grato plurimus ore cliens.*

<sup>7</sup> As Littlewood 2017: xiv n. 19 notes, the dates of Silius' proconsulship are debated; long thought to have been AD 77, there is some evidence in support of an earlier date (AD 70 – 73).

<sup>8</sup> Pomeroy 1989: 135 n. 4 comments that this phrase is "a piece of innuendo worthy of Tacitus."

<sup>9</sup> Littlewood 2017: xvi.

Pliny tells us that at the end of his life Silius retired to Campania (perhaps in the neighborhood of fellow Flavian epicist Statius) to live a life of artistic and literary connoisseurship. Pliny describes him as φιλόκαλος even to the point of criticism (Plin. *Ep.* 3. 7. 8: *erat φιλόκαλος usque ad emacitatis reprehensionem*), with several villas and a great amount of books and artwork (*multum ubique librorum, multum statuarum, multum imaginum*). Above all, Pliny notes, Silius was a devout worshipper of Vergil, whose birthday he celebrated *religiosius quam suum* and whose tomb he treated as a temple, and Cicero, one of whose villas Silius owned.<sup>10</sup>

The most lasting of Pliny's comments on Silius are his remarks about the *Punica*, which have now become somewhat infamous: *scribebat carmina maiore cura quam ingenio*. This remark, Matier notes, "has practically become Silius' epitaph,"<sup>11</sup> and is can be considered in large part responsible for Silius' chilly 20<sup>th</sup> century reception. Yet Pliny's poor opinion of Silius' poem is not universally accepted. Vessey, not a consistent admirer of Silius, as the quote at the beginning of this section makes clear, writes that Pliny is "frank to the point of malice."<sup>12</sup> Pomeroy describes it as a "barbed evaluation," though he also notes that Ovid described Callimachus in similar terms.<sup>13</sup> Marcus Wilson, in a detailed and revealing article on Silius' use of Ovid, comments that "whether or not we agree with Pliny's denigration of Silius' poetry, we must admit that his biographical sketch, which portrays a poet obsessed with a single poetic hero, namely Vergil, is contradicted by the evidence of the *Punica* itself."<sup>14</sup> Rather than reading Pliny

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<sup>10</sup> Donatus *Vit. Verg.* 5. 5. 36 tells us that Silius owned both Vergil's tomb and one of Cicero's villas.

<sup>11</sup> Matier 1981: 141.

<sup>12</sup> Vessey 1974b: 116.

<sup>13</sup> Pomeroy 1989: 139 n. 87: "... an evaluation which puts Silius on a par with Callimachus, whom Ovid described as 'strong in skill, if not in talent' (*Am.* 1.15.14: *quamvis ingenio non valet, arte valet*)."

<sup>14</sup> Wilson 2004: 236.

uncritically, Wilson continues, and accepting Silius as a worshipful and inferior poet, we should instead allow ourselves to read Silius' remarkably learned poem without prejudice. "The extent of Ovidian allusion in the *Punica*," he concludes, "is enough to make one wonder whether Pliny ever read any more than the beginning of the poem." Pliny's verdict on Silius and his poem were for many years the first and last words on the *Punica*; the situation nowadays is changing rapidly.

## II. Silius Italicus and the Flavian Renaissance

Silius Italicus, and Flavian poetry more generally, has undergone such a remarkable rehabilitation in recent decades that it is becoming less and less necessary to give the customary apology which begins so many studies. As can be seen from Vessey's hesitant and rather backhanded praise above, for more than a century Silius had been the subject of harsh, dismissive, and, at times, strangely hostile criticism.<sup>15</sup> The scholar who first, in recent history, shook off the shackles of this unproductive tradition and embraced Silius Italicus as a fully legitimate author was Michael von Albrecht, who, in a 1964 monograph, delineated the major issues of the poem in a comprehensive way, including Silius' debt to Vergil and Livy, the importance of Hercules as a heroic paradigm, the shadow which Lucan casts over the poem, the presence of pastoral or Ovidian digressions, Silius' use of similes, and discussions of length and structure. In 1972 Herbert Juhnke published a monograph on the influence of Homer on Flavian epic, *Homerisches in römischer Epik flavischer Zeit*, establishing an invaluable foundation for all later studies. Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy followed in 1986 with a long article in *ANRW*. This fundamental piece of scholarship, with its respectful, earnest treatment of the poet and thorough

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<sup>15</sup> Silius' reception from the time of his rediscovery by Poggio in 1417 through the Renaissance and into the Early Modern Period was almost entirely positive. See Muecke 2010 and Dominik 2010 for revealing overviews.

investigation of the poem's themes, officially, in my opinion, inaugurated the modern age of Silian scholarship.<sup>16</sup>

In that same year was published the first and still only complete modern commentary, in French, by François Spaltenstein, a reference work to be celebrated for its remarkable breadth, though it is clear that Spaltenstein did not share Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy's appreciation of Silius' talent. Modern individual commentaries exist now for Books 2, 7, 8, 10, and 14, with unpublished dissertations covering Books 11 and 13.<sup>17</sup> Forthcoming commentaries also include Books 3 (Augoustakis and Littlewood) and 14 (Klaasen). The pace of publication is exciting, but a glance at the book numbers reveals that scholars are picking around the battle-heavy books (4, 5, and 9 will, I worry, be the last books to receive commentaries), revealing perhaps a modern scholarly distaste for war.<sup>18</sup> Silius has also been blessed with a *Brill's Companion*,<sup>19</sup> and Flavian poetry and culture more generally have received no fewer than eight edited volumes in the last decade and a half.<sup>20</sup> The flurry of Silian scholarship also includes several important monographs: Tipping 2010 on Hannibal, Fabius, and Scipio, Marks 2005 on Scipio, McGuire

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<sup>16</sup> They establish Silius as a worthy peer of Vergil and Lucan in their opening statement: "Fundamental to our approach is respect for Silius as a poet and as an intellect, and a determination to come to grips with his considerable powers of creative and original thought. He brought to his work a lifetime of political and literary experience no other Latin epicist can rival. This, we believe, imparts to the *Punica* a texture and a quality quite distinct from either the *Aeneid* or the *Pharsalia*" (Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2493).

<sup>17</sup> Bernstein 2017 on Book 2, Littlewood 2011 and 2017 on Books 7 and 10, Ariemma 2000 on Book 8 (in Italian), Roosjen 1996 on Book 14 (in Dutch), Matier 1976 on Book 11, Van der Keur 2015 on Book 13 (with publication forthcoming). See also Bennett 1978 on *Pun.* 13. 381 – 895 (Scipio's *katabasis*).

<sup>18</sup> "Battle narrative is difficult. Difficult for us, in attempting to understand something which perhaps does not have an immediate place of prestige in our cultures nowadays ..." (Gibson 2008: 85).

<sup>19</sup> Augoustakis 2010a.

<sup>20</sup> Boyle and Dominik 2013, Nauta, van Dam, and Smolenaars 2006, Augoustakis 2013a, 2014, and 2016, Manuwald and Voigt 2013, Maniotti 2016, and Zissos 2016. This catalogue does not include volumes on Statius, who is going through a similarly vigorous renaissance, which cover many important and related themes.

1997 on civil war, tyranny, and suicide, Stocks 2014 on Hannibal, and Augoustakis 2010c on motherhood and otherness.

The catalogue of commentaries, edited volumes, and monographs above reveals a clear trend in scholastic preference regarding Silius' great work: little to no attention is paid to the battle scenes, despite their fundamental role in this most martial of epics. The goal of this dissertation is to correct that trend, offering a thorough reading of one of the *Punica*'s most important and neglected books, one which happens to be composed almost entirely of two back to back battles, those of Ticinus and Trebia, which occurred during the fall and winter of 218 BC. Before delving into the thesis, goals, and methodology (section V) of this dissertation in detail, it will be useful first to contextualize Silius' place in the ancient battle tradition (section III), and then to explore how Silius adapts and adjusts to this long tradition (section IV).

### III. The Epic Battle Scene: From Homer to the Flavians

#### **Homer**

The tradition of the epic battle scene begins, as do so many other things, with that enigmatic bard. Compared to the battle scenes of Latin epic, which have long been neglected in favor of larger thematic or stylistic studies and non-combat episodes, the battle scenes of Homer, perhaps because he is so foundational for so much of both ancient literature and, specifically, the martial combat narrative, are remarkably well studied.<sup>21</sup> These studies include Jasper Griffin's article on "Homeric Pathos and Objectivity," with corresponding book chapter, which examines

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<sup>21</sup> The following survey is, by necessity, much too short to incorporate even a marginally decent summary of the scholarship on ancient epic. I have tried only to focus on those works which seem most important to the battle scenes themselves.

motifs of death in battle.<sup>22</sup> Joachim Latacz describes warfare in Homer as a combination of single combat and mass fighting and argues for a higher degree of historical accuracy in such depictions, with the alternation between the two an important motif.<sup>23</sup> Bernard Fenik gives arguably the most important and in-depth examination of the structure and composition of the battle scenes in the *Iliad*, with many insights pertinent to Latin poetry (a counterpart to Fenik for Vergil, it is noted, is still lacking).<sup>24</sup> Mueller's chapter on "Fighting in the *Iliad*" is useful, with an analysis of duels, injuries, and death descriptions, as well as a useful overview of similes *vis à vis* battle scenes.<sup>25</sup> Van Wees' two-part article on "The Homeric Way of War" provides a follow up to Latacz and examines the differences between Homeric depictions of warfare and the historical warfare of the 8<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>26</sup>

Two important studies of Homeric warfare in German have been recently republished in English: Albracht's *Battle and Battle Description in Homer* and Friedrich's *Wounding and Death in the Iliad*.<sup>27</sup> These two works, although in some ways outdated, give readings which are still useful and are hyper-focused on the battle scenes. Finally, Mark Edwards, in his detailed itemization of the Homeric type-scene, describes four major categories of Homer's battle scenes, *aristeiai* and duels, arming scenes, *androktasiai* (also called catalogues and anecdotes, though I prefer Fenik's term 'necrologue'), and battle speeches; this vocabulary will be most useful in our examination of Silius' battle structure.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Griffin 1976 and 1980, respectively.

<sup>23</sup> Latacz 1977.

<sup>24</sup> Fenik 1968.

<sup>25</sup> Mueller 2009, ch.3.

<sup>26</sup> van Wees 1994a and 1994b.

<sup>27</sup> Albracht 2005 and Friedrich 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards 1992: 299 – 303.

In Homeric scholarship, the key problems regarding depictions of warfare are the following: the historical accuracy of the Homeric battlefield (I am less concerned with this issue than the Homerists), the tone of descriptions of death (the so-called *androktasiai* or necrologues), patterns and formulae of death and injury, and the use of the simile during battle. With the exception of historical accuracy, all of these questions remain important in the study of the Vergilian battlefield.

### Vergil

For Vergil and his *Aeneid*, our resources become more limited on the subject of battle scenes, and this trend will become more pronounced in each subsequent epicist. Vergil was not averse to battle scenes and included many in his epic, but virtually all the battle scenes of the *Aeneid* are located in the final, rather more neglected four books.<sup>29</sup> Willcock's 1983 article, "Battle Scenes in the *Aeneid*," gives a good overview of Homeric battle conventions as found in Vergil. He concludes that Vergil's main implementation of the Homeric battle scene is through the *aristeiai* of Turnus, Pallas, Aeneas, and others. On the other hand, the poet does not include nearly any depictions of large scale battle maneuvering or the ebb and flow of warfare, both of which are important aspects of the Homeric battle scene. "Whereas Homer," he writes, "will be quite clear what is going on in the centre, and what is happening on the left, Virgil suggests no more than a chaotic situation, mixed fighting all over the field."<sup>30</sup> Horsfall 1987 follows and

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<sup>29</sup> Horsfall 1995:179 describes the situation for the *Aeneid*, though the situation has changed somewhat in the past 20 years: "Given that battle is the principal subject-matter of *Aen.* 9-12, it is most remarkable that so little attention has been paid to Virgil's techniques of structure and arrangement ... the subject as a whole is entirely serious, however unfashionable, and its neglect imposes fundamental limitations on our understanding of how Virgil has reworked his Homeric material."

<sup>30</sup> Willcock 1983: 90.

argues that there is a marked shortage of major heroes in Vergil compared to Homer's more extensive cast. "Virgil labours under a self-imposed problem:," he writes, "how to write an epic of war in four books, given a tiny cast of major figures; the number and scale of the *aristeiai* are severely limited, as are the boundaries within which individual characters attractive and memorable to the reader may be developed ..."<sup>31</sup> The *Aeneid*, it is argued, differs from Homer in that it is lacking personalities with as much depth and background as a Hector, or a Patroklos; there is no Odysseus, no Ajax, no Agamemnon or Menelaus, no Diomedes, all well-developed culture heroes with long afterlives in myth and history. Silius Italicus, as we will see, is well equipped to deal with this problem; in his epic there is a fine cast of secondary heroes – one might say there are too many options<sup>32</sup> – to be taken from famous moments in Roman history: Fabius Maximus, Scipio Africanus, Marcus Claudius Marcellus, Gaius Flaminius, Marcus Atilius Regulus, to name only a few. Hannibal as well is in many ways a much more compelling enemy than Vergil's Turnus (and has a more interesting afterlife).

Scholarship on the battle scenes in Vergil has been greatly bolstered by Andreola Rossi's 2004 *Contexts of War*, a development and expansion of her 1997 dissertation. Important motifs like the *urbs capta* are examined, with Rossi elucidating the importance of these rhetorical topoi. Rossi also explores *Aeneid* 9-12 as a distinct unit within the larger narrative of the poem, with a focus on plot and narrative over thematic unity. She concludes that Vergil makes use of a variety of genres within his war narrative, including of course Homeric poetry but also historiography and tragedy. She also includes a detailed study of the duel between Aeneas and Turnus as

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<sup>31</sup> Horsfall 1987: 54.

<sup>32</sup> "The sheer number of Roman leaders who come and go in the course of the second Punic War was probably as daunting to Silius as he set about planning his epic as it is to the modern critic of the *Punica*" (Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2519).

spectacle, comparing it to the duel between the Horatii and Curiatii in Livy – a comparison that will be very useful to our subject indeed. Rossi's 1997 dissertation is more focused on the battle scenes proper, with informative chapters on pitched battles, sieges, and death scenes. To be added to these works is Mazzochini's detailed 2000 monograph on victim catalogues and minor deaths in the *Aeneid*. These three works, as best as I can tell, represent the majority of the work done on Vergil's battle scenes in the last 20 years.

### Ovid

Before moving on to a survey of the secondary literature on Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and its battle scenes, it will be useful to say a few things about Ovid. The most important epicist between Vergil and Lucan, Ovid refuses to bow to the weight of tradition and consistently plays with our expectations for the genre.<sup>33</sup> While at first glance not an especially relevant poet for Silius, increasingly scholars are beginning to appreciate the Flavian poet's debt to Ovid.<sup>34</sup> His epic masterpiece, *Metamorphoses*, in Callimachean fashion (although not Callimachean length), has a conspicuous lack of the traditional epic themes of wars and heroes. Despite Ovid's conscious effort to avoid an epic in the style of Homer or Vergil, there are still a few moments of epic warfare in the *Metamorphoses*, namely the battle between Perseus and Phineus at 5.1-235 and that of the Lapiths and Centaurs at 12.210-535.<sup>35</sup> As always, Ovid is quick to problematize his theme. "The chief critical question," Anderson comments about the battle between Perseus

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<sup>33</sup> This is most clear in his famous *recusatio* at the beginning of the *Amores*: *arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam ...* (*Amores* 1.1). For *arma* in the *Fasti*, see Hinds' 1992 double article.

<sup>34</sup> See Bruere 1958 and 1959 and Wilson 2008 on the importance of Ovid in the *Punica*; see Littlewood 2011: xliv-xlix on the importance of the *Fasti* on *Punica* 7.

<sup>35</sup> The Calydonian Boar hunt at *Met.* 8. 260 – 525 also contains many aspects of an epic battle scene.

and Phineus, “is what has Ovid aimed at and achieved in this ‘epic’ battle? Has he raised the tone of his poem and ennobled Perseus; has he, on the contrary, made a mockery of epic warfare in general (and Vergil’s in particular) by his emphasis on the crazy odds of a thousand to one and on the grotesque variation in wounds that have no sense or ethical relevance, thereby reducing Perseus to a sardonic bully?”<sup>36</sup>

Critical studies of Ovid’s battle scenes are few and far between, outside of the relevant commentaries.<sup>37</sup> The only book-length study of the battle scenes themselves, as far as I am able to discover, is Anne Bishop’s unpublished 2001 dissertation entitled *The Battle Scenes in Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, an insightful work which includes not only in-depth examinations of each of the two aforementioned battle scenes, but also useful summaries of Homeric and Vergilian battle topoi. Bishop sees a metapoetic reading in the battle between Perseus and Phineas, with their different fighting styles representing two approaches to composing a battle narrative. She also views Ovid’s Centauromachy as a response to Homer’s *Iliad* and, as a nested narrative, a portrayal of the relationship between author, narrator, and audience. As for article-length scholarship, Bishop summarizes our situation: “Except for the commentaries, most readings stop well short of handling the particulars of the battle scene itself.”<sup>38</sup>

### Lucan

With Lucan, we reach our first (nearly) complete surviving historical epic in Latin and return to the traditional setting of epic poetry. However, as is well known, Lucan does not

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson 1997: 498.

<sup>37</sup> For Perseus and Phineas in Book 5, see Anderson 1997 and Rosati 2009; for the Lapiths and Centaurs in Book 10, see Reed 2013, as well as the relevant sections in Bömer and Hill.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop 2001: 74.

approach this traditional subject in a traditional manner.<sup>39</sup> This consciously non- (or even anti-) traditional style does not seem to affect the contents of his battle scenes – although the absence of the gods is a notable change – as much as it affects their tone. The well-established topoi of epic battles are all present, vivid descriptions of death, tragic necrologues, numerous *aristeiai*, similes, the mass movement of troops, and the ebb and flow of battle, but Lucan twists and stretches each of them to their breaking points with his characteristic use of hyperbole and paradox. Consequently, rivers flow backwards with blood, severed body parts continue fighting after death, battlefields are so filled with corpses that there is no room for any to fall, carrion birds overburdened with gore rain blood from the sky, and the violence and excess of the *aristeiai* verges on mindless mass murder.

Lucan's inversion and perversion of the epic tradition has received much attention. Studies focusing on Lucan's *aristeiai* include, among very many others, Ahl 1975, Johnson 1984, and Gorman 2001, who all conclude in various ways that Lucan has twisted or perverted this typical battlefield topos. Once again, the only book-length study available which examines the battle scenes themselves is an unpublished dissertation, Matthew Crutchfield's 2015 *A New Heroism, A Study of the Battle Scenes in Lucan's Bellum Civile*, a work which I sincerely hope can be qualified as 'forthcoming.' Crutchfield examines what he deems the three major battles of the *Bellum Civile* (Massilia in book 3, Pharsalus in book 7, and Cato's desert struggle in book 9). In a systematic way, using the rubric of the Homeric battle, he divides each battle scene into four episodes: the advance, the collective fight, the melee (heroic single combat), and the rout.<sup>40</sup> Each

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<sup>39</sup> Interpretations of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* are too many to list. The main scholarly dispute rests on debates over the severity or tone of Lucan's negativity. See, for example, Henderson 1988, Masters 1992, Bartsch 1997, Leigh 1997, and Sklenář 2003 for a diverse spread of interpretations.

<sup>40</sup> Crutchfield 2015: 20 – 29; the 'advance' "establishes the identities of the two combating forces as two discrete forces that are distinct from one another"; the 'collective fight' "is characterized by the description of a massive collision of armies" with a focus on the movements of the two armies as a whole;

of these sections has its origins in literature in the battle scenes of Homer's *Iliad* and each can be found within the battles of the *Punica* as well. Lucan also revives the description of large scale warfare which Vergil embraced in the final books of the *Aeneid* but which Ovid downplayed or ridiculed. Each time, however, Crutchfield argues, Lucan highlights the inability of traditional heroism to overcome civil war. He writes that "Lucan intends to negate the traditional definition of heroism as described in the actions of heroes in large scale battles and replace them with the actions of the philosopher."<sup>41</sup> That is to say, the traditional epic hero (of the Achilles type), who deals primarily in violence on the battlefield, is shown to fail under the circumstances of civil war. Only the philosopher-hero can overcome such uncontrollable violence, and for Lucan that can only mean Cato. Silius makes heavy use of this Lucanian innovation, describing the self-destructive results of traditional epic virtues, epitomized in imperfect heroes like Scipio's father, Gracchus (a.k.a. Tiberius Sempronius Longus), and Gaius Flaminius. By the second half of the *Punica*, Silius reverses this trend and pits his archaic, Achillean, and flawed Hannibal against a succession of Roman counter-types, first Fabius, most famous for not fighting, Marcellus, who attempts, and ultimately fails, to imitate Hannibal's Achillean boldness, and finally Scipio, whose unique mix of martial prowess, *fides*, and *pietas* becomes the winning combination.

### Statius

Like his contemporary Silius Italicus, the poet Statius has undergone an exciting renaissance over the last few decades, though, like Silius, the great variety of scholarship

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the 'melee scene' "narrates a great number of individual combats" but the poet's attention does not linger on any one warrior for long; finally, the 'rout' "describes the retreat of the defeated army," be it orderly or chaotic.

<sup>41</sup> Crutchfield 2015: 22.

includes little on his battle scenes, despite their importance to the *Thebaid*. Statius' use of violence and spectacle is of particular relevance to our reading of Silius' battle narratives.

Rhiannon Ash well describes the typical aspects of the Statian battlefield, describing how the poet balances the hyperbolic tendencies and expectations of the epic battle scene with the over-saturated literary atmosphere of his day. A key feature of Statius' time was the changing definition and availability of *virtus*. "Although the notion of martial valor is intricately connected with traditional conceptions of Roman *virtus*," Ash writes, "the familiar ways to acquire personal glory had evaporated under the principate."<sup>42</sup> The reinterpretation of *virtus* can be seen in the lessons of the *Punica*'s flawed Roman heroes, who continuously fail until Scipio Africanus merges the traditional Homeric conception of martial valor with Aeneas *pietas*. Ash also comments on the relatively low proportion of the narrative dedicated to formal fighting, the majority of which occurs in the second half of the epic. Her conclusion strikes me as a bit curious, since she cites nearly 2000 lines of battle narrative in *Theb.* 7 – 10, some 20% of the poem's verses and 40% of the 5000 lines of the *Thebaid*'s second half; surely this qualifies as more than "low," although I suppose, as she says, it is all relative.<sup>43</sup> In any case, Ash describes how Statius uses "the surreal, the grotesque, and above all the visual in productive ways" over the course of the battle-heavy second half of the *Thebaid*.<sup>44</sup> Statius' focus on the violation of generic and moral boundaries, coupled with a love of paradoxography, reveals rather the influence of Lucan than Vergil. Also examining Statius' battlefield, Newlands describes the "particularly Roman sensibility" that Statius brings to his depictions of landscapes, which become in the *Thebaid* the "canvas on which can be dramatically displayed the spreading evil of

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<sup>42</sup> Ash 2015: 207.

<sup>43</sup> Ash 2015: 208 n. 5; Ash cites *Theb.* 7.632-823, 8.373-606, 8.655-766, most of Book 9 ("Book 9 is more consistently martial"), 10.449-939, 11.403-579.

<sup>44</sup> Ash 2015: 213.

a civil war that bursts beyond the bounds of the warring parties.” Statius’ reimplementation of the Ovidian *locus amoenus*, guided through Lucan’s *locus horridus*, “rewrote the rules of battle epic for the age of Domitian and made the form more arresting, more compassionate, and more desolate.”<sup>45</sup>

Gibson, in a 2008 article on the Statian battlefield, delineates several important points that will be relevant to our examination of Silius. The first is Statius’ use of compression, what Gibson calls ‘foreshortening,’ a practice by which Statius speeds up and disorders Vergil’s combat narrative. Vergil, in a narrative structure characteristic of Homer before him, provided a clear set of escalations leading up to the conflict in Italy in the *Aeneid*, starting the process with the death of Silvia’s deer in *Aen.* 7 but not officially beginning the war until *Aen.* 9; Statius, as Gibson shows, mirrors the death of the stag with the death of the sacred tigers of Bacchus in *Theb.* 7, but compresses the long Vergilian hiatus into only a few lines.<sup>46</sup> This lends the Statian battlefield a more confused and less organized feeling; the motives are unclear and the fighting happens quickly in a chaotic fashion. Gibson also comments on Statius’ surprising hesitance to give extended descriptions involving minor characters fighting amongst themselves, a tendency that strongly contrasts with Silius’ crowded battlefields.<sup>47</sup> Statius seems to embrace Lucan’s anti-individualism (as seen most notably in his refusal to describe individual deaths at Cannae) more than Silius, despite the fact that the Theban civil war features so many well-known individuals.

The relationship between Lucan and Statius has been well explored. Paul Roche, in a 2015 chapter that unpacks this complicated situation, notes that the first major allusion in the *Thebaid* is tellingly not to Vergil but Lucan (cf. *Theb.* 1.1: *fraternas acies* and *BC* 1.4 *cognatas*

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<sup>45</sup> Newlands 2004: 154.

<sup>46</sup> Gibson 2008: 87 – 88.

<sup>47</sup> Gibson 2008: 89.

... *acies*).<sup>48</sup> The influence of Lucan on Statius is, as for Silius as well, pervasive yet subtle.

“Although there is no one place in the *Thebaid* where the narrator makes an explicit statement regarding his emulation of Lucan’s epic,” Roche writes, “such as in his injunction to follow the *Aeneid* at the poem’s conclusion, Statius was also self-consciously and creatively walking in the footsteps of *De Bello Civili*.”<sup>49</sup> McNelis explores the idea of civil war that penetrates all aspects of the *Thebaid* in his 2007 monograph, but, though Lucan is present throughout, reads the poem rather through a Callimachean lens.

The visuality of Statius’ violence has been well studied. Gervais 2008, in a well-received M.A. thesis, explores the shocking violence of the Lemnian massacre in *Thebaid* 5, which he argues is eroticized through allusions to Augustan elegy and Ovidian poetry. A 2013 article followed has, expanding on this reading, which compares Statius’ use of violence to the films of Quentin Tarantino – a surprisingly effective comparison. Helen Lovatt makes heavy use of Statius (and Silius) in her 2013 monograph on the epic gaze, and her chapter on the ‘assaultive gaze’ and the relationship between killer/viewer and killed/viewed is particularly revealing.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, no reading is of Silius and Statius is complete without a discussion of the all-consuming question of primacy. Since the composition of the *Thebaid* and *Punica* had much chronological overlap (the *Thebaid* is thought to have been written AD 80 – 92 and the *Punica* 80 – 98), the question remains, who is influencing whom? There has been much debate and little decision on this question in recent years. The two most well accepted viewpoints seem to be those of Lovatt and Ripoll. Lovatt, in a 2010 chapter in which she attempts to read the games of

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<sup>48</sup> Roche 2015: 393.

<sup>49</sup> Roche 2015: 407.

<sup>50</sup> Lovatt 2013: 28 describes that “viewing leads to killing, and viewing can be in itself a sort of violence, a sort of violation.” She later compares the assaultive gazes of Hannibal and Scipio in the *Punica* (320-24).

Silius and Statius ‘backwards and forwards,’ describes the two poets’ complex and competitive relationship. “The most productive narrative,” she concludes, “is that in which the poets are writing, or at least reciting and revising, at the same time. This allows us to see true interplay, an athletic poetics at work, in which both self-consciously compete with each other, belittle, exceed, suppress, sanitize, and miniaturize, questioning each other’s choices and their own.”<sup>51</sup> This ‘middle ground’ argument seems to me the most logical and fruitful approach to Statius and Silius. Ripoll provides a deep and broad analysis of the relationship between the two poets and comes to a similar conclusion; it is highly likely that the two poets knew each other’s work (and likely each other personally) through their proximity in Rome and Naples and by attending the other’s *recitationes*.<sup>52</sup> For two in-depth examples of the interrelation of Statius and Silius, in addition to Lovatt’s games-centered offering above, see Marks 2013 and Walter 2013, who both compare the siege of Thebes to the siege of Saguntum in *Punica 2*.

### **Silius Italicus**

We have finally reached the esteemed subject of this dissertation. As mentioned above, in recent years Silius has received a wide variety of commentaries, edited volumes, and monographs, covering an equally wide variety of topics. However, as also mentioned above, there remains no work that examines the battle scenes themselves, despite their prominence in this epic and to the epic tradition. There are, fortunately, some small signs of improvement on this topic. Neil Bernstein’s recently published commentary on book 2 includes a detailed look at the “Amazonian and Herculean warfare” of the siege of Saguntum.<sup>53</sup> This includes the first

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<sup>51</sup> Lovatt 2010: 175 – 76).

<sup>52</sup> Ripoll 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Bernstein 2017: xxii-xxv and ad. loc.

*aristeia* of the epic, that of the Amazonian warrior Asbyte, whom Bernstein defends from charges of derivation and argues for an independently conceived response to the epic tradition. He also comments on Silius' rearrangement of the structure of his epic predecessors. Asbyte appears early, contrasting with the late-arriving Penthesilea and Camilla, and Bernstein concludes that Silius is implying that we have begun *in medias res*; we begin during the middle of three wars. Finally, Bernstein examines the duel between Theron and Hannibal, arguing that it is a recombination of the duel between Hector and Achilles in the *Iliad* and Aeneas and Turnus in the *Aeneid*. Through a window reference looking back through the *Aeneid* to the *Iliad*, Bernstein shows that Hannibal's cruel, Achillean aspects are revealed.<sup>54</sup>

In an equally recent commentary on book 10 of the *Punica*, Joy Littlewood covers the final episodes of the battle of Cannae, which focus on the *aristeia* and death of the Roman general Lucius Aemilius Paulus. Although the majority of the fighting occurs in book 9, Littlewood provides an excellent overview of the battle itself, commenting on Silius' selection of scenes from Livy, his manipulation of historical characters, and the expansion or compression of the details of combat. For example, Silius enhances the scene of Lentulus receiving command from Paulus, narrated by Livy with only a single prosaic sentence, with "flamboyant poetic diction and complex inter- and intratextual allusions to make a companion piece to Paulus' earlier encounter with Metellus, a diptych contrasting degeneracy from Roman archaic values with epic nobility."<sup>55</sup> This is an important example of the skill and care with which Silius composes his battle narratives and which can be found throughout the *Punica* – he is hardly a

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<sup>54</sup> The phrase 'window reference' was coined by Richard Thomas: "It consists of the very close adaptation of a model, noticeably interrupted in order to allow reference back to the source of that model: the intermediate model thus serves as a sort of window onto the ultimate source, whose version is otherwise not visible" (1986: 188).

<sup>55</sup> Littlewood 2017: xxii.

“laborious compiler and tasteless versifier.”<sup>56</sup> Littlewood also pays close attention to how Silius makes use of contrasting similes during Paulus’ doomed *aristeia* to highlight first his epic strength and then the pathos of his eventual defeat. Again, this close examination of similes will be an important method in exploring Silius’ other battle narratives. Finally, Littlewood contrasts the death of Paulus, explored via ‘big cat’ similes, with Hannibal’s single-minded and efficient slaughter of the six sons of Crista. Overall, although Littlewood avoids the majority of the battle scenes found in book 9, her methods and conclusions in examining the *aristeia* of Paulus at the beginning of book 10 are easily applicable to the other battle scenes in the poem.

The third and final major work done on the battle scenes in the *Punica* comes yet again from an unpublished PhD dissertation, Giles Gilbert’s 2001 *The Aesthetics of Slaughter: A Study in the Battle-Descriptions of Latin Epic*. Besides relevant overviews of the battle narratives of the other epics, ranging from Homer all the way to the Flavians, Gilbert gives a detailed and in-depth comparative analysis of the battle of Ticinus as found in *Punica* 4 and Livy 21.46. He concludes that, while Silius makes heavy use of Livy, he does much to modify his source to fit his overall narrative plan, epicizing the events of Livy by describing them in Homeric or Vergilian ways. Silius Italicus, he argues, has three main goals for the battles of the *Punica*: to epicize his historical material, to compress Roman history, and to provide geographical and ethnographical discourses on Italy (I would add also for Africa and Spain, integral parts of the Empire in Silius’ time).<sup>57</sup> Gilbert clearly identifies each of these goals within the battle of Ticinus in *Punica* 4, and reading the five other major battles of the poem with these in mind will be an important method for this dissertation. Gilbert, however, does not apply such a close reading to any other battle of the *Punica*, since the breadth of his topic requires him to move

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<sup>56</sup> Crutwell 1877, cited in Dominik 2010: 432.

<sup>57</sup> Gilbert 2001: 29.

freely between the battles of the *Punica* and the entirety of the epic tradition. He does later in his dissertation give a helpful examination of various topoi of death in battle, including head-crushing and eye-gouging, a survey useful for the reading of any epic battle scene.

#### IV. Silian Poetics and the Allusive Battlefield

Silius' use of the epic tradition should not, after all, be much of a surprise; like Homer and in some ways like Vergil, Silius is unafraid to devote large sections of his narrative, sometimes the entirety of books, to battle descriptions. Silian poetics, marked by a great complexity of historical and literary sources and the poet's willingness – even eagerness – to engage with many influences simultaneously, is remarkably dense and, in some ways, unique in the Roman epic tradition. Silius' style, while on the surface highly Vergilian, is in many ways quite distinct from Vergil (this has been the source of much of the *Punica*'s criticism: it is both too Vergilian and not Vergilian enough), and so it will be useful to delineate some of the more unique aspects of Silian poetics.

The *Punica* of Silius Italicus is, to use Wilson's now famous (among Silius' readers, at least) comment, "the most intertextual of poems,"<sup>58</sup> and so a few moments should be spent examining some features of the poet's style before we continue to the goals and methods of this dissertation. Intertextuality, a key aspect of the study of Latin poetry, is usually typified by the use of verbal parallels or quotations which refer back to and interact with another text.<sup>59</sup> Silius

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<sup>58</sup> Wilson 2004: 248.

<sup>59</sup> The use of 'allusion' and 'intertextuality' in Latin poetry is fraught with disagreement and inconsistency, having expanded from Conte's definition of resemblances deriving from "a common literary codification" and their function within the literary text (1986: 28). This idea has merged with West and Woodman's belief that, through patient scholarship, direct 'imitation' of one author by another *can* be pinpointed (1979: 195). Richard Thomas sought to add more precision to the vocabulary and offered the word 'reference' (broken down into a host of specific terms: 'casual reference', 'single

makes heavy use of intertextuality in his poetry, the most frequent point of reference being Virgil's *Aeneid*, but his voracious appetite for Latin literature brings in large doses of Ovid, Lucan, Statius, and, of course, Livy.<sup>60</sup> As a Flavian poet, participant in his own age's literary renaissance and living after the great flourishing of the Augustan and Neronian ages, Silius had access to a vast amount of literature – Pliny himself tells us of his large library and the eagerness with which he read.<sup>61</sup>

Consequently, Silius' poetry is remarkably dense, with each line containing sometimes multiple references or allusions to several authors ranging from Homer all the way to Statius.<sup>62</sup> Often, he compresses several examples from the same or different authors into a single episode, maintaining the connection to multiple sources simultaneously. Equally often, he describes a similar situation from earlier epic and, in the first half of his poem, has his Romans make or

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reference', 'self-reference', 'correction', 'apparent reference', 'multiple reference', 'conflation') to indicate Vergil's wish that his readers refer, either through memory or reading, to other texts and apply their observations to his work (1986: 172 n. 8, 174) – but this too has already lost much of its specificity and the term 'reference' is now essentially a synonym for 'allusion'. The problem of 'intentionality' has not been solved, and likely never will be, but there remains a fruitful middle path which I will employ in this dissertation. This "enlarged version", which contains all the subtlety and specificity of 'reference' and 'creative imitation' is, as Stephen Hinds puts it, "good to think with" and "enables us to conceptualize and to handle certain kinds of intertextual transaction more economically and more effectively than does any alternative" (Hinds 1998:50).

<sup>60</sup> Studies of Silius and Vergil are too many to list; for Silius and Ovid see Brùère 1958 and 1959, Wilson 2004, and Littlewood 2011: ix – lxii; for Lucan and Silius see Marks 2010; for Silius and the historiographical tradition see Pomeroy 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Pliny's famous obituary (*Plin. Ep.* 3.7) tells us of Silius' love of literature, artwork, and, above all, Vergil: *multum ubique librorum, multum statuarum, multum imaginum, quas non habebat modo, verum etiam venerabatur, Vergili ante omnes, cuius natalem religiosius quam suum celebrat, Neapoli maxime, ubi monimentum eius adire ut templum solebat*; Wilson 2004: 236 questions Pliny's familiarity with Silius: "The extent of Ovidian allusion in the *Punica* is enough to make one wonder whether Pliny ever read any more than the beginning of the poem."

<sup>62</sup> Van der Keur 2015: xviii sums up the intertextual situation for us, writing that "beyond the works of Livy, Vergil and Homer, which have long been recognized as important intertexts, allusions to numerous other poets and prose authors attest to the breadth of Silius' reading, including but not limited to Greek writers such as Plato and Apollonius Rhodius, Cicero's philosophical prose, poets such as Horace and Propertius, the tragedies of Seneca, and all Roman epic from Ennius to Silius' contemporaries Valerius Flaccus and Statius."

repeat a mistake or, in the second half, has them ‘correct’ this bad behavior or learn from past mistakes. To use an example which I describe below, when alluding to Turnus’ attempt to goad the Trojans out of their fortified camp in *Aen.* 9, Silius follows Vergil closely but has his Romans ‘forget’ their Vergilian predecessors and charge forward to their deaths. The ‘inversion’ of his epic predecessors is one of the most important aspects of Silian intertextuality.<sup>63</sup>

It has become entirely clear now that Silius, despite his debt to Vergil and the other Latin epicists, has his own unique style and that includes his own brand of intertextuality. The distinction between Silius’ intertextuality and Vergil’s or Ovid’s has not gone unnoticed in recent scholarship, and a large part of engaging productively with Silius and the *Punica* is tied to the defining and understanding of this difference. “Compared with other writers of Latin epic,” Wilson writes, “[Silius] tends to eschew signposting his intertexts by the technique of ‘quotation,’ that is, by repeating complete phrases or other word collocations from earlier poems. He prefers to signal the intertextual connection by alternative means, in particular, by coincidence of situation and detail rather than wording and, occasionally, by more explicit hints.”<sup>64</sup> So, while an allusion may not at first seem immediately clear, when followed to its source it is not uncommon that several more links will appear in the language surrounding the initial jumping off point. “A single correspondence,” Littlewood observes, “a matching apostrophe, and a different name in a matching *sedes*, may be all the coincidence required to signal a cogent parallel.”<sup>65</sup> This makes Silian intertextuality in some ways different from, and

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<sup>63</sup> “Inversion can be found on all levels [of the *Punica*]. It can be as simple as a borrowed phrase with a slight adjustment so that its meaning is opposite, or the inversion of a simile or metaphor of an earlier poet so that what is compared and what it is compared to are interchanged. More often, the inversion is a form of profound engagement with the literary tradition, carrying a deeper significance than mere reminiscence and verbal play” (Van der Keur 2015: xix).

<sup>64</sup> Wilson 2004: 226.

<sup>65</sup> Littlewood 2011: xxii.

more difficult than, the Vergilian and Ovidian style to which we modern readers are so accustomed.

So, when we read Silius' poetry, we must be more willing to follow verbal parallels which seem at first too slight, examine source passages more broadly, and consider non-verbal correspondences like setting. Finally, we must also keep in mind what Cowan calls a "poetics of contingency," the fact that Silius consistently offers two competing possible outcomes, contrasting rather sharply with the usually strongly railroaded nature of the epic plot.<sup>66</sup> The clearest and most common of these counterfactuals is the ever-present possibility of Rome's defeat, but the use of hypothetical outcomes filters down to nearly every part of the epic.<sup>67</sup> Counterfactuals, Cowan continues, are "particularly and perhaps uniquely fundamental to its poetics of contingency" and should therefore be read with great care. As we shall see below in the case of the death of the Roman soldier Catus at the beginning of the battle of Ticinus, these 'what-if' scenarios are some of the most intertextually complex passages in the battle scenes.

## V. Silius and the Historiographical Tradition

Silius wrote about the most famous war in Roman history and so his most important influences must be not only Homer, Vergil, *et al.*, but also the long tradition of Greek and Roman historiography, both in general and on the Hannibalic War specifically. Just as his use of the epic poets centers around Vergil, Silius' use of historiography centers on Livy, whose third

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<sup>66</sup> "The suggestion that the entire course of history could have turned out differently stands in stark opposition to the determinist, teleological tendency of the epic genre" (Cowan 2010: 323).

<sup>67</sup> Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2504 sum up a similar idea: that the *Punica* is structured on a 'paradox,' that "defeat is better for Rome than victory is. Yet the war Silius narrates is, ultimately, a Roman victory; and Silius is not really telling us that Carthage should have won instead."

decade (*AUC* 21-30) covered the events of the Second Punic War and whose proem Silius invokes alongside the *Aeneid*'s in the *Punica*'s opening,<sup>68</sup> but the poet makes use of wide variety of other sources as well. Polybius is an obvious choice for Silius, whose third book of his *Histories* provides an older, Greek source for the war with Hannibal. Because of the scope and prominence of the Second Punic War, many other sources existed from which Silius could have drawn,<sup>69</sup> including Silenus and Sosylus of Lacedaemon (Greek historians who travelled with Hannibal),<sup>70</sup> Fabius Pictor (also in Greek),<sup>71</sup> L. Cincius Alimentus (whom Livy tells us was captured by the Carthaginians and perhaps had the chance to meet with Hannibal face to face),<sup>72</sup> Coelius Antipater's seven-book monograph on the war,<sup>73</sup> and Valerius Antias (often cited by Livy).

For some time, scholarship on Silius' use of the historiographical tradition centered around the search for lost sources of the Second Punic War hidden in the *Punica*. Heynacher began this quest in 1877, as he sought to carefully recover alternative accounts of events in the Hannibalic War, and Nicol 1936 is a culmination (and the only English publication) of this approach. Klotz, in 1933, was already questioning the usefulness of this search, citing the different needs and goals of historiographical prose and epic poetry. Venini 1972, in two articles, continued from Klotz, arguing that many of the chronological divergences from Livy in Silius

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<sup>68</sup> Pomeroy 2010: 32 – 36 compares the opening of *AUC* 21 with Silius' proem.

<sup>69</sup> Pomeroy 2010: 27 – 28 and Gibson 2010: 48 – 51 (in back-to-back chapters in Silius' *Companion*) give useful and current summaries of Silius' sources.

<sup>70</sup> *FGrH*175 T 2 (=Nep. *Han.* 13.3); Polybius criticizes Sosylus' methods and trustworthiness at 3.20.5, but Pomeroy suggests he may have been hypercritical due to Sosylus' pro-Carthaginian stance (Pomeroy 2010: 28 n.6).

<sup>71</sup> *HRRel* 1:5-39; Polybius mentions Pictor during his description of the causes of the war (3.8.1-8) and Livy cites Pictor as the best source for the casualties at Trasimene (22.7.1-4).

<sup>72</sup> *HRRel* 1:40-43 (=AR 1:54-59); Livy describes his capture at 21.38.3-5.

<sup>73</sup> *HRRel* 1:158-77 (=AR 2:50-70); Cicero speaks of the quality of Coelius' writing at *Leg.* 1.6 and *de Orat.* 2.54.

could be explained by the structural and narrative requirements of the *Punica* and Silius' use of Homeric and Vergilian epic. Nesselrath offered what is now the most accepted conclusion: that almost all of Silius' variations from Livy can be explained by authorial choice rather than through the presence of alternative sources, though there remains some push back in this area.<sup>74</sup>

Although the primacy of Livy (and to a lesser extent Polybius) is now the *communis opinio*, there remain some open questions about Silius' use of other historiographical sources, especially in Greek. Gibson argues that Silius' erudite reputation and his life in the highly Greek area around Naples means that we should not ignore the possibility of Silius' engagement with Greek sources. "If Statius' father taught Greek poets as obscure as Sophron and Corinna," he argues, "there is no reason to suppose that Greek historians, especially those concerned with the western Mediterranean, were not available."<sup>75</sup> Two useful examples Silius' implementation of Greek sources over, or at least in tandem with Livy can be given. The first is in Silius' description of Gaius Flaminius at the end of the battle of Trebia (*Pun.* 4. 704 – 10); both Livy and Silius depict Flaminius' consulship as a disaster (cf. *AUC* 21.63), but Silius also describes Flaminius' easy victory over the Boii that made the general dangerously over-confident against Hannibal, a detail that is not present in the Livian narrative.<sup>76</sup> Silius' reading of Polybius is confirmed by a simile that compares Flaminius to an untrained captain at sea, a comparison also found in the same context in Polybius. The second is in what Pomeroy calls the 'Thucydidean narrative' which runs through the *Punica*; Thucydides can be seen not only in the proem of the

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<sup>74</sup> Lucarini 2004 argues for the presence of non-Livian annalistic sources.

<sup>75</sup> Gibson 2010: 49 n. 6.

<sup>76</sup> "Silius, however, evokes a different past for Flaminius, and, strikingly, one not directly evident in the Livian passage... Silius' treatment of Flaminius in the run-up to Trasimene makes more of his past than Livy does in the same context" (Gibson 2010: 51). Gibson also notes (51 n. 14) that Flaminius' tribunate and first consulship are described in *AUC* 20, which is now unfortunately lost.

*Punica* alongside Livy and Vergil, but also throughout the Sicilian war in *Punica* 14, when Silius recreates and inverts the disastrous Athenian expedition in books 6 and 7 of his *Histories*, complete with a second battle in the Great Harbor (*Pun.* 14. 292 – 561).

Silius' use of the historiographical tradition is, as with the epic tradition, subtle, complex, and deliberate. When reading the *Punica* it is equally important to consider Livy, Polybius, Thucydides, and many other historiographical authors alongside Vergil and the epicists. It is also important to keep in mind the differences – and the similarities – of Silius' epic program and the goals of a historian. For some time, Silius' historical epic was thought to be anything but 'historical,' a line of thinking that is represented in Spaltenstein's 1986 judgement ("pour parler net, Silius est tout sauf un historien"),<sup>77</sup> but this perspective is beginning to change as scholarly ideas about ancient history evolve. Nowadays, scholars are distinguishing more and more between the work of modern academic historians and ancient historiography, and with this distinction our view of Silius as a historian is changing as well.<sup>78</sup> When reading the *Punica*, therefore, we must keep in mind Silius' multivocal style, his ability to weave together the manner of the poet *and* the historian, and consider his divergences from the Livian narrative not as deficiencies but as purposeful engagement with and innovation of the historiographical tradition.

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<sup>77</sup> Spaltenstein 1986: *xiii*.

<sup>78</sup> "Viewed from a perspective which sees ancient historical texts as something rather different from the work of modern academic historians, however, Silius and ancient historiography may in fact not be so far removed from each other after all" (Gibson 2010: 47).

## VI. Dissertation Thesis, Goals, and Methods

This dissertation has two broad goals: First, to provide a thorough and complete reading of the battles of *Punica* 4, something not done since Niemann's 1975 monograph, and never in English, and second, to establish a testing ground of sorts for in unpacking the narrative strategies and literary devices Silius employs in the battles scenes that can serve as a foundation for reading the *Punica* as a whole. Throughout the dissertation, I aim to provide a reading of these battles that engages with Silius as a legitimate poetic talent worthy of close and extended study. I argue that book four and the battles within form a crucial part of Silius' program for the *Punica* that, because of the modern reader's aversion to battle scenes, has gone largely unnoticed. This study fills a gap currently present in the scholarship of the *Punica*, which tends to focus on either character studies,<sup>79</sup> non-military episodes and digressions,<sup>80</sup> or larger thematic and structural aspects without fully accounting for the content of the battle scenes, despite their length and prominence. The battles of Ticinus and Trebia in *Punica* 4 and their many varied, and interesting deaths, duels, *aristeiai*, speeches, and similes are not filler; rather, as the first encounter between the Romans and Hannibal, they are fundamental in the development of themes that will reoccur throughout the whole of the epic. Book four of the *Punica* in many ways marks a new beginning, coming after three books of 'prologue' concerning Hannibal and Saguntum, and this essential first book in Italy is almost completely dominated by battle scenes.

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<sup>79</sup> Important character studies include Stocks 2014 on Hannibal, Marks 2005 on Scipio Africanus, Tipping 2010 on Hannibal, Hercules, Fabius, and Scipio, Asso 2010 on the figure of Hercules, Fucecchi 2010 on Fabius Maximus and Claudius Marcellus, and Ariemma 2010 on Varro.

<sup>80</sup> There are many important studies, including, to list just a few, Littlewood's excellent 2011 commentary on the very digressive Book 7 which includes the myth of Falernus, Hannibal's nighttime raid, and Nereus' retelling of the Judgement of Paris, Reitz 1982 on Scipio's katabasis, Augoustakis 2010c on (among other things) the story of Regulus in Book 6, and his 2013 chapter on teichoscopia and katabasis in the *Punica*. Other popular episodes are the story of Anna in Book 8 (Marks 2013), Hannibal's stay in Capua in Book 11 (Marks 2008), and the self-contained Sicilian war in Book 14 (Augoustakis 2010b).

The *Punica* is, after all, a poem about war – even more so than the *Aeneid*. *Punica* 4 is essentially one uninterrupted battle, combining Ticinus and Trebia; Book 5, with a small digression on the etymology of Lake Trasimene, is likewise almost entirely combat; the battle of Cannae takes up portions of three books, with preparations and troop catalogues in book 8 and descriptions of combat taking up the entirety of 9 and 300 lines of book 10. All in all, within books 4-10 there are 1,737 lines of pure combat description, not including catalogues, pre-battle speeches and maneuvering, omens, or immediate post-battle descriptions of carnage.<sup>81</sup> The battles of the second half of the poem do not receive nearly as many lines (a hint of Silius' changing goals in the second half of the epic) yet still fill 724 lines of pure combat description.<sup>82</sup> Out of the *Punica*'s roughly 12,000 lines, these 2,461 lines of battle description make up over twenty percent of the entire poem; one out of every five lines describes a battle scene.

These major battle scenes are filled with heroic deaths, detailed descriptions of injuries, numerous *aristeiai*, and many beautiful and interesting similes. Yet, to say that Silius' depiction of epic warfare is formulaic, repetitive, or uninteresting – as some have – is to risk repeating the same errors of judgement which scholars were once accustomed to make for the whole poem.<sup>83</sup> There is much to be enjoyed here, including Silius' movement between prosaic and poetic vocabulary, his skillful implementation and adaptation of Homeric, Vergilian, Lucanian, and Statian style, intricate structures, exciting and varied action, a density of similes and allusions, and, yes, some truly innovative and memorable poetry.

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<sup>81</sup> This count is purposely selective; if the non-combat aspects of battle scenes (speeches, etc.) are included, the count would far exceed 2000. These counts also do not include minor skirmishes or other small-scale combat descriptions (such as the 50 lines of battle in Book 7 in which Fabius rescues Minucius from Hannibal (7. 523-579), or the war in Sardinia in Book 12 (342-419).

<sup>82</sup> I am including in this count the 60 lines devoted to Archimedes' contributions to the naval battle at Syracuse which form a strange engineering-*aristeia* (14. 292-352).

<sup>83</sup> "Silius is at his most tedious in the battle-scenes of the *Punica*" (Vessey 1973: 146).

The battle scenes of the *Punica* 4 – and indeed of the whole epic – can be approached in several ways. First and foremost is Silius’ part in the tradition of war poetry stretching back to Homer’s *Iliad*. How much does Silius’ battle narrative rely on Homeric topoi, and how much is filtered through Vergil’s undeniable influence? The presence of Lucan must also be addressed, who made indisputable changes to the genre of Latin epic in vocabulary, structure, and tone, and whose presence is felt most strongly during scenes of violence and death.<sup>84</sup> The Homeric simile, too, will be an important point of examination, with some of Silius’ most beautiful and creative examples appearing in the course of battle, just as in Homer.<sup>85</sup> How does Silius vary his description within these long battle scenes to avoid monotony? How does Silius portray and problematize the identities of the Romans and Carthaginians? This leads down fascinating avenues, as it becomes clear that Silius’ two opposing peoples are in dialogue with Lucan, as Caesarians and Pompeians, with Vergil, as native Italians fighting Trojans, and finally with Homer, as Trojans besieged by Achaeans. Hannibal himself is thus simultaneously a Caesar and a Pompey, an Aeneas and a Turnus, an Achilles and a Hector.<sup>86</sup> Each step back in epic time multiplies the complexity of Silius’ poem, and the *Punica*, as the inheritor of this long tradition, is in simultaneous contact with each of its predecessors.

Silius’ most important prosaic influence should also not be forgotten. That is, of course, the historiographical tradition, specifically the historians Livy and Polybius. Livy seems to be Silius’ main source for the most important events in the war, although there is some debate over

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<sup>84</sup> Lucan’s more graphic and descriptive tone is sometimes seen as a hallmark of the excesses of the Neronian age, while others see it rather as a return to the Homeric battlefield. For an overview of Lucan’s use of Homer, see Green 2010.

<sup>85</sup> “There are many more similes in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*, and they occur for the most part in the books of fighting. It is natural to infer from this that the extended simile was a standard feature of battle poetry, designed to add variety to a type of narrative in which repetition was unavoidable and diversity at a premium” (Mueller 2009: 102).

<sup>86</sup> Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2511-13.

whether he used Livy primarily or a source in common with Livy that no longer survives, though he is clearly a close reader of Polybius as well.<sup>87</sup> Livy and the historiographical tradition bring many important insights to Silius' poem, including comparisons of the order and importance of events (Silius often modifies or excludes entirely some events found in Livy), as well as character studies (how do Silius' epic versions relate to the historical figures in Livy?) Important avenues to pursue include Silius' implementation of historiographical vocabulary and style, the use of *enargeia* to create a sense of realism in his battle scenes, or the use of rhetorical devices like the *urbs capta* and generals' speeches. How often, and under which circumstances, does Silius employ these historiographical devices? How does Silius' use of historiography in epic differ from Vergil or Lucan, the latter of whom is also classified as having written a 'historical' epic? When, and why, does Silius diverge from Livy? Many of these historiographical questions will have direct relevance to our examination of Ticinus and Trebia.

The most important aspects of Silian poetics that I will examine in my reading of Ticinus and Trebia are delineated as follows:

### **Poetics of Contingency**

Silius' constant use of 'what-if' scenarios is one of the defining characteristics of the *Punica*. What if the Romans lost the war? What if Rome was sacked by Hannibal? What if Scipio Africanus and Hannibal had a Homeric duel? All of these contingencies and more are played out in miniature on the battlefields of book four and a programmatic example can be seen in the very first scene of the battle, when Silius describes that the first spear thrown 'would have'

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<sup>87</sup> See Pomeroy 2010 for a useful overview of Livy and Silius; Gibson 2010 explores other potential historiographical influences such as Thucydides and Polybius. For an older, and inevitably dismissive, but still useful catalogue of historical sources, see Nicol 1936.

missed its target, had not the Roman soldier Catus willingly brought himself in its path (see 1.2.1).

### Poetics of Defeat

The Second Punic War is remembered as much for its defeats (Trebia, Trasimene, Cannae) as its ultimate victories (Metaurus, Zama) and the Romans embraced these defeats, along with others like Allia in 390 BC, as part of their national identity.<sup>88</sup> Silius' implementation of a poetics of defeat is most influenced by Lucan, whose pessimistic epic elevated the losers, Pompey and Cato, above the victors, namely Caesar, though elements of it can be traced back through Vergil's Turnus and Homer's Hector. In Silius, individual defeats on the battlefield and the overall losses at Ticinus and Trebia are always mitigated by the understanding that they were necessary for the Romans' ultimate victory. As in Lucan, Silius' heroes embrace not the glory of victory but the glory of death.

### Inversion

As described above (see n. 63), inversion is present in virtually all aspects of Silius' poem, from the inversion of words in a quotation (such as in the death of Crixus, when Silius alludes to and quotes *Aen.* 9. 709: *dat tellus gemitum* but reverses the order with *Pun.* 4. 294: *gemit tellus* – see 1.5), to the inversion of individual roles (such as Scipio's father's very Caesarian attempt to *stop* the Carthaginians from crossing the Ticinus/Rubicon – see 2.3.2), to inversion of the overall roles of the Carthaginians and Romans (the Romans, as the defenders of Italy, are placed in the position of the Italians of the *Aeneid*, while the Carthaginians, as the invaders of Italy, become instead the Trojans of the *Aeneid*, with all the problems this

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<sup>88</sup> “I will suggest that the Second Punic War had an appreciable impact on Romans' perception of defeat, and that the costs of that war were in part translated into the particular place that military defeat occupied both in politics and in the historiography of early second-century Rome” (Clark 2014: 3).

reassociation brings). Silius' use of inversion is more than just a simple trick of variation; the poet is willing to pursue the interesting ramifications of these inversions, with the inversion of Trojan and Italian, Caesarian and Pompeian roles being of special importance throughout the entire epic.

### **Compression of History**

This is another of Silius' favorite techniques, found in small moments throughout the battles of *Punica* 4. Silius' all-encompassing historical epic seeks to not only describe the events of a 17-year long war, but also works to include nearly all of Roman history. A great example of this occurs during the opening of the battle of Ticinus, which is contextualized as a replay of the Gallic invasion of 390 BC; hence the Gallic chieftain Crixus claims descent from Brennus and Scipio's victory over him becomes, in addition to a hypothetical defeat of Hannibal, a replay of Camillus' defeat of Brennus (see 1.5). In this way the compression of history is sometimes coupled with the poetics of contingency, with Silius looking simultaneously forward to a hypothetical 'what if' situation in the future and backwards to an important moment in the Roman past. In effect, this universalizes the scope of the war, as the Romans are pitted not only against the impressive Hannibal but are also forced to relive existential moments from their long history and to 'preplay' moments in their future.

### **Nomenclature**

Silius' battlefields are filled with the exploits and deaths of numerous named characters, whose names Spaltenstein almost universally describes as 'fréquent' or 'habituel,' and, consequently, unimportant. Spaltenstein, the only modern commentary that includes book four, is uniformly uninterested in the names of Silius' warriors, thinking them to be either chosen, essentially, at random, simply for variation, to add exotic flavor, for metrical needs, or for

anything other than a good reason. The reality is precisely the opposite: Silius' use of nomenclature is among the subtlest, most revealing, and rewarding aspects of his poetry. In virtually every case during my research on *Punica* 4 I have discovered an important and meaningful reason behind name choice. Sometimes a name more firmly positions us in a Vergilian context, such as Silius' use of Murranus and Cupencus, the same names used in the analogous *Aeneid* scene, as victims during Gracchus and Hannibal's dual *aristeia* at the opening of the battle of Trebia (see 3.3.5 and 3.3.6); other times Silius uses meaningful nomenclature to add a subtle context to a passage, such as when he aligns the duel of Scipio's father and Crixus at Ticinus with the aborted duel between Scipio Africanus and Hannibal at Cannae through the use of the name 'Garganus' (see 1.5.3).

### **Anticipation and Foreshadowing**

Silius has a well-known love of anticipation, alluding often to important moments later in his own epic or later in Roman history. Important examples in the context of Ticinus and Trebia include the programmatic figure of Catus, whose death at Ticinus is an allusion to Lucan's soldier of the same name during the naval battle of Massilia in *Bellum Civile* 3; the watery demise of Lucan's Catus is suppressed at Ticinus but alluded to once again during the flood scene at Trebia – a wonderful example of Silius use of anticipation and retrospection. The death of Catus also anticipates both Gracchus' death at the opening of Trebia, who likewise rushes forward over-eagerly to death and all the way forward to the battle of Zama, when the Romans' scorn of delay is finally rephrased as proper behavior. Silius' use of anticipation and foreshadowing shows the care with which he constructed his poem; each part of Ticinus and Trebia is intricately connected with important moments later in the *Punica*, and in the latter half of the poem this same tendency towards anticipation turns towards retrospection and hindsight.

The *Punica* is in many ways a circular epic, with the first half referencing the second, and the second returning to the first.

These six techniques, the poetics of contingency, the poetics of defeat, inversion, compression of history, meaningful nomenclature, and anticipation and foreshadowing are the most important aspects of Silius' unique style. In his characteristic way, Silius mixes and matches these techniques, sometimes combining several into one allusion, often resulting in a remarkably complex and innovative engagement with one or multiple literary predecessors. Silius' highly allusive poetry is in some ways familiar to readers of more popular authors like Ovid or Vergil, but in other ways it is quite different from those well-established writers, and it will be important throughout this dissertation to balance Silius' traditional aspects with his more innovative techniques.

## VII. Dissertation Structure

My examination of the battles of Ticinus and Trebia is divided into four chapters, with the first two focusing on Ticinus and the second two on Trebia. Fortunately, for our purposes, each battle has a clear and, I argue, purposeful division into two halves, each with its own tone and goals.

### **Chapter 1: Ticinus, part I (4.131 – 366)**

The first half of the battle of Ticinus (*Pun.* 4. 131 – 366) takes place between the Romans and the Carthaginians' Gallic allies, led by a Gaul named Crixus; the Carthaginians themselves are conspicuously absent (*Pun.* 4. 189: *nec locus est Tyriis belli pugnaeve*) and will not appear until the second half of the battle. This 'Celtomachy,' as it can rightly be called, is dominated by

a series of what I call ‘minor deaths.’ These four deaths (Catus, Tyrrhenus, Quirinius, and Crixus) do not involve major heroes and instead focus on previously unseen and seemingly random Roman soldiers. Because of this, these important necrologues are almost universally overlooked (Catus is a prominent exception) and declared to be simply filler in Silius’ endless and one-dimensional quest for *variatio*. In Chapter 1, I push back against the assumption that vignettes on the Silian battlefield are unimportant and instead argue that each of these four necrologues is of immense structural and programmatic importance, establishing themes that will be crucial not only to Ticinus and Trebia but to the *Punica* as a whole. Catus, Tyrrhenus, Quirinius, and Crixus each typify one or several of the themes delineated above: self-destructive, suicidal behavior, civil war imagery, the confusion of identity, the compression of history, or the poetics of contingency.

## **Chapter 2: Ticinus, part II (*Pun.* 4. 310 – 479)**

Silius clearly marks the end of the Celtomachic first half of Ticinus with a transitional simile – a technique he uses to great effect within these battle scenes – and I have maintained this delineation for chapters 1 and 2. The second half of Ticinus is altogether more Punic, introducing first Mago and the Carthaginian cavalry (*Pun.* 4. 311: *at Mago...*) and then Hannibal and his martial train (*Pun.* 4. 324 – 25: *advolat ... ductor / Sidonius*) in quick succession. I divide the Punic half of Ticinus into three scenes. The first includes Hannibal’s dramatic appearance, accompanied by the personifications of Fear, Terror, and Madness, and the following short *aristeia*; the second is a long and remarkably complex duel between two sets of triplet brothers – a scene that prepares the audience for a recreation of Livy’s exemplary Horatii and Curiatii but suddenly veers into a fratricidal recreation of Statius’ *Thebaid*; the third and final scene features

Scipio's rescue of his endangered father, an overtly Aenean moment that marks the beginning of the future Africanus' journey. The structure of this second half is well balanced, with the exploits of the two major heroes of the poem (Hannibal and Scipio) balanced around the intermediate scene of the triplets' battle. The battle of Ticinus is itself also well balanced around the two Scipiones, with its beginning marked by the omen of Scipio Africanus' future (*Pun.* 4. 101 – 119), its middle concerning Scipio's father's duel with Crixus, and its end describing Scipio's rescue of his father.

### **Chapter 3: Trebia, part I (*Pun.* 4. 480 – 621)**

The battle of Trebia is also easily divided into two halves and so mirrors the preceding battle. Rather than a sign of Silius' inadequacies as a poet, the repetition inherent in these two back to back Roman defeats reinforces the cyclical nature of these opening battles and will be of great importance to my reading of *Punica* 4. The battle's two halves consist of a land battle (*Pun.* 512 – 569), which contains, like Ticinus, several *aristeiai* and necrologues, and a river battle (*Pun.* 4. 570 – 671), which, unlike Ticinus, features drawn out scenes of fighting and drowning in a watery setting. Preceding and following these two major sections are a smaller transitional section (*Pun.* 4. 480 – 511) and a rather foreboding epilogue (*Pun.* 4. 702 – 721).

Chapter 3 focuses on the land battle that dominates the first half of the battle of Trebia. Silius uses the short transitional section to very quickly describe the movement of the two forces after Ticinus and to introduce a new Roman commander, Tiberius Sempronius Longus, whom he curiously refers to as Gracchus. The rapid pace of the transition and the use of ring composition strengthens the connection between the two battles and the feeling of repetition. Unlike at Ticinus, Hannibal is given a prominent (and unanswered) speech before the battle begins,

although the brash general unknowingly undermines himself with several allusions to Dido and Creusa. The battle proper begins with the dueling *aristeiai* of Gracchus and Hannibal, a recreation of that of Aeneas and Turnus in *Aeneid* 12, in which are contained several important and revealing necrologues (Murranus, Phalantus, Cupencus, and Varenus), further tying the passage with *Aeneid* 12 while providing several interesting links to Statius' *Thebaid*. Statius and his *Thebaid* will become ever more important as the river battle escalates in the second half of the battle. The battle also becomes increasingly Lucanian, as bodies stack up quickly with no room to fall, and Silius punctuates the end of the land battle with a long necrologue describing the death of Allius, a fate which, like the beginning of Ticinus, reminds us of Lucan's Catus in *BC* 3.

#### **Chapter 4: Trebia, part II**

The second half of the battle becomes increasingly hyperbolic, eventually culminating in a *mache parapotamios* between Scipio's father and the now fully personified Eridanus (Po) river. Homer and the river battle between Achilles and Scamander in *Iliad* 21 is a foundational source, but this passage is also in close contact with Silius' contemporary Statius, who included a river battle between Hippomedon and the river Ismenus in *Thebaid* 9. The audience is primed for this Statian context at the beginning of the river section of the battle, when a certain Fibrenus defeats an elephant that charges into the river, a death which closely mirrors Hippomedon's fate. Discussions of primacy (who is imitating whom?) are important but not essential; the connection is clear, whether Silius responded to Statius or Statius to Silius. Finally, as the river threatens to overwhelm Scipio's father, Vulcan intervenes and burns the river into submission. The *mache parapotamios* is a fitting climax to the final chapter of this dissertation; Silius ends the battles of

*Punica* 4 with a lofty tone, setting his Roman hero against a god of nature, all the while moving freely through a plethora of ancient and contemporary sources.

Chapter 4 ends with a brief look at the epilogue to the battle of Trebia (*Pun.* 4. 703 – 21), examining how Silius prepares to transition from Trebia to Trasimene and foreshadows worse defeats for the Romans. Gaius Flaminius is introduced in language that strongly reinforces the theme of the enemy within (*Pun.* 4. 708: *genitum ad fatalia damna*) and compared in a simile to an untrained captain at sea. This ominous ship of state metaphor condemns the Roman lack of leadership, but Flaminius' status as *nescius* also puts him in comparison with Hannibal, who only a few lines earlier was described using the same word (*Pun.* 4. 702); Silius denigrates Flaminius but is also keen to remind us that Hannibal himself is equally deceived. Finally, the battle narrative of *Punica* 4, which began at *Pun.* 4. 131, comes to an end with the description of the Roman troops moving into Etruria. These final lines, focusing on the mixed blood of the Italian peoples (*Pun.* 4. 720: *iunctosque a sanguine avorum* – note also the elisions – ; *Pun.* 4. 721: *permixta stirpe*), end this section of the poem with a subtle invocation of the Italian unity that, though it will bend, will not break to Hannibal's invasion. Book 4 continues for another 100 lines (*Pun.* 4. 722 – 829), when Hannibal crosses the Apennines and refuses an order to sacrifice his son, an interesting and worthwhile interlude but one which falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

## Chapter 1:

### Caedemque accepit ab hoste: The Battle of Ticinus, Part I

*“There are undoubtedly long stretches in the poem which no modern reader can enjoy. Silius gives ample space, too ample, to the six great battles of the war – Ticinus, Trebia, Lake Trasimene, Cannae, the Metaurus, and Zama; and the details of slaughter become in him, as they become in better poets, monotonous and repulsive”*

J. D. Duff, 1934.<sup>89</sup>

#### 1.1.0: Ticinus in History

The battle of Ticinus, which occurred in November of 218 BC, is described in Livy (*AUC* 21.40 – 46) and Polybius (3. 64 – 65). Both authors include the speeches of Scipio Maior<sup>90</sup> and Hannibal, with Livy’s being more expansive than Polybius’. Silius reverses the order of the speeches in Livy and Polybius, with Hannibal’s short speech (*Pun.* 4. 56 – 66) followed by Scipio Maior’s (*Pun.* 4. 67 – 80). Unlike Polybius, both Livy and Silius include a description of the pre-battle omens, though Livy does not mention Silius’ portent of the hawk, doves, and eagle

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<sup>89</sup> From the introduction to Duff’s *Loeb*, still the most recent full translation.

<sup>90</sup> A word on my own nomenclature: I refer to Scipio Africanus’ father (Publius Cornelius Scipio, *cos.* 218) as ‘Scipio Maior’ throughout the dissertation to distinguish him from Scipio Africanus, whom I normally call just ‘Scipio,’ since he only received the agnomen ‘Africanus’ after the war was over. This is a distinction only useful within my text, to avoid the constant workaround of ‘Scipio’s father,’ or the even more awkward double possessive (e.g. ‘Scipio’s father’s duel,’ or ‘Scipio’s father’s exploits,’ etc.), and should not be confused with ‘Scipio Maior,’ the name used to distinguish between Scipio Africanus and his adopted grandson Scipio Africanus ‘the Younger’ (*cos.* 147 and 134 BC).

(*Pun.* 4. 101 – 119), instead listing a wolf entering the camp and a swarm of bees over the general's tent; Silius' omen is positive and alludes to Scipio Africanus' ascension after years of difficult war, while Livy's only anticipates the upcoming loss. Instead, Silius references the omen seen by Lucumo, the future Tarquinius Priscus, at *AUC* 1.34.8, and the omen that appeared to Jupiter before the battle with the Titans.<sup>91</sup>

The battle itself takes up only about one page in a modern edition of Livy (*AUC* 21.46.3-10) and a similarly small amount of space in Polybius (3.65.4-11), to be compared with Silius' hyper-epic 250 or so lines (*Pun.* 4. 131 – 479). Livy describes the battle of Ticinus as a brief, unexpected skirmish that occurred as some of Hannibal's troops ran into Scipio's troops while reconnoitering the area around the Ticinus river. Both Livy and Polybius mention the unusually dense cloud of dust (*AUC* 21.46: *densior deinde incessu tot hominum equorum oriens pulvis signum propinquantium hostium fuit* and Polyb. 3. 65.5: ἄμα δὲ τῷ πλησιάζειν αὐτοῖς καὶ συνιδεῖν τὸν κονιορτὸν ἐξαιρόμενον, εὐθέως συνετάπτοντο πρὸς μάχην). A cavalry battle breaks out, with Hannibal's Numidian skirmishers outflanking the Roman forces and bringing about a quick rout. Both Livy and Polybius comment on the clear superiority of the Carthaginian cavalry and the Romans' need to offer battle in more favorable conditions.

Livy, but not Polybius,<sup>92</sup> speaks briefly of the rescue of Scipio Maior by his son, an episode of great importance in the Silian narrative (*Pun.* 4. 401 – 79). Livy tells of an alternative tradition, one preserved by Coelius, that the consul's life was saved by a Ligurian slave (*AUC* 21.46.10: *servati consulis decus Coelius ad servum natione Ligurem delegate*), though he himself prefers the version with Scipio's son. Silius well exploits the heroic aspects of Livy's choice and uses this moment to mark the beginning of Scipio Africanus' journey. Both authors'

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<sup>91</sup> See Fucecchi 1993: 22 and Marks 2004: 165 – 169 for a closer look at the Ticinus omen.

<sup>92</sup> Polybius knew the story and describes it at 10.3 when going over the character of Scipio.

account of Scipio Maior's rescue comes at the end of the Ticinus battle narrative, although Silius' narrative continues almost directly into Trebia, causing the Scipionic intervention to appear more at the middle of the battle narrative, to be mirrored at the end of Trebia with Scipio Maior's Achillean *mache parapotamios*. Valerius Maximus preserves the same story at *FDM* 5.4.2.

The battle of Ticinus, as Jessica Clark writes, "looms large in the histories of Polybius and Livy as the first contest between Hannibal and Rome," and, as such, "bears a greater narrative burden than is merited by its minimal strategic significance."<sup>93</sup> Livy's account, she also notes, adds a "palliative coda" at the end of what is a clear defeat. Clark contrasts the three depictions the battle of Ticinus, in Livy 21.46, Polybius 3.65, and recounted by Coelius Laelius to Polybius at 10.3; Polybius' is focused and swift, Coelius' balances the Roman defeat with a surprising moment of heroism, while Livy's uses the rescue to foreshadow the brilliance of Rome's future savior, masking the shame of defeat with an allusion to the Romans' future victory.<sup>94</sup>

### 1.1.1: Structure and Interpretation

The battle of the Ticinus river spans some 350 lines of Book 4 of the *Punica* (4.120-479), from the first spear thrown by the Carthaginian seer Bogus, and the immediately following death of the Roman soldier Catus, to the words of Mars to Scipio after the rescue of his injured father. It consists of all the expected and traditional features of an epic battle: a pre-battle phase consisting of maneuvering, generals' speeches, and omens, followed by a general melee

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<sup>93</sup> Clark 2014: 53.

<sup>94</sup> Clark 2014: 55.

punctuated with *aristeiai*, duels and necrologues,<sup>95</sup> and divine interventions, until finally the darkness of night forces the end of combat. Niemann 1975 gives the best (and virtually only) full account of the structure of this particular battle, to which I will adhere with few changes, as follows:<sup>96</sup>

1. **The preparatory phase** ('Vorbereitungsphase'): 4. 56-142.

This phase consists of an idyllic description of the river Ticinus, the speeches of Scipio's father and Hannibal, as well as the omen of the hawk, doves, and eagle and its interpretation by each side.

2. **Battle, phase 1:** 4. 143-310.

The battle itself is divided into two clearly delineated halves. The first begins with the initial spear-throw by Bogus, and is marked by the combat between the Romans and the Carthaginians' Gallic allies led by Crixus. The Carthaginians are conspicuously absent. The *aristeia* of Crixus (in three parts) is followed by that of Scipio's father (also in three parts), who later slays the Gallic chieftain in a duel. A long simile describing a hunter's use of fire on the mountainside closes the scene. The encounter between Bogus and Catus will be an important focus of this chapter. Niemann also marks two important intermediary scenes ('Zwischenszene'), the death of Tyrrhenus ('die Tyrrhenus-Episode') and the death of Quirinius, which will be examined equally closely. This phase will be the focus of chapter one.

3. **Battle, phase 2:** 4. 311-479.

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<sup>95</sup> See pg. 7 for a list of type scenes including 'necrologues.'

<sup>96</sup> Niemann 1975: 37-61.

This phase is marked by the arrival of the Carthaginians, led by Mago and Hannibal. Hannibal is given a short *aristeia* (again in three parts), which is followed by the complex combat between two groups of triplets ('Die Drillingsbrüdergruppe'). Scipio's father attempts to rally the Roman troops, Jupiter sends Mars from Olympus, Scipio's father is wounded, and Scipio himself is inspired by Mars to save him. This phase, broken into four subdivisions, will be the focus of chapter 2. The arrival of darkness signals the end of the battle and the transition towards Trebia, which will be the subject of chapter 3.

Niemann concludes that, despite the nearly overwhelming amount of detail and variety, there is a cohesive underlying structure to Silius' battle of the Ticinus river.<sup>97</sup> Niemann does a superb job delineating the macro-structure of Silius' battle techniques; there is, he concludes, a method to Silius' madness.

Moving from larger scale observations to smaller episodes, several scenes of this battle have already received at least some attention in the last few decades, including the bird omen and competing interpretations (Ripoll 2002; Marks 2005b: 163-169; Lovatt 2013: 65-8) and most especially Scipio's rescue of his father and the following prophecy of Mars (Marks 2005b: 115-22; Tipping 2010: 147-50). These are undoubtedly significant scenes which deserve extended looks, but these are only bookends to the battle itself; the meat of the combat continues to be passed over or taken only very briefly. For instance, the death of Catus has been recognized by several authors for its thematic importance – yet no author has actually given a close reading of the text itself, a reading which will reveal many significant parallels to Vergil and beyond.

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<sup>97</sup> Niemann 1975: 77-8.

The battle of Ticinus and the other battles in the *Punica* include a complexity of details, ideas, allusions, puns, similes, and a variety of deaths that borders on demoralizing. A study of the battle in its entirety, aiming to include or touch upon the full breadth of ideas, risks losing focus and becoming merely an exercise in list-making. More useful, I think, is a study of the major moments of the battle, the deaths around which Silius structures the conflict. There are, of course, numerous deaths listed one after the other in the various *aristeiai* of the battle – certainly worthy of their own study – but there are also several more prominent deaths, some of which Niemann has called ‘Zwischenszene.’ These slightly longer and more descriptive deaths, sometimes called necrologues, occur at important turning points in the battle and often showcase themes crucial to the battle and the poem in its entirety. A major goal of this chapter – and the dissertation as a whole –, therefore, is to examine these deaths on the *Punica*’s battlefield, wading into an area of the poem which has not yet received the attention it deserves. These important ‘minor’ deaths include the first Roman combat death, Catus, Tyrrhenus the trumpeter, the decapitation of Quirinius, and finally the death of the Gallic chieftain Crixus. It will be revealed that within these short descriptions is a world of inter- and intratextuality, as Silius weaves together moments from his epic predecessors, develops and expands the major themes of the poem, and anticipates important future episodes in his own poem. These short, descriptive scenes become anchor points within the chaos of the battles, marking important beginnings, climaxes, and transitions. This is the allusive battlefield, in which Silius embraces epic and history, compressing Roman past and future into a microcosmic conflict. Let us now start at the very beginning, the actual first event of the battle – not the preparatory phase, no omens or prophecies, however intriguing they may be – but the very first action of combat and the subsequent first death in battle.

1.2.1: The Death of Catus (*Pun.* 4. 131 – 142)

The death of Catus and its significance to the battle and the poem as a whole has not entirely escaped the notice of scholars. Raymond Marks in particular notes the importance of Catus' death several times, arguing that "as the first Roman death in the war and as a self-destructive act, Catus' demise foreshadows Rome's self-destructive defeats to follow in Books 4-10."<sup>98</sup> He also connects Catus to the soldier of the same name in Lucan's battle of Massilia (*BC* 3.538-762), an important link which further colors the passage with civil-war tones and one which I aim to explore in greater depth. Marks' thematic interpretation is very convincing, but at no time does he examine the passage in detail (the scene is not quoted, and the entire discussion takes less than a page). A close examination of the death of Catus at the beginning of the battle of Ticinus and its many intriguing verbal and thematic parallels will do much to complement and extend Marks' interpretation and our own understanding of the battle.

When the battle begins at 4. 134, much weight is given to the first spear thrown by the Carthaginian seer Bogus and the all too avoidable death of the Roman soldier Catus. This episode opens the battle in a clearly programmatic way and is a wonderful example of the range and depth of Silius' style. No shallow detail added merely for the sake of variety, the death of Catus is a thoroughly researched and highly intertextual scene, touching on important moments in Vergil and Lucan and anticipating a mirror-death at the upcoming battle of Trasimene.

Tum dictis comitem contorquet **primus in hostes**,  
 ceu suadente deo et fatorum conscius, hastam.      135  
 illa volans patuli longe per inania campi  
 ictum perdiderat spatio, ni, fusus habenas,  
 dum **primae** decus affectat decerpere pugnae,  
 obvia quadrupedis praeceps **Catus** ora tulisset.  
 sic elanguescens ac iam casura, petitum      140

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<sup>98</sup> Marks 2010: 133.

invenit vulnus caedemque accepit ab hoste  
 cornus et oblatae stetit inter tempora frontis.  
 (*Pun.* 4.134-142)

[Then, to suit his words, he hurled the first spear against the foe, as if prompted by heaven and aware of coming events. The weapon flew far over the empty space of the spreading level expanse, and distance would have robbed it of its effect, but for the desire of Catus to reap glory in the first battle. He galloped forward with loosened rein and drove his horse's head to meet it; and so the spear, when flagging in its course and ready to fall, found the mark it sought and received from the enemy power to kill; it lodged between the temples of the brow that courted death.]<sup>99</sup>

The ceremonial throwing of a spear is a traditional aspect of war declaration.<sup>100</sup> The first death in battle is likewise an important moment in epic combat and one especially ripe for a generalizing statement or interpretive observation about the battle or the war. Catus is depicted as a Protesilaus figure, whose death was fated to inaugurate a long and bloody conflict.<sup>101</sup> This frames the Second Punic War as another Trojan War (not unlike Vergil's more overt phrasing at *Aen.* 6. 86 – 94 (*alius ... Achilles*, etc.)), yet reverses the Trojan and Greek roles; Protesilaus was an invading Greek, while Catus is a defensive Roman.

Marks, as noted above, discusses the thematic significance of Catus' death to the rest of the poem – especially the upcoming defeats – but pursues no verbal parallels. Silius describes a futile, self-inflicted, and avoidable death with a pointed counterfactual: the distance *would have* consumed the spear's strength (*ictum perdiderat spatio*), *had not* Catus brought himself in the

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<sup>99</sup> Translations of Silius are from Duff 1934, lightly adapted.

<sup>100</sup> Servius in *Aen.* 9. 52 (*principium pugnae*), cited by Shearin 2015: 86-8, describes how the *pater patratus* would declare war by throwing a spear (*fetiales hastam mittebant*). Marks 2005b: n. 15 discusses the ritual vis a vis the death of Catus in *Pun.* 4.

<sup>101</sup> Protesilaus leaps to mind, whose brief role as the first death at Troy led to the establishment of a hero cult and became the topic of numerous poems (e.g. Catullus 68 and *Heroides* 13). He may have also been a surrogate for Achilles, standing in for and preventing his death; see Boedeker 1988: 36 – 7 for an interesting summary.

way (*obvia ... Catus ora tulisset*). *Caedemque accepit ab hoste* is a striking paradox, rephrasing Catus' death as a willing offering, one which the spear readily accepts.

Catus' desire for glory resulted in an entirely unnecessary death, an observation which can easily be applied to the many Roman defeats of the first half of the poem when over-eager Roman generals meet disaster after avoidable disaster. The scene as a whole highlights the counterfactual nature of the first half of the poem: Rome *would have* fallen *had not* Scipio defeated the Carthaginians. The readers (ancient and modern) know that Rome will defeat the Carthaginians, yet for the first 10 books Rome's destruction hangs over the narrative as an ever-present threat. By opening the battle in this way, Silius shows us that the defeats of the first half of the epic will be marked by this 'poetics of contingency'; only in the second half of the poem does the outcome finally become clear. Just as the counterfactual language in the death of Catus points to alternate contingencies, the depiction of Bogus and Catus comprises several different sources. With this in mind, I would like to read the death of Catus using four points of comparison: Turnus' unsuccessful spear-throw at *Aen.* 9. 47-57, Tolumnius' false prophecy (and spear-throw) at *Aen.* 12. 257-276, Turnus' famous (and famously unsuccessful) stone-throw at *Aen.* 12. 896-907. and, finally, the death of Catus' namesake at Lucan *BC* 3. 583-91.

#### 1.2.2: Turnus at the Gates (*Aen.* 9. 47 – 57 and *Pun.* 12. 558 – 586)

The scene of Catus' death recalls several important throws in the *Aeneid*, the first being when Turnus raises an attack against the Trojan camp in *Aeneid* 9:

Turnus, ut ante **volans** tardum praecesserat agmen,  
 viginti lectis equitum **comitatus** et urbi  
 improvisus adest, maculis quem Thracius albis  
 portat equus cristaque tegit galea aurea rubra.           50  
 ecquis erit mecum, iuvenes, qui **primus in hostem**- ?  
 en,' ait et iaculum **attorquens** emittit in auras,

**principium pugnae**, et **campo** sese arduus infert.  
 clamore excipunt socii fremituque sequuntur  
 horrissono; Teucrum mirantur inertia corda, 55  
 non aequo dare se campo, **non obvia ferre**  
 arma viros, sed castra fovere.

(*Aen.* 9. 47 – 57)

[But Turnus had hurried forward in advance of his tardy column, with a following of twenty chosen horse, and reaches the city sooner than expected: a Thracian steed, spotted with white, bears him, and a golden helmet with crimson crest guards his head. “Men, is there anyone who with me will be first against the foe? See!” he cries, and whirling a javelin sends it skyward to start the battle and advances proudly over the level expanse. His comrades greet him with a shout, and follow with dreadful din; they marvel at the Trojans’ craven hearts, crying: “They cannot trust themselves to a fair field, or face the foe in arms, but hug the camp.”]<sup>102</sup>

There are several immediate parallels to the scene of Catus’ death: *primus in hostem* is very clear, but *principium pugnae* also seems to be picked up by Silius’ *primordia cladis* in 4.55. As he often does, Silius alludes strongly to a core group of lines (51-53) but also adds a sprinkle of verbal parallels from the surrounding lines, sometimes in a different context but nonetheless clear markers. So, Bogus’ spear ‘flies’ (*volans*) over the empty field in *Pun.* 4.136 just as Turnus’ ‘flies’ (*volans*) in front of the battle line at *Aen.* 9.47; Turnus is ‘accompanied’ (*comitatus*) by his picked companions, while Bogus throws his spear as a ‘companion’ (*comitem*) to his words. Likewise, Vergil remarks that none of the Trojans would bear their arms ‘against’ (*obvia*) the Italians, while Catus pointedly *does* bring himself ‘in the way’ (*obvia*) of the spear. None of these parallels are especially strong on their own, but when taken together with the much stronger correspondences at *Aen.* 9.51-53 the result is quite clear: the ‘weaker’ allusions on

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<sup>102</sup> Translations of Vergil are the *Loeb* (trans. Fairclough), lightly adapted.

the borders of the passage strengthen the stronger ones at its core, creating a “collective security.”<sup>103</sup>

In addition to strong verbal resonances, there are several important thematic contrasts between the two spear-throwing scenes. Despite Turnus’ enthusiasm, his spear has no effect and neither strikes an enemy nor goads them into battle; the Trojans are safely behind the walls of their camp, as Aeneas had instructed, and, despite their eagerness to fight and the shame of a defensive posture, no one advances to receive the blow offered by Turnus.<sup>104</sup> In other words, the Trojans resist the traditional aristocratic desire for glory, the same urge that proves so fatally irresistible for the Romans of the *Punica*; Silius’ Romans have forgotten the *exemplum* of this scene. The battle of Trebia also starts in the same way, with Hannibal goading the Romans out from their defensive position.<sup>105</sup> The Romans, it seems, will need to learn this lesson several times. Through Catus’ death, Silius shows that it is the time to embrace a patient defense and eschew any inevitably futile offensive strategy. Just as the invading Trojans in the *Aeneid*, who play defense until a worthy leader arrives, Silius’ Romans will need to implement a defensive strategy while they await the great offensive leaders of the second half of the poem, Marcellus, Nero, and, most especially, Scipio Africanus. Silius offers us an alternate history of sorts: Ticinus and Trebia become the battle that never happened in *Aen.* 9, the result of the Trojans fighting Turnus without the presence of Aeneas. This allusion thus ramps up the stakes for Silius’ Romans at Ticinus and the following battles as they experience a bizarre recreation of *Aeneid* 9 – 12 in which Turnus and the Italians prevail.

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<sup>103</sup> Hinds 1998: 28 – 9.

<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, at *Pun.* 4. 39 Hannibal is described as keeping his army within a camp in very similar language: *sed Libyae ductor tuto fovet agmina vallo.*

<sup>105</sup> *Pun.* 4. 510 – 514.

Bogus' spear-throw at the opening of the Ticinus looks back to Turnus in *Aen.* 9 but also anticipates Hannibal's failed attack on Rome in *Pun.* 12.559-685 – a similarity Nicholas Horsfall has noted.<sup>106</sup> The attack on Rome is, much like the death of Achilles in the *Iliad*, constantly alluded to in the *Punica* but never fulfilled; Saguntum, Capua, Naples, and Nola, all operate as surrogates for a never-besieged Rome. Bogus' spear throw, in reference to Turnus' spear throw in *Aen.* 9, thus follows through with an allusion already hinted at by Vergil. "One might even suggest," Horsfall concludes, "that Silius is aware of the relationship between the stories of Hannibal in 211 BC and Turnus in *Aeneid* 9 and that this awareness influences the characterization of Hannibal in *Punica* 12."<sup>107</sup> The spear throw of Bogus at the beginning of Ticinus, successful as it might have been, alludes to Turnus' two failed throws in *Aen.* 9 and 12 and looks ahead to Hannibal's final, most significant, failure in *Pun.* 12. In this way, Silius describes Carthaginian success at the beginning of the *Punica* using the language of failure from Vergil's depiction of Turnus.

As is common in the first half of the poem, each side takes on two simultaneous, and sometimes paradoxical, roles: the Carthaginians, as the invading force, seem at first to represent the Trojans of the *Aeneid*, but at other times, as in this example, they are closer to the Italians led by Turnus.<sup>108</sup> Conversely, the Romans of the *Punica* can appear as the besieged Trojans of the *Aeneid* and at other times as the native Italians defending their homeland from foreign invaders, as they will most especially in Book 7.<sup>109</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that the

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<sup>106</sup> Horsfall (1974: 80): "... the opening of *Aeneid* 9 is consciously reminiscent of a particular attack on a particular city – Hannibal's assault on Rome in 221."

<sup>107</sup> Horsfall (1974: 86).

<sup>108</sup> The Italians in the *Aeneid* also display this paradoxical nature: they are the defenders, but begin the war on the offense. For more on the fluidity of the roles played by the Romans and Carthaginians, see Marks 2010, who discusses the two sides as switching between the Pompeians and Caesarians of Lucan.

<sup>109</sup> See Littlewood 2011: xxxviii – xliv for more on Silius' portrayal of an Italy under siege.

invaders are coming from Carthage, as were the Trojans in the *Aeneid*, and the defenders, formerly those same Trojan invaders, are now the ‘native’ Italians. Finally, Carthage, such a vehement enemy of Rome in the Punic wars, will be by Silius’ time completely integrated into the imperial system. This rather confused depiction mirrors the confusion of Roman identity in the first half of the poem. For now, the Romans have lessons to learn and the futile and avoidable death of Catus will be repeated thousands of times during the next few books. The death of Catus at the beginning of Ticinus is a wonderful example of Silian intertextuality. Representative of the self-destructive strategy which the Romans pursue for the first half of the poem and anticipating Carthaginian failure in the second through subtle allusions to Vergil’s Turnus, Catus is much more than just an invented character with a stylized death.

### 1.2.3: Tolumnius and Bogus (*Aen.* 12. 257 – 276)

As Bogus hurls this fateful, fatal first spear, he is notably described as *consciis fatorum*, yet it is not long before he learns just how unfounded his confidence as a seer is:

ante omnes iaculo tacitas fallente per auras  
 occumbit Bogus, infaustum qui primus ad amnem  
 Ticini rapidam in Rutulos contorserat hastam.  
 ille sibi longam Clotho turbamque nepotum  
 crediderat, vanis deceptus in alite signis.     405  
 sed non augurio Parcarum impellere metas  
 concessum cuique: ruit inter tela cruentis  
 suspiciens oculis caelum superosque reposcit  
 tempora promissae media iam morte senectae.  
 (*Pun.* 5. 401 – 409)

[Bogus was the first to fall, by a javelin that came stealing noiselessly through the sky. He had launched the first flying spear against the Romans by the ill-omened river of Ticinus. Beguiled by deceitful omens from birds, he had believed that he would live long and see many children of his children. But no man may postpone by augury the date that Fate has fixed. He fell in battle,

looking up to heaven with blood-shot eyes, and calling upon the gods, even as he died, to redeem their promise of old age.]

When the seer meets his death at the battle of Trasimene (the presence of Bogus at both Ticinus and Trasimene further strengthens the link between the two battles) there is a cluster of ‘fate’ language as he is exposed to be not *consciuis* but *inscius fatorum*.<sup>110</sup> Bogus’ lack of knowledge is highlighted by his death via a deceptive spear (*iaculo fallente*) and status as *deceptus*. He cannot avoid his fate (this time *Parcarum* rather than *fatorum*). The seer, so confident in his abilities at Ticinus, is eventually cut down by an unseen spear, undercutting the prophetic skill which he claimed at the opening of the Ticinus (*Pun. 4. 131: contra laeta Bogus Tyrio canit omina regi*). Lovatt comments that “in the world of Flavian epic, the more theatrical the prophecy, the better it becomes.” In other words, the simplicity of Bogus’ statements before the battle of Ticinus in Book 4 is a sign of a deceptive interpretation, especially when contrasted with the more detailed and less confident (and all the more accurate) interpretation of Liger which immediately preceded it.

Bogus’ interpretation of the bird omen at the beginning of Ticinus is false in several ways. First and foremost, the Carthaginians, as a matter of historical circumstance, will ultimately lose the war. In the short term he is seemingly on the money, since the Carthaginians will soon achieve many quite significant victories. However, the immediate positive feedback he receives through the killing of Catus ‘as if the gods were urging’ (*ceu suadente deo*) is diluted by the active role Catus takes in his own death. It seems at first, to Bogus at least, that Catus’ death is a sign of the gods favor, but the reader sees this as yet another misinterpretation. It is not Bogus’ skill, either in spear-throwing or prophecy, that kills Catus but Catus’ (and by extension

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<sup>110</sup> Not unlike Dido at *Aen. 1.718-19: inscia Dido / insidat quantus miserae deus*.

the Romans’) own urge towards self-destruction.<sup>111</sup> The contrafactual nature of the scene negates both conditionals: Catus *would have* lived if he had not brought himself in the way of the spear (he did), and Bogus throws his spear *as if* the gods were urging (they are not). Cowan, citing Morson, refers to this as ‘sideshadowing,’ when “two or more alternative presents, the actual and the possible, are made simultaneously visible.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, both the spear missing and hitting, and the gods helping and hindering, are given equal weight. The entire narrative tension of the *Punica*’s first half rests upon this idea, that Silius and his readers (and we moderns) know that the Romans will win and continue on to forge a great empire – but what if they didn’t?

Misinterpreted omens followed by a spear-cast easily remind the reader of Tolumnius in *Aen.* 12 who also misunderstands a bird omen prior to a battle, hurls a symbolic first spear, and then later dies.

tum vero augurium Rutuli clamore salutant  
 expediuntque manus, **primusque Tolumnius augur**  
 ‘hoc erat, hoc votis’ inquit ‘quod saepe petivi.  
**accipio agnoscoque** deos; me, me duce ferrum  
 corripite, o miseri, quos improbus advena bello 260  
 territat invalidas ut avis, et litora vestra  
 vi populat. petet ille fugam penitusque profundo  
 vela dabit. vos unanimi densete catervas  
 et regem vobis pugna defendite raptum.’  
 dixit, et adversos **telum contorsit in hostis** 265  
 procurrens ; sonitum dat stridula cornus et auras  
 certa secat. simul hoc, simul ingens clamor et omnes  
 turbati cunei calefactaque corda tumultu.  
**hasta volans, ut forte** novem pulcherrima fratrum  
 corpora **constiterant contra** ... 270  
 (*Aen.* 12.256-71)

[Then in truth the Rutulians hail the omen with a cheer and spread out their hands. And first of all Tolumnius the augur cries: “This it

<sup>111</sup> Lovatt 2013: 67 relates this to the Ascanius – Numanus Remulus episode in *Aen.* 9: “Catus, who runs forward to meet Bogus’ spear, takes the active role in embracing death, so that Bogus’ spear-throw does not validate his words in the same way that Ascanius’ arrow answers Numanus Remulus’ insult.”

<sup>112</sup> Cowan 2010: 323, citing Morson 1994:118.

was, this, that my prayers have often sought! I accept it, I acknowledge the gods. With me, me, at your head, snatch up the sword, hapless people, whom, like frail birds, a shameless foreigner affrights with war, and violently ravages your coasts. He too will take to flight, and spread sail far across the deep. With on accord close up your ranks, and in battle defend the king who has been snatched from you!” He spoke, and, darting forward, hurled his spear full against the foe; the whistling cornel shaft sings, and splits the air, unerring. At this deed, at once rises a mighty shout, the crowds are all confusion, and their hearts hot with turmoil. The spear flew on where, as it chanced, nine brothers of fine stature stood in its path ...]

The likeness is clear, despite fewer verbal parallels, to Bogus’ spear-throw in *Pun.* 4: the omen is (mis)interpreted, the spear flies through the air, and strikes and kills a target. Unlike Turnus in Book 9, Tolumnius and Bogus both score a hit with their throw. However, like Bogus’ throw, the poet specifically describes the factors of the hit as not involving the thrower’s skill; Tolumnius hits ‘by chance’ (*forte*) because the brother happened to stand in its way (*constiterant contra*), obliquely alluded to by Silius with *obvia ... tulisset* at *Pun.* 4. 139. Vergil’s *contorsit* (rather than Turnus’ *attorquens* at *Aen.* 9. 52) lines up even more closely with Silius’ *contorquet* at *Pun.* 4. 134. Tolumnius is also a ‘first’, described as *primus Tolumnius augur* and, during the scene of his death, as *primus in adversos telum qui torserat hostis*. This epitaph echoes the language that Vergil employs for Turnus’ spear-throw in *Aen.* Book 9 and which Silius uses in *Pun.* 4. Anderson argues that this omen is purposely deceptive, “calculated to exploit Italian passions” and return Turnus to their favor.<sup>113</sup> Both Tolumnius and Bogus are described as augurs who misinterpret an important bird omen, both throw the ceremonial first spear against the enemy, and both receive very similar epitaphs as they die in battle. Comparisons between Bogus and

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<sup>113</sup> Anderson 1971: 53. He continues, writing that “nowhere in the poetic context does Vergil lend support to the prejudicial image of Aeneas as wild eagle swooping down on a helpless flock of swans and seizing their leader. It is all in the warped feelings of the Italians (55).

Tolumnius lend credence to the idea that Ticinus is the ‘first’ battle *and* a renewal of an already simmering conflict, since it was Tolumnius whose spear broke the truce in *Aeneid* 12.<sup>114</sup> The battle of Ticinus can therefore be read simultaneously as the first battle of the epic, the renewal of the hostilities of the first Punic war (just as Tolumnius renews the war in *Aen.* 12), and as the beginning of the end, since Tolumnius’ spear-throw sets into motion the chain of events which leads to the death of Turnus and the end of the *Aeneid*.

The link between Turnus, Bogus and Tolumnius is made even clearer by the fact that Turnus also misinterprets an omen not prior to but just after his spear throw at *Aen.* 9. 47-57. After being refused battle by the Trojans, Turnus and the Rutulians turn their wrath towards the fleet, which they intend to burn. Just before they can do that, however, that Great Mother transforms the ships into nymphs which swim away into the sea (*Aen.* 9. 107-122). Turnus misinterprets this omen as favorable to his cause (*Aen.* 9. 128: *Troianos haec monstra petunt*) and boasts that he fears no omens (*Aen.* 9. 133: *nil me fatalia terrent*). The failure to correctly interpret an omen (or, perhaps, the failure to see through a purposely deceptive omen) before a battle is a matter addressed rather specifically in Roman religion. As Phillips notes in his discussion of this passage, the punishment for such a failure is death and falls only upon the leader who made the mistake.<sup>115</sup> In this way, a religious interpretation transforms the scene from a temporary mistake or character flaw into a forecast of Turnus’ looming death, and the same is true in miniature for Bogus and Tolumnius.

Finally, let us return to a matter of identity. When Bogus dies at *Pun.* 5. 401 – 409, he is described as having first thrown a spear against the ‘Rutulians’ (*ad Rutulos*) – here meaning ‘the

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<sup>114</sup> Stocks 2014: 83 comments on Silius’ fixation with mid-points, citing the *sed medio finem bello* at *Pun.* 1. 12; Bernstein 2017 also comments on how Silius begins the war as if *in medias res*

<sup>115</sup> Phillips 1997: 50-2.

Romans'. Tolumnius, on the other hand, is a member of the *Rutuli* at *Aen.* 9. 257, who are of course Turnus' people and the Trojan proto-Romans' primary enemy in the *Aeneid*. In the *Punica* these identities have been switched; the Rutulians of Vergil's *Aeneid* have been assimilated into the Trojan/Roman world, just as predicted in the *Aeneid* and just as Carthage will have been by Silius' time, further highlighting the futility of both Bogus' and Tolumnius' resistance. Bogus, a stand-in for Tolumnius, and so Turnus and the Rutulians, throws a disastrous and ill-informed spear that only hurts his own people and seals his upcoming death. So, in a delightfully complex case of *oppositio in imitando*, Vergil has his Rutulian defender (Tolumnius) attack the invading Trojans (the future Romans), while Silius has his Rutulian-flavored invader (Bogus) attack the 'Rutulian' defenders (the Romans).

1.2.4: Turnus's Stone and the Failure of the Carthaginian's Epic Predecessors (*Aen.* 12. 896 – 907)

Bogus' spear flies 'far over the empty space of the field' and this phrase (*longe per inania campi*) evokes yet another crucial turning point in the *Aeneid*, this time at the very end of the poem when Turnus throws his famous stone:

genua labant, gelidus concrevit frigore sanguis.  
tum lapis ipse viri **vacuum per inane** volutus  
nec **spatium** evasit totum neque pertulit **ictum**

[His knees buckle, his blood is frozen cold. The very stone,  
whirled by the hero through the empty air, did not traverse the  
whole distance, nor drive home its blow.

(*Aen.* 12. 905 – 7)

Again, Silius contrasts a successful attack in the *Punica* with the frustrated actions of Turnus in the *Aeneid*. This final attack, which fails so pathetically, directly precedes the death of Turnus at

the end of the *Aeneid* and so, perhaps, anticipates the death of Bogus as briefly discussed above. The death of Catus can be viewed as a counterfactual outcome of the final Turnus/Aeneas encounter revealing the timeline that would have been created if Turnus' rock had connected. Bogus becomes a triumphant Turnus, whose rock *does* connect, and Catus becomes a tragic Aeneas whose death will usher in the destruction of Roman/Trojan forces. Turnus' final hurrah does not connect 'by chance,' as Tolumnius' does, nor was it 'about to fail'; this missile was doomed from the beginning and Aeneas does not obstruct the course of fate. By placing the end of the *Aeneid* at the beginning of the first battle of the *Punica*, Silius even more clearly establishes his epic as a continuation or sequel to the *Aeneid*.<sup>116</sup> In this way, the throw of Bogus and the death of Catus alludes simultaneously to several linked episodes in the *Aeneid*, all forecasting the final failure and death of Turnus. A hint of future failure is mixed in with the success of Bogus and the Carthaginians at the opening of the war. They may be victorious now, but consistent allusions to their failed predecessors remind us that this victory will only be temporary. They are never too far, Silius reminds us, from reliving the fate of Turnus and the Italians of the *Aeneid*, as we know they historically, inevitably, will.

#### 1.2.5: The Death of Catus in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* (BC 3. 585-91)

In a series of discussions in books and articles on Silius and Lucan, Raymond Marks quite correctly connects the death of Catus at *Pun.* 4. 131-42 with the death of another Catus in Lucan during the battle of Massilia at *BC* 3. 585-91.<sup>117</sup> His comments are astute, especially

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<sup>116</sup> "Imperial Latin epic takes to an extreme the innate tendency of the genre towards the expansive and the comprehensive; yet it does not escape from the contrary pulls towards continuation and repetition that deny to even the most arrogantly hyperbolic epic the possibility of making a final and all-inclusive statement" (Hardie 1993: 11). Silius' epic, occupying the 'middle' space both between the *Aeneid* and *Bellum Civile* and between the first and final Punic wars, especially oscillates between these two poles.

<sup>117</sup> Marks 2005a: 16-17, Marks 2005b: 130-31, and Marks 2010: 133.

concerning self-destruction and the ritual of *devotio*, but he includes only a very slight reading of Catus in Silius and Lucan, essentially only connecting the two by name. Keeping in mind the aspects of Silius' style I noted at the beginning of the chapter, as well as the four examples included above, let us now compare Catus in Silius and Lucan to see if there is more to the connection than just name and fate.

In book three of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Caesar and his troops have just begun the siege and blockade of the Greek city of Massilia. With his characteristic impatience, Caesar leaves for Spain and leaves his (unnamed) generals in charge.<sup>118</sup> After an unsuccessful nocturnal skirmish, the setting changes from land to sea as a massive naval battle begins. This is the first large-scale combat of any kind in the epic, matching Silius' first pitched battle as the Ticinus as well as the first combat of any kind at the siege of Saguntum. It is during this battle that Lucan finally describes the first named death in civil war combat:<sup>119</sup>

Phocaicis Romana ratis vallata carinis  
 robore diducto dextrum laevumque tuetur  
 aequo Marte latus; cuius dum pugnat ab alta         585  
 puppe Catus Graiumque audax aplustre retentat,  
 terga simul pariter missis et pectora telis  
 transigitur: medio concurrit corpore ferrum,  
 et stetit incertus, flueret quo vulnere, sanguis,  
 donec utrasque simul largus cruor expulit hastas         590  
 divisitque animam sparsitque in vulnera letum.  
   (*BC* 3. 583 – 591)

[A Roman ship, hemmed in by Phocaean craft, was defending her port and starboard with divided crew but equal hardihood. Catus, while fighting on the raised deck and boldly grasping the stern-ornament of a foe, was pierced in the back and breast at the same moment by weapons launched together; the weapons met in his

<sup>118</sup> “This block may be said to have no main character at all” (Hunink 1992: 187).

<sup>119</sup> Names are perhaps even more loaded in Lucan, who famously bemoans the impossibility and shame of listing the individual casualties of civil war (cf. *BC* 7. 617 – 18: *impendissee pudet lacrimas in funere mundi / mortibus innumeris...* and *BC* 7. 630 – 31: *mors nulla querella / digna sua est nullosque hominum lugere vacamus*).

body, and the blood stayed, uncertain through which wound to flow; at last the torrent from his veins drove out both javelins at once, parting his life in two and distributing his death between the wounds.]<sup>120</sup>

The similarities are thus far the name (Catus), the origin (Roman), and the death (by spear), as well as both being the first named death in battle. Despite few immediate verbal parallels, it remains true that Lucan often lurks in the background of Silius' poem and it would be hard to believe that Silius chose this name as his first death in complete ignorance of the soldier of the same name in *Bellum Civile*. As Marks reminds us, "Lucan often simmers under the surface of the *Punica*; he can be found in details, a motif, a name, an allusion, and as the reader enumerates these instances, and as patterns of reference begin to emerge, it becomes clear that his presence is much more pervasive and more integral to the big ideas and themes of the *Punica* than it appears on first glance."<sup>121</sup> With that in mind, let us broaden our search and examine several intriguing thematic links between the two passages.

To begin, the nature of Catus' death in Lucan is typical of the paradoxes of civil war. Normally, a blow from the front signals a noble death, since the soldier had not wavered in battle, and a blow to the back marks the soldier as a coward who died fleeing. In the mixed-up world of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Catus receives a wound in *both* the front and the back, signifying the morally ambiguous nature of his death and, more generally, civil war itself. Despite staying to fight the enemy, Catus still receives a shameful blow to his back as if he had fled. Silius' Catus has an equally ambiguous death: by rushing forward in pursuit of *decus*, he exhibits the traditionally desirable virtue of the Roman warrior elite, but by giving himself to

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<sup>120</sup> Translations of Lucan are from Duff 1928, lightly adapted.

<sup>121</sup> Marks 2010: 128.

such a pointless and avoidable death he exemplifies the futility and wastefulness of that very act. This is a significant change to the traditional avenue for aristocratic glory on the battlefield. Normally, victory and glory are the strongly linked products of bravery, yet, in these first battles of the *Punica*, bravery produces glory and *defeat*. Silius cannot change the historical record, the Romans did suffer many, often preventable disasters in the opening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic war. Instead, he chooses to emphasize the glory of the Roman deaths, although this glory-seeking can be tinged with ambiguity. The glory of death and defeat, as opposed to killing and victory, is a theme rather more prominent in Lucan than Vergil, and Silius here seems to be following the example of his Neronian predecessor.<sup>122</sup>

The naval setting of the battle of Massilia in *BC 3* is also an important point of comparison between the deaths of the Neronian and Flavian Catus. The significance of water to the battles of the *Punica*, especially those of the first half, has been well-examined, with each major battle taking place next to a body of water.<sup>123</sup> This is, of course, a matter of historical fact, the battles of the Ticinus, Trebia, and Trasimene did actually occur near those bodies of water, and Silius is able to use this to great effect in accordance with established epic tropes. Thus, the battle of Ticinus begins with a lovely bucolic description of the river (*Pun.* 4. 81 – 87), Trebia is centered around Scipio’s battle with the god of the river (this episode in particular has attracted much attention)<sup>124</sup> and so many Roman soldiers die drowning in the river that it seems almost more like a naval disaster than land battle, and the poet does much to play up the polluted, ominous qualities of Lake Trasimene.

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<sup>122</sup> Hunink 1992: 201 “But indeed Lucan seems to have introduced some innovations. In the type of battle he describes, warriors find glory in meeting death rather than inflicting it upon others.”

<sup>123</sup> See most especially Santini 1991: 63 – 113.

<sup>124</sup> For the *mache potamios* in Silius and the other epicists, see Juhnke 1972: 11 – 41, 201, Santini 1991: 80 – 91 and Chauduri 2014, especially 205 – 9.

There are several times when Silius describes the battle of Ticinus using watery and naval language, some of them quite striking. When the armies first meet in formation at line 143, immediately after Catus' death, they are described as clashing with "a great crash over the level expanse" (*magnoque fragore per aequor*), language equally suitable to a naval battle. Soon afterwards at line 159, "waves" of Boii (*undae Boiorum*) are described as rushing onto the field.<sup>125</sup> When the slaughter begins in line 162 there is a vivid series of wet/watery details: "the ground is drenched; pools of blood, from men and horses, swallow up the slippery footprints of the fighting squadron" (*arva natant, altusque virum cruor, altus equorum / lubrica belligerae sorbet vestigia turmae*). Significantly, Lucan uses the same language at *BC* 7. 728, when Caesar finally halts the massacre at Pharsalus (*Caesar, ut Hesperio vidit satis arva natare / sanguine*). Water imagery continues throughout the battle: when Scipio joins the field in response to the Roman slaughter, he is compared at *Pun.* 4. 244 – 47 to a storm on the sea; as the two battle lines clash at 320 they are likened to the back-and-forth movement of the churning sea. This phrasing simultaneously gives the opening of Ticinus a watery feeling, linking it back to Lucan's Massilia and ahead to Silius' own naval battle in Book 14, as well as connecting it with the worst example of civil war violence through the battle of Pharsalus. Additionally, the watery aspects of Ticinus look more directly ahead to the battle of Trebia, the second half of which is dominated by a river battle and includes a replay of Catus' death.

Silius recreates Lucan's battle of Massilia with the naval battle in the great harbor of Syracuse in *Punica* 14. The first major battle in the second half of the poem, Syracuse is an important mirror to Ticinus, as the Romans score their first major victory in apposition to their first defeat in Book 4. Silius connects Ticinus with Syracuse through the death of Catus, a

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<sup>125</sup> Spaltenstein 1986: 278 describes this metaphor as "rare."

character much more at home dying in a Lucanian naval battle. As a result, Catus' death in the battle of Ticinus both alludes to his namesake in *Bellum Civile* and anticipates the repetition of watery battle in Book 14 of the *Punica*. Finally, Lucan's naval battle can be thought of as a modernized, godless *mache parapotamios*, which further links Massilia to Ticinus through Trebia and Scipio's river battle.<sup>126</sup>

While the death of Catus in Silius is a great example of the poet's wide-ranging use of allusion through verbal parallels to several different but related scenes in Vergil, the connection to Lucan's Catus provides an illustration of his ability to be thematically intertextual. Few verbal parallels connect the two Cati, other than their names, but there are strong similarities in terms of setting. Both figures die futile deaths, Catus in the *Punica* through self-inflicted wounds in the pursuit of *decus* and in *Bellum Civile* through the meaningless violence of civil war. Lucan's Catus perishes in a naval battle, a modernized *mache parapotamios*, while Silius' Ticinus is colored with water imagery and prefigures the watery battle of the Trebia, with its own, more traditional river-battle. Both Cati die in the initial large battle of their poems, and the battle of Ticinus looks ahead to the battle of Syracuse in Book 14, a naval battle which is in turn heavily influenced by Lucan's battle of Massilia. Catus in the *Punica* is representative of glory through death, an innovation peculiar to Lucan's pessimistic epic. These two warriors do not achieve glory through their achievements in battle, their martial prowess in defeating the enemy, but rather through simply being killed.<sup>127</sup>

The initial Carthaginian success at the opening of Ticinus is depicted almost entirely through allusions to Italian failures against the Trojans in the *Aeneid*. Thus, when the

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<sup>126</sup> "Moreover, the scene is firmly rooted in the epic tradition of battle scenes. For instance, it may be considered as a modernized counterpart of the *mache parapotamios*..." (Hunink 1992: 200).

<sup>127</sup> Hunink 1992: 201 describes Lucan's 'innovation': "In the type of battle he describes, warriors find glory in meeting death rather than inflicting it upon others."

Carthaginian seer Bogus hurls the first spear, killing the Roman soldier Catus, Silius alludes simultaneously to Turnus' failed challenge outside the Trojan camp in *Aen.* 9, Tolumnius' ignorant appraisal of bird omens, spear throw, and subsequent death in *Aen.* 12, and Turnus' frustrated stone-throw at the very end of that same book. Furthermore, Turnus' assault on the Trojan war camp in *Aen.* 9 is a well-attested allusion to Hannibal's attack on Rome in 211 BC, an example of Silius' use of 'retroactive intertextuality.'<sup>128</sup> Finally, Catus' name is a strong allusion to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, in which a soldier of the same name also dies as the first casualty in the first battle. Silius employs both inter- and intratextuality, looking back to the *exempla* of the *Aeneid*, anticipating his own narrative climax at *Pun.* 12, connecting the battle of Ticinus back to Lucan's Massilia and forward to the Syracusan naval battle, and highlighting the self-destructive qualities of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War through allusions to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. The first death of the first battle of the war, therefore, deserves a much closer reading than it has thus far received; it reminds us to trust Silius as a poet and that pursuing his intertexts can be as richly fulfilling and rewarding as in any of his predecessors.

### 1.3.1: The Death of Tyrrhenus (*Pun.* 4. 167 – 174 and 5. 7 – 23)

Not long after the death of Catus, which marks the very beginning of the battle narrative, a second 'first' death occurs, acting as a transition to the individual fighting:

spicula prima, puer, tumidi, Tyrrhene, Pelori  
 purpureo moriens victricia sanguine tinguis.  
 nam tibi, **dum stimulas cornu atque in proelia mentes**

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<sup>128</sup> Van der Keur 2015: xx uses the phrase of Silius: "By [retroactive intertextuality] I understand that the poet, in his treatment of a certain subject, alludes to a passage in an earlier poet who used that subject as an intertext; the later poet has 'recognized' the intertext of his predecessor and expresses his recognition by 'returning' to this original context in his own narrative with verbal allusion to the intermediary text." The classic example of this is Lucan's reception of Vergil's description of Priam's corpse at *Aen.* 2. 557 as an allusion to Pompey's death; cf. Narducci 1973, Bowie 1990, and Hinds 1998: 8 – 10.

**accendis renovasque viros ad vulnera cantu,** 170  
 haesit barbaricum sub anhelio gutture telum  
 et clausit raucum letali vulnere murmur.  
 at sonus extremo morientis fusus ab ore  
 flexa pererravit mutis iam cornua labris.

(*Pun.* 4. 167 – 174)

[The first victorious javelin was thrown by proud Pelorus, and stained by the red life-blood of young Tyrrhenus. For, while he blew his horn, to stir the soldiers' hearts and kindle their courage for battle, and to make them face fresh wounds by his music, the barbarian's weapon stuck fast in his windpipe and stopped with a deadly wound the hoarse murmur of the horn. Yet the last music that came from his dying lips trickled through the curved instrument, after the lips themselves were dumb.]

The Roman trumpeter Tyrrhenus is the first victim (*spicula prima*) of the mass melee, struck through the mouth by a spear thrown by proud Pelorus, and his dying breath produces one last note. Silius often makes use of 'first' language to signal transitions in battle narratives, and this scene marks the transition into the frenzy of melee combat.<sup>129</sup> This necrologue, however, has more than just a transitional function. It is commonly believed that Tyrrhenus is so named because the Etruscans were traditionally assigned the invention of the trumpet.<sup>130</sup> This may not be *the* Tyrrhenus, but it is not long before we meet that famous inventor, just before the beginning of the battle of Lake Trasimene:

Lydius huic genitor, Tmoli decus, aequore longo  
 Maeoniam quondam in Latias advexerat oras 10  
 Tyrrhenus pubem dederatque vocabula terris;  
**isque insueta tubae monstravit murmura primus**  
**gentibus et bellis ignava silentia rupit.**  
 Nec modicus voti natum ad maiora fovebat.  
 verum ardens puero castumque exuta pudorem 15  
 (nam forma certare deis, Thrasymenne, valeres)  
 litore correptum stagnis demisit Argylle,

<sup>129</sup> Spaltenstein 1986: 278 "Sil. passe à une autre phase de son récit (et de la bataille) et 'prima' souligne cette introduction."

<sup>130</sup> Spaltenstein 1986: 278; Duff 1934: 180-81.

flore capi iuvenem primaevo lubrica mentem  
 nympa nec Idalia lenta invaluisse sagitta.  
 solatae viridi penitus fovere sub antro 20  
 Naides amplexus undosaque regna trementem.  
 hinc dotale lacus nomen, lateque Hymenaeo  
 conscia lascivo Thrasymennus dicitur unda.  
 (*Pun.* 5. 9 – 23)

[The father of Thrasymennus was Tyrrhenus, a Lydian and the pride of Tmolus; he had formerly brought men of Maeonia the long sea-voyage to the Latian land, and had given his own name to the country, and it was he who first revealed to men the sound of the trumpet, unheard till then, and broke the spiritless silence of battle. Immodest in his wishes, he bred his son for a higher destiny. But the nymph Agylle loved the young Thrasymennus; and indeed in beauty he could contend with the gods themselves. Casting off maiden shame, she seized him on the shore and carried him down to the depths; for her young heart was quick to feel the spell of youthful beauty, nor was she slow to catch fire from the arrow of the Idalian goddess. The Naiads, in their green cave far below, comforted and cherished the boy, when he shrank from his bride's embrace and that watery world. From him the lake, a gift from the bride, got its name; and the water, aware through all its extent of the marriage joy, still bears the name of Thrasymennus.]

This interesting passage has received some recent attention from a short note by Antony Augoustakis and a full-length article by Robert Cowan.<sup>131</sup> Both authors focus on the etymological function of the story. Augoustakis links the immodesty of Tyrrhenus (*nec modicus* and the θάρσος of Thrasymennus' name) with that of Hannibal and his aspirations for his son at the end of Book 4.<sup>132</sup> Cowan, on the other hand, sees clues in the words *lascivus* and *Hymenaeus* which gives the real etymology: “wanton-wedding,” or “Thrasymennus.”<sup>133</sup> Cowan also touches

<sup>131</sup> Augoustakis 2005 and Cowan 2009; cf. also Asso 1999 and Batino 2003.

<sup>132</sup> “Both Hannibal and Tyrrhenus are immodest in their wishes: Hannibal will be defeated at the end of the war and his son never becomes his successor, contrary to the father's expectations. Likewise Thrasymennus' abduction by the nymph results in the permanent separation of father and son and the annihilation of Tyrrhenus' hopes” (Augoustakis 2005: 223-4).

<sup>133</sup> “*lascivus Hymenaeus* glosses the Greek θρασύς ὑμέναιος, the true words behind Thrasymennus” (Cowan 2009: 228).

upon some important father-son connections: Tyrrhenus is a martial epic poet who wishes his son to follow in his footsteps and so gives him a good martial name with the root *θηρασύς*, only to have his ambitions overturned by Argylle, a bucolic and “entirely unepic” figure. “Tyrrhenus’ success in epicizing and militarizing the Etruscans,” Cowan concludes, “and his failure to continue that level of generic and moral integrity into the next generation, are played out on a larger scale throughout the *Punica*.”<sup>134</sup> The Romans too must break the *bellis ignava silentia*, snap out of their Saturnian peace, and embrace Jovian warfare.

Cowan, Augoustakis, and others give a nuanced and revealing reading of the Thrasymennus episode, but none looks at the possibility of a connection between the Tyrrhenus who dies at the beginning of Ticinus and the Tyrrhenus who is the father of Thrasymennus at the beginning of book 5. These two men cannot, of course, be the same Tyrrhenus, but their proximity to each other and the connection of the war horn seems deliberate. Lake Trasimene, Silius reveals, is the son of Tyrrhenus, and so a misleading impression is given that the father is killed and the son defiled in successive books. This gels with Silius’ overarching civil war/familial destruction theme and, most specifically, looks ahead to the father-son tragedy which occurs just before the battle of Cannae. So, with the name Tyrrhenus Silius gives us the name of the proverbial ‘first’ trumpeter, who is killed by Pelorus’ ‘first’ spear-throw in the ‘first’ battle of the epic, while simultaneously linking Books 4 and 5 and their battles more closely together. There may also be a connection with Hercules, a crucial background figure in the *Punica*, since Hyginus tells us that Tyrrhenus was the son of Hercules and invented the trumpet.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Cowan 2009: 234.

<sup>135</sup> *Tyrrhenus Herculis filius tubam primus invenit* (Hyg. *Fab.* 274). This link is perhaps strengthened by the similarities it shows to the Hylas story of Ap. Rhod. 1. 1229 ff. For the importance of Hercules to the *Punica*, see Tipping 2010, Asso 2010: 179 – 192, and Fucecchi 2010: 219 – 239.

The specifics of Tyrrhenus' death also return us to the theme of offense and defense which we saw in the death of Catus earlier. Catus, unlike the Trojans of the *Aeneid*, cannot resist the urge for glory and so willingly suffers a futile death as he charges in front of the wavering spear of Bogus. In a similar vein, Tyrrhenus incites the Romans to battle (*stimulas cornu atque in proelia mentes / accendis*), a battle which they are destined to lose. In this case, inciting Romans to battle is a harmful act. The spear of Pelorus might have prevented this, but even in death this Roman soldier continues to urge the troops to their inevitable destruction. The repetition of the word *vulnus* in lines 170 and 172 drives this point home, as instead of renewing his men towards inflicting more wounds (*renovasque viros ad vulnera*), he himself receives a mortal blow (*letali vulnere*). The irony of the one urging on wounds receiving a wound is coupled with the ambiguity of the phrase: is he renewing the other soldiers' ability to *cause* wounds, or their ability to receive them?<sup>136</sup> Silius, channeling the pessimism of Lucan, questions the value of a trumpeter whose task is to inspire men to be cut down in a doomed battle.<sup>137</sup> Tyrrhenus' death may then be thought of as a sort of authorial assassination, as Silius fruitlessly attempts to retroactively prevent the disaster of Ticinus/Trebia by killing martial epic as represented in archetypal Tyrrhenus and his war trumpet. The battle cannot be averted, however, and Tyrrhenus' lips continue to blow even in death. Finally, the repetition of *vulnus* perhaps recalls Livy's famous description of Rome's series of defeats as *non volnus super volnus sed multiplex clades*, which in turn brings us back to the *primordia cladis* with which Silius opens the battle.<sup>138</sup> By this understanding, Tyrrhenus is not urging his men on to wound the enemy but urging them

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<sup>136</sup> Duff translates *ad vulnera* as "to make them face fresh wounds," while Spaltenstein suggests rather *ad vulnera inferenda*.

<sup>137</sup> The idea recalls Lucan's questioning of the value of virtue in civil war, most specifically during his description of Scaeva at *BC* 6. 147 – 48: *qui nesciret in armis / quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus*.

<sup>138</sup> Livy 25.54.

on towards defeats (*ad vulnera*) which will add up to *clades*. The defeat at Ticinus/Trebia is only the first of many wounds, yet despite the slaughter the Romans will continue to mindlessly throw themselves at the enemy, just as Tyrrhenus' lips continue to sound the horn even in death.

### 1.3.2: Tyrrhenus and Misenus: Two Doomed Trumpeters

Tyrrhenus the trumpeter has a potential analogue in the *Aeneid*, and it will be worthwhile to explore the two figures' similarities. At *Aen.* 6. 149 – 155, Aeneas is told by the Sibyl that before he may enter the realms of the dead, but he must first bury an unknown friend. As Aeneas and Achates return from the cave of the Sibyl, they realize their trumpeter lies dead and unburied on the shore:

Misenum Aeoliden, quo non praestantior alter  
**aere ciere viros Martemque accendere cantu.** 165  
 Hectoris hic magni fuerat comes, Hectora circum  
 et lituo pugnas insignis obibat et hasta.  
 postquam illum vita victor spoliavit Achilles,  
 Dardanio Aeneae sese fortissimus heros  
 addiderat socium, non inferiora secutus. 170  
 sed tum, forte cava dum personat aequora concha,  
 demens, et cantu vocat in certamina divos,  
 aemulus exceptum Triton, si credere dignum est,  
 inter saxa virum spumosa immerserat unda.  
 (*Aen.* 6. 164 – 174)

[Misenus, son of Aeolus, surpassed by none in stirring men with his war horn's blare, and in kindling with his clang the god of war. He had been great Hector's comrade, at Hector's side he braved the fray, glorious for clarion and spear alike; but when Achilles, victorious, stripped his chief of life, the valiant hero came into the fellowship of Dardan Aeneas, following no meaner standard. Yet on that day, while by chance he made the seas ring with his hollow shell – madman – and with his blare calls the gods to contest, jealous Triton, if the tale can win belief, caught and plunged him in the foaming waves amid the rocks.]

The **accendis** renovasque **viros** ad vulnera **cantu** of Pun. 4. 170 is a great example of Silius' use of intertextuality. *Accendis*, *viros*, and *cantu* are clear verbal parallels, but Silius further connects the passage with his use of *tumidus* ('proud'). It is, admittedly, Pelorus whom Silius calls proud, but the interlocking word order and alliteration between adjective and name (*puer, tumidi, Tyrrhene, Pelori*) creates an initial connection between the two. Pelorus (nothing more is detailed about this warrior) may be simply generically proud, but *tumidi, Tyrrhene*, might at least imply that pride had something to do with Tyrrhenus' fall – especially given the glory-seeking death of Catus beforehand. This seems to be a case of compressive intertextuality: Tyrrhenus is 'proud' (by association) because his intertextual forebear challenged the gods to a musical contest. Within the lines of Silius' text, there is no explanation given for Tyrrhenus or Pelorus as *tumidus*, but when the allusion is followed back to Vergil's Misenus the adjective can be explained – though Vergil does not use the word. This avoidance of quotation (Silius avoids *demens*, *certamina*, and *aemulus* as well) and selection of a word not found in the source passage (*tumidus*) which nonetheless sums up the tone of Misenus' death can be considered a sign of Silius' diligence to his predecessor's language. With this strong engagement with Vergil, *renovas* takes on a metaliterary tone; the trumpeter renews the Roman lust for death, while Silius renews a passage of Vergil. By giving slight verbal parallels and then rewriting the scene (this time by compressing several lines of Vergil into *tumidus*), Silius reveals how close a reader he actually is.<sup>139</sup>

The connection between Misenus and Tyrrhenus is further strengthened by their etymological conclusions: Misenus gives his name to the famous cape, and Tyrrhenus' son gives

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<sup>139</sup> “[Silius] treads a very careful line between fidelity to the tradition and innovation within it, and has given obvious attention to personalizing his diction. To distance oneself systematically from the verbal expression of a forerunner writing about a similar topic requires vigilance and the availability of resources for checking on what the forerunner actually wrote” (Wilson 2004: 226-7).

his to the (in)famous Lake Trasimene. Through the two Tyrrheni, one linked with *tumidus* and the other *nec modicus*, and the *demens* Misenus, Silius paints a picture of three martial trumpeters who doomed themselves with ambition. Tyrrhenus at the Ticinus compels the Romans on not to glory but death and then receives death himself, Thrasymennus' proud, martial father sees his son become a depersonalized, elegiac victim, and Misenus challenges the gods to a musical competition and is destroyed. These allusions are strengthened both with verbal parallels and through closeness of setting and theme. Thus, all three are trumpeters, the two Tyrrheni are linked through their names, and all three are impious challengers of the gods, though Silius' *tumidus* is an explanation and compression of Vergil's description of Misenus. Finally, the Thrasymennus scene just before the battle of Lake Trasimene looks back to the Tyrrhenus of Book 4, the near-*tumidus* who dies in battle, and back further to Misenus who dies challenging the gods to *certamina* with his horn, but also foreshadows the theomachic nature of the upcoming battle.<sup>140</sup> Silius makes these short episodes do incredible work, exploring inter- and intratextual paths which lead in several directions simultaneously – and we are not finished with Tyrrhenus yet.

### 1.3.3: The Battle of Lake Avernus

Silius often uses the setting of his source passage – in this case *Aeneid* Book 6, just before Aeneas goes to the underworld – to lend more complexity to his own passage. It is perhaps, then, not a coincidence that the very next passage after the death and burial of Misenus is the description of a rather memorable lake:

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<sup>140</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: ch. 6, n. 66 remarks that “Silius subtly foreshadows the episode’s theomachic theme in the aetiology of the lake’s name: ‘for you, Trasimene, could compete in beauty with the gods’ (*nam forma certare deis, Thrasymenne, valeres, Pun. 5. 16*).”

His actis propere exsequitur praecepta Sibyllae.  
 spelunca alta fuit **vastoque immanis hiatu**,  
 scrupea, tuta lacu **nigro** nemorumque **tenebris**,  
 quam super haud ullae poterant impune volantes  
 tendere iter pennis: talis sese **halitus atris** 240  
**faucibus** effundens supera ad convexa ferebat  
 (*Aen.* 6. 236 – 241)

[This done, he fulfils with haste the Sibyl's behest. A deep cave there was, yawning wide and vast, of jagged rock, and sheltered by dark lake and woodland gloom, over which no flying creatures could safely wing their way; such a vapor from those black jaws was wafted to the vaulted sky]

The lake is “allusively but definitely”<sup>141</sup> identified as Avernus and its description is appropriately hellish. This passage can be easily compared with Silius' two descriptions of Lake Trasimene's physical aspects and the result is an attractively similar setting:

at parte e laeva, restagnans **gurgite vasto**,  
 effigiem in pelagi lacus umectabat inertis  
 et late multo foedabat proxima limo  
 (*Pun.* 5. 4 – 6)

[But on their left hand the lake, like a sluggish sea, spread over all the region round with the overflow of its mighty waters and marred the prospect with abundant slime.]

And again, as the Romans march blindly towards Hannibal's trap:

tum super ipse lacus, **densam caligine caeca**  
 exhalans nebulam, late corruperat omnem  
 prospectum miseris, atque **atrae noctis** amictu  
 squalebat pressum **picea** inter nubilia caelum.  
 (*Pun.* 5. 34 – 37)

[Then, in addition, the lake itself breathed forth a black and blinding mist, so that the doomed army could see nothing on any side; and the sky, hidden beneath night's dark robe, was gloomy with pitch-black clouds.]

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<sup>141</sup> Horsfall 2013, *ad loc.*

Both descriptions of the two lakes are full of dark imagery: Vergil's is black (*lacu nigro*), surrounded by the shadows of trees (*nemorumque tenebris*), and breathes out poisonous vapor from its black jaws (*halitus atris / faucibus*), while Silius' Lake Trasimene breathes forth a dense cloud of blindness (*densam caligine caeca / exhalans nebulam*), covering the land with the dark embrace of night (*atrae noctis amictu*) and pitchy clouds (*picea inter nubilia*). Avernus is given an appropriately dismal description but, through the Misenus-Tyrrhenus connection, we can now see that Silius prefigures the slaughter at Lake Trasimene by linking the lake to the hellish landscape of *Aeneid* 6.<sup>142</sup> This language hints to the readers that many Roman soldiers will soon be making their own one-way journeys to the underworld. Furthermore, Silius' initial description of Trasimene resonates with Vergil's waves of Acheron, as Aeneas continues his journey further down into the underworld:

Hinc via Tartarei quae fert Acherontis ad undas.  
turbidus hic caeno **vastaque voragine gurges**  
aestuatur atque omnem Coccyto **eructat** harenam.  
(*Aen.* 6. 295 – 97)

[From here a road leads to the waters of Tartarean Acheron. Here, thick with mire and of fathomless flood, a whirlpool seethes and belches into Cocytus all its sand.]

Again, Silius alludes to a source passage with only slight (though clear enough) verbal parallels and then rephrases Vergil's language and modifies the setting. The verbal keystone is given with *gurgite vasto*, perhaps a reference to Vergil's *vastoque immanis hiatu* at *Aen.* 6. 237, but also a rephrasing of *vastaque voragine gurges* at 6. 296. The underworld tone of this language is confirmed in Book 6, when Silius uses a nearly exact phrase to describe a strongly Tartarean

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<sup>142</sup> Avernus was likely near to one of Silius' many Campanian villas as well.

scene at *Pun.* 6. 175 – 7, as Regulus encounters the serpent.<sup>143</sup> Vergil's lake seethes with filth (*caeno*), while Silius' befouls its shores with *limo*, a more earthly equivalent; Lake Avernus belches (*eructat*), while Lake Trasimene only 'moistens' (*umectabat*), another more realistic touch.

The death of Tyrrhenus at *Pun.* 4. 167 – 174, a short scene and one of numerous, easily overlooked, battlefield deaths has taken us on quite a journey. First, we examined the link between this trumpeter and the Tyrrhenus whose son Thrasymennus is kidnapped by the nymph Argylle at *Pun.* 5. 9 – 23. The close link between the two – one plays the trumpet, the other invented it – and the presence of Thrasymennus allow us to see a father (the first Tyrrhenus) killed and son (through its namesake Lake Trasimene) defiled in successive battles.

Thrasymennus' father sees his martial ambitions for his son shattered by the elegiac figure of Argylle. Like Catus before him, the death of the first Tyrrhenus further highlights the futility of glory seeking; he inspires the Roman troops to battle in vain, since Ticinus is doomed from the start, and even his own death cannot prevent this death-bringing music from continuing. Through Misenus, Vergil's ambitious and doomed trumpeter, Silius links the death of Tyrrhenus with the events leading up to the *katabasis* of *Aen.* 6. The poisonous Lake Avernus and the nearby cave leading to the underworld, described by Vergil just after the burial of Misenus, are in turn picked up by Silius in his description of Lake Trasimene, which lends a foreboding atmosphere to the upcoming battle. We then come full circle and return to the original Tyrrhenus through Thrasymennus' proud father. This cycle of intertexts (*Pun.* 4 Tyrrhenus → Misenus →

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<sup>143</sup> *Pun.* 6. 175-7, as Regulus encounters the serpent: *Tartareus turbo atque insano saevior Euro / spiritus erumpit, vastoque e gurgite fusa / tempestas oritur*. This hellish scene (notably occurring in Book 6) is filled with echoes of Vergil's *katabasis*. Take, for example, 6. 198 when the serpent consumes Regulus' companion *faucibus atris*, as the 'jaws' of Lake Avernus' cave are literalized. Pointedly, Silius is careful not to describe a *vastus gurgis* during Scipio's *katabasis* in Book 13 – instead, the whirlpool is foaming (*Pun.* 13. 567: *spumante gurgite*).

underworld waters → Trasimene → *Pun.* 5 Tyrrhenus → *Pun.* 4 Tyrrhenus ...) requires the reader to juggle multiple and subtle allusions but the result is that a seemingly filler death scene becomes a nexus of intertexts, engaging with the larger themes of the poem and, through the story of Thrasymennus, closely linking its first two battles.

Thus far, we have examined two minor battlefield death scenes in *Pun.* 4, those of Catus and Tyrrhenus. It has been shown that each man's death activates a series of intertexts leading through Vergil and Lucan, as well as anticipating several important moments in future battles. We have seen most especially how closely connected Ticinus and Trasimene are, with characters like Bogus and Tyrrhenus reappearing in the later battle. By approaching these death scenes with an understanding of Silius' intertextual style, we find that his use of subtle verbal parallels which activate a variety of thematic allusions opens the door to a great many interesting intertexts in Vergil and beyond. Understanding Silius' ability to juggle multiple allusions at the same time greatly increases our appreciation of his still underappreciated style.

#### 1.4.1: The Death of Quirinius (*Pun.* 4. 192 – 215)

After the death of Tyrrhenus, the Gallic chieftain Crixus owns the field, killing several one-shot warriors within a few lines.<sup>144</sup> Silius then makes room for his longest necrologue thus far, that of the warrior Quirinius who also receives a micro-aristeia lasting some 26 lines.

Besides serving as a transition from the Gallic introduction which began in line 143 and which continues with Crixus' showcase from 175 – 189, the death of Quirinius is interesting in its own

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<sup>144</sup> One of these, Tullus, is given a rather interesting epitaph perhaps worthy of study elsewhere: *et te sub gelido nutritum, Tulle, Velino, / egregium Ausoniae decus ac memorabile nomen, / si dent fata moras, aut servent foedera Poeni* (*Pun.* 4. 183 – 85).

right, offering the clearest replay of the Gallic sack of 390 BC through a symbolically charged decapitation. The scene begins with a description of Quirinius' bravery:

hic inter trepidos immane Quirinius audens,  
 cui fugere ignotum atque invicta mente placebat  
 rebus in adversis exceptum pectore letum,  
 cuspidem flammat equum ac dispergit gaesa lacerto, 195  
 si reserare viam atque ad regem rumpere ferro  
 detur iter; certusque necis petit omnibus ausis,  
 quod nequeat sentire, decus.

(*Pun.* 4. 192 – 198)

[And now Quirinius, to whom flight was a thing unknown, and whose dauntless heart chose death with wounds in front, when the battle went against them, showed mighty daring, while those around him trembled. He spurred his horse with his spear-point and hurled javelins with his strong arm, hoping to clear a passage and burst his way by the steel to Crixus. Assured of death, he sought with might and main the glory he could never hope to enjoy.]

This warrior displays, on the surface level, several well established epic traits: he is daring in the face of danger (*inter trepidos ... audens, omnibus ausis*), he shuns flight (*cui fugere ignotum*), preferring only noble wounds from the front (*exceptum pectore letum*). However, as we have seen before, the virtues of traditional epic combat have become flaws in these first battles of the war. The Roman obsession with achieving *decus* at all costs led to the death of Catus at the beginning of the battle, and Quirinius repeats his predecessor's mistake. Certain only of death (*certus necis*), Quirinius seeks a vain glory and in so doing will never further his cause nor achieve that *decus*. Instead, he becomes just another casualty.

If we read Quirinius' traditional epic virtues instead as flaws, *cui ignotum fugere* becomes something like, "who did not know that he *should* flee," and *invicta mente* instead highlights the fact that his *body* was actually defeated. Still, Silius' portrayal of Quirinius is not entirely negative. Rather, it implements a poetics of defeat which focuses on glory in death rather

than the glory of victory. Quirinius' *invicta mens* serves to describe the entire Roman state at the time of the Second Punic War: their bodies may be defeated, but their spirits were never broken. *Invicta mente* may also resonate with depictions of Cato in Latin epic, who is described by Lucan as "undefeated" (*invicti ... Catonis*) when the spirit of Pompey goes to Cato at *BC* 9. 18. Manilius, perhaps even closer to the mark, describes Cato as *invicta devictum mente Catonem* (*Astr.* 4. 87). Quirinius, then, is an ambiguous figure. On the one hand he represents the flawed Roman over-eagerness for battle and the subsequent empty glory of death and defeat, but on the other hand he recalls the best aspects of the Roman republican spirit and its doomed torch-bearer Cato. Additionally, the name Quirinius proves to be an astute choice, representing through his name the core virtues and flaws of the Roman *quirites* – a surrogate which is unceremoniously beheaded at the battle of Ticinus.

Quirinius continues his small-form *aristeia*, cutting down a 'Teutalus' and a 'Sarmens' in quick succession (*Pun.* 4. 198 – 205). Both men represent, through their names and descriptions, tribes beyond Imperial borders (speaking from Silius' perspective) who were in frequent, often hostile contact with the Romans; Teutalus is "ouvertement celtique," Spaltenstein remarks, reminding us of the name of 'Teutates,' the Gallic god of war, while Sarmens recalls the Celtic root 'sarm,' seen in Gallic place names such as Sarmasia and Sarmedum. Sarmens may also be meant to bring to mind the Sarmatians, against whom Domitian had campaigned in AD 92 – 93 and 95 – 96.<sup>145</sup> The symbolism of the image of bold Quirinius cutting down the tribal enemies of the Romans would not go unnoticed by Silius' audience and primes us to read his necrologue in the context of Rome's long and checkered history with the tribes to its north.

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<sup>145</sup> See Jones 1992: 152 – 55 for a brief overview of these campaigns.

Eventually, Quirinius' luck runs out; one man, Ligaunus, rushes past his javelin and severs his arm from his body, while another man, Vosegus, decapitates him, carrying off his head as a trophy.

at, non tardatus iaculo occurrente, Ligaunus  
 irruit adversumque viro rotat obvius ensem  
 et ferit insurgens, humero qua bracchia lenti  
 annectunt nervi, decisaque vulnere laeva  
 laxatis paulum moribunda pependit habenis,                   210  
 dumque micans tremulo conatu lora retemptat,  
 flectentem adsuetos imitator nescia frenos.  
 demetit aversit Vosegus tum colla iubaque  
 suspensam portans galeam atque inclusa perempti  
 ora viri patrio divos clamore salutat.

(*Pun.* 4. 206 – 215)

[But now Ligaunus, undeterred by the javelin that met him, rushed on a whirled his sword full in face of Quirinius, rising to his full height as he struck; and the left arm, where the tough muscles attach the limb to the shoulder, was cut off by the blow; for a space it hung dying over the slackened reins, and the quivering hand, while it felt again the feeble effort for the bridle, imitated unwittingly the familiar gesture of the horseman. Then Vosegus cut off his head from behind, and carried off the helmet hanging by its plume with the dead man's head inside it, and hailed his gods with the war-cry of his nation.]

*At* sharply cuts off Quirinius run of good luck and begins his rather detailed death. Not one, but two soldiers are involved in the Roman's demise, as Ligaunus and Vosegus team up to bring Quirinius down. Spaltenstein notes the relevance of each name: the Ligani were a people of Gallia Narbonensis and *mons Vosegus* was a mountain range in what is now eastern France (presently the Vosges mountains). Spaltenstein also notes the traditional motif of the limb operating after death, listing examples from Vergil, Lucan, Seneca, and Statius, although he seems to miss the most relevant parallel in Lucan. During the battle of Massilia in *BC* 3, which has already supplied Silius with his 'Catus' figure, another unfortunate soldier loses his hand trying to board a Roman ship, "but a heavy blow from above cut off his hand, which clung there

still, such was the pressure of its grasp and, holding on with tightened muscles, it grew stiff in death.”<sup>146</sup> Silius certainly had a close eye on this passage of Lucan; the death of Catus occurs just before and the unnamed handless soldier was one of a set of tragic triplets, a story also emulated by Silius later in this same battle (see 2.2.1). The limb continuing to function after severance from the body also brings to mind the death of Tyrrhenus not long ago, whose lips continued to blow the horn as he died. As in Lucan, the Romans’ urge to fight in the face of and even despite death, creates a sense mindless slaughter; these men march thoughtlessly, zombie-like, into and past death.<sup>147</sup>

Quirinius’ death also introduces an interesting political metaphor, as Silius furthers his goal of compressive history. Raymond Marks, in a 2006 article, describes Silius’ Second Punic War as a conflict between heads, that is the battle to claim the title of *caput mundi*, and that “the decapitations in the epic thereby become ways of measuring the different trajectories and ultimate outcomes for each side in the war.”<sup>148</sup> Heads, he argues, play fundamental roles in both Rome’s and Carthage’s foundation myths, with the discovery of a horse’s head interpreted as a good omen by the Carthaginians (as described by Silius at *Pun.* 2. 406) and the Capitoline’s own *caput* omen described at Livy 1.55.5-6. Decapitations abound at important moments in the *Punica*: the status of the Roman army after Cannae is likened to a body without a head (*Pun.* 10. 310 – 11: *ceu truncus capitis saevis exercitus armis / sternitur*), and the Romans return the favor by decapitating Hasdrubal after their victory at Metaurus at the end of Book 15 (*Pun.* 15. 805 –

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<sup>146</sup> BC 3. 611 – 13: *sed eam gravis insuper ictus / amputat; illa tamen nisu, quo prederat, haesit / deriguitque tenens strictis immortalis nervis*. Hunink *ad loc.* describes the stock theme of the *vir fortis sine manibus*, which originates perhaps from the story of Cynaegirus in Herodotus 6.114.

<sup>147</sup> Hunink 1992: 231 writes that Lucan has created a new paradox: “with every injury, the warrior gets more eager to fight, right up to his final moment. Rather than a description of brave or heroic fighting, this has become a paradoxical scene of mutilation and death, a *miraculum fati*.”

<sup>148</sup> Marks 2006: 66.

7) – to name only two of the most important examples. However, Marks continues, the Romans are able to survive the Carthaginian onslaught because the most important ‘head,’ the *Capitolium* remains safe from Hannibal; the physical and metaphorical ‘head’ of the Roman body is never severed.<sup>149</sup>

All of this symbolism has great consequences to our interpretation of Quirinius death. As the manifestation of the Roman *Quirites*, Quirinius’ decapitation offers a replay of the sack of Rome by Brennus in 390 BC, already mentioned in Crixus’ introduction (*Pun.* 4. 150 – 51: *ipse, tumens atavis, Brenni se stirpe ferebat / Crixus et in titulos Capitolia capta trahebat*). In fact, the context of the Gallic invasion of 390 BC has already been placed in the audience’s mind from the beginning of the battle, when Hannibal recruits the Gauls as allies (*Pun.* 4. 47 – 48: *mox impia bella / Tarpeius pater et capti sensere Quirites*). These two details, Crixus’ proud recollection of Brennus’ sack of the Capitoline and the *capti Quirites* invoked at the beginning of the battle, prime Silius’ audience to read the Gallic sack replayed once more in the decapitation of Quirinius during the battle of Ticinus. Furthermore, Quirinius’ decapitation can also be read as standing in for the never realized sack of Rome by Hannibal, with Quirinius acting as a surrogate and apotropaic sacrifice for the city. Quirinius’ death thus takes on many layers of significance. His death is a strongly political metaphor, embodying the use of both compressive history, as a nightmarish replay of the Romans’ defeat at the Allia and the subsequent sack of the City, and the poetics of contingency, as a look ahead to a hypothetical future where Rome is decapitated by Hannibal.

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<sup>149</sup> “If Hannibal is to win the war, surely he has to attack this ‘head’, and, consistent with that objective, he directs his enmity, above all, against the god and his Capitoline abode throughout the epic” (Marks 2006: 76).

The name Quirinius is far more than just ‘fréquent,’ as Spaltenstein aptly describes. A closer look at the context of his death, the many references to Brennus and the sack of Rome, the *capti Quirites* that open the battle, and Silius’ consistent use of decapitation as a political metaphor reveals that Quirinius in fact represents the Roman citizen body, operating without a head, as it will until Scipio Africanus takes the helm, but never without *the* head, as long as the sacred seat of power, the *Capitolium*, remains unscathed. Leaving behind these ‘minor’ deaths for now, let us take a look at the only ‘major’ death at the battle of the Ticinus River, that of the Gallic chieftain Crixus at the hands of Scipio’s father.

#### 1.5.1: The Death of Crixus: Celtomachic, Homeric, Gigantomachic Combat (*Pun.* 4. 248 – 310)

As the battle rages and the Gauls fill the field the first half of the battle comes to a climax with the duel between the Gallic chieftain Crixus and the Roman general, Scipio’s father. This is a dense and complicated scene with several anchor points. The duel takes place, first of all, in the midst of a full-blown Celtomachy – the Carthaginians, Silius tells us, are nowhere to be found.<sup>150</sup> The battle will be, then, an encore of Rome’s many struggles with the Gauls, most specifically the Gallic invasion of Italy and sack of Rome in 390 BC. The Gallic invasions of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC have a long history in Latin epic, most significantly on the shield of Aeneas in *Aen.* 8, and they often deal in the same themes as Gigantomachies.<sup>151</sup> Consequently, this section is filled with references to this invasion: Brennus himself is mentioned several times by name (Crixus claims his ancestry), Crixus’ shield is inscribed with images of the Gauls weighing their captured gold, and the 390 BC sack of the **Capitol** is replayed in miniature through the death of

<sup>150</sup> *Pun.* 4. 189 – 90: *nec locus est Tyriis belli pugnaeve, sed omnem / Celticus implevit campum furor.*

<sup>151</sup> “The association of the Gallic assault on the Capitol with Gigantomachy comes naturally to the Latin poets of the Silver Age” (Hardie 1993: 124).

the aptly named Quirinius by **decapitation**. The battle will also be Homeric, as all epic duels must be. Silius makes this especially clear by allusively comparing Crixus to Achilles when he kills Tarius and his corpse is dragged across the battlefield by his horse.<sup>152</sup> Finally, the duel is presented in Gigantomachic terms when Crixus is directly compared to the Giant Mimas.<sup>153</sup> Crixus is thus a hyperbolic figure, compared to Achilles and the Giants, but he will be outmatched by the even more hyperbolic (and hyper-Achillean) Scipio.<sup>154</sup> Silius, in his characteristic, all-encompassing style, engages with all of these settings simultaneously.

### 1.5.2: Horse-talkers: Mezentius and Crixus

Before the duel begins, Scipio addresses his horse:

cornipedem alloquitur: “vulgum Martemque minorem  
 mox, Gargane; vocant superi ad maiora. videsne,  
 quantus eat Crixus? iam nunc tibi praemia pono  
 illum Sidonio fulgentem ardore tapeta,  
 barbaricum decus, et fulvis donabere frenis.”

(*Pun.* 4. 265 – 269)

[Scipio spoke thus: “Garganus, leave till later the common herd of lesser foes; the gods summon us to greater things. Do you see the mighty Crixus coming? Even now I promise to reward you with yonder saddle-cloth, glittering with Tyrian purple – an adornment fit for the barbarian; and I shall give you the reins of gold.”]

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<sup>152</sup> *Pun.* 4. 252 – 258: *invadit Tarium, vicino consule pugnas / miscentem, saevisque virum circumtonat armis. / volvitur ille solo; nam pronum effundit in armos / fata extrema ferens abies, rapiturque pavore / tractus equi, vinctis connexa ad cingula membris. / longa cruor sparso linquit vestigial campo / et tremulos cuspis ductus in pulvere signat.* This scene once again muddies the idea of identity in the *Punica*: is Crixus an Achilles or a Hector?

<sup>153</sup> *Pun.* 4. 275 – 7: *quantus Phlegraeis Telluris alumnus in arvis / movit signa Mimas caelumque exterruit armis / tantus semifero Crixus sub pectore murmur / torquet et horrissonis ululatibus erigit iras.*

<sup>154</sup> Scipio will go on to perform a super-Achillean *mache parapotamios* later in Book 4.

The change in tone of the upcoming scene is made clear by *Martemque minorem* and *ad maiora*, which Silius uses to mark the transition from the mass melee to the elevated realm of a Homeric duel. We also see a repetition of the same *decus* which Catus so fruitlessly pursued. Scipio displays this same Roman urge for *decus* as he charges towards Crixus, but unlike Catus he will be successful this time, although it will not be long before his recklessness requires divine (or semi-divine) intervention later in the battle.

Spaltenstein, in a brief note, compares Scipio's speech to his horse with Mezentius' final words to his in *Aen.* 10. 860, and indeed there seem to be several interesting connections between Scipio, Aeneas, Crixus, and Mezentius.<sup>155</sup>

haud deiectus equum duci iubet, hoc **decus** illi,  
 hoc solamen erat, bellis hoc victor abibat  
 omnibus, **adloquitur** maerentem et talibus inquit: 860  
 "Rhaebe, diu, res si qua diu mortalibus ulla est,  
 viximus. aut hodie victor spolia illa cruenta  
 et caput Aeneae referes Lausique dolorum  
 ultor eris mecum, aut, aperit si nulla viam vis,  
 occumbes pariter; neque enim, fortissime, credo, 865  
 iussa aliena pati et dominos **dignabere** Teucros."  
 (*Aen.* 10. 858 – 866)

[... undismayed, he bids his horse be brought. This was his pride, this his solace; on this he rode victorious from every battle. He addresses the grieving beast and accosts it thus: "Rhaebus, we have lived long, if anything lasts long for mortals. Today you will either carry away in victory those bloody spoils and the head of Aeneas, and with me avenge the sufferings of Lausus, or, if no force opens a way, you will die with me; for you, gallant steed, will not deign, I think, to endure a stranger's orders and a Trojan lord!"

The verbal parallels, even for Silius' standards, are very slight. *Adloquitur* (which activates the note for Spaltenstein) is about as close as it gets; both scenes see the presence of *decus*, Scipio

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<sup>155</sup> Spaltenstein 1986 *ad loc.* "Cette idée peut paraître naturelle, et donc banale, mais les auteurs lui donnent une emphase qui suppose plutôt que l'on y voyait un motif suggestif."

promises it while Rhaebus itself is a *decus*; *donabere* and *dignabere*, both in the same position in the speech (penultimate word and same metrical position), the same verbal shape, and with vocal and visual similarities, seem close enough to merit being parallels. Now that we have our eyes on the Mezentius passage, however, let us examine the details of Crixus' death in this context:

**tum** nodo cursuque levi simul adiuvat **hastam**,  
dignum mole viri nisus. fugit **illa per oras**  
**multiplicis lini subtextaque tegmina nervis**  
atque **altum** tota metitur cuspide pectus.  
(*Pun.* 4. 289 – 92)

[Then he added force to his spear by the thong and by the trotting of his horse, and threw it with an effort worthy of his huge antagonist. Through the many folds of linen it sped and through the shield fashioned of hide, and pierced with the length of its point his inmost breast.]

There are some very close parallels, not to Mezentius' actual death at *Aen.* 10. 907 – 9 but his first, near-death experience at *Aen.* 10. 783 – 86, when he is saved at the last minute by his son – the first of many connections between this scene and the battle at the Ticinus.

**tum** pius Aeneas **hastam** iacit: **illa per orbem**  
aere cavum **triplici**, per **linea terga tribusque**  
transit **intextum tauris** opus, **imaque** sedit  
inguine, sed viris haud pertulit.  
(*Aen.* 10. 783 – 86)

[Then loyal Aeneas casts a spear; through the hollow shield of threefold bronze, through the layers of linen and the inwoven work of triple bull hides, it sped, and lodged low in the groin; but it did not drive its force home.]

Now there is a true density of verbal parallels: both passages are four lines which begin with *tum*; *illa per oras* and *illa per orbem* are very similar, with essentially the same meaning and the same metrical position; both spears fly through layers of linen (*lini* and *linea*) and shields are bound (*intextum* and *subtexta*) with animal hide (*tauris* and *nervis*), Vergil's through triple layers

(*triplici* and *tribus*) and Silius' through 'multiple folds' (*multiplaci*), and both spears cause a wound at the deepest part of the blow (*altum* and *ima*). As we have seen before, Silius follows the source passage very closely, but varies his language to avoid exact quotation. To mirror a scene so closely, yet so consistently to sidestep Vergil's language is strong proof of Silius' engagement with the actual text of his source passages.

The major difference between these two scenes is, of course, that Crixus dies in this passage but Mezentius is rescued by his son and is not killed for another 120 lines. It seems here that Silius is engaging in the 'poetics of contingency,' as seen before in the death of Catus. With Catus' death, the defensive *exemplum* of the *Aeneid* is pointedly not followed, and the result is a pointless and avoidable death. For Crixus we see the opposite effect as the unfulfilled blow in the *Aeneid* is now completed by Scipio in the *Punica*; there is no son to rescue Crixus and he falls to the ground like a defeated Giant. This fits well with Silius' hyperbolic depiction of his characters; Scipio's father finishes what Aeneas cannot, just as he will outdo Achilles in his upcoming *mache parapotamios*. This of course will make Scipio (the future Africanus) himself that much greater than both heroes when he saves his father at the end of the battle. In the death of Crixus, Silius aligns his Gallic chieftain with the famed *contemptor divum* of the *Aeneid*, except he alters the scene to have Crixus die during the first blow. Crixus can now join the ranks of Catus, Tyrrhenus, Misenus, and Tolumnius as a man who raises his head up too far, seeks what is not right to seek, and is struck down.

### 1.5.3: Garganus and Silian Nomenclature

As any reader of the *Punica* knows well, Silius delights in nomenclature, seemingly doing everything he can to avoid writing simply "Roman," "Carthaginian," "Italian," etc. Duff

sees this as a grave flaw, writing that the poet “did himself serious injury by what might seem a trifling matter – his system of nomenclature ... Variety is good; but here it was carried to excess.”<sup>156</sup> Spaltenstein (n. 1. 152) admits that Silius often has a well-researched reason for his names, either historical, ethnographical, or Vergilian, but still concludes that the link is rarely more than surface level. The *communis opinio* was for some time that Silius’ names, be they people, ethnicities, geographical locations, were chosen simply for variety or metrical convenience. Thankfully, this sentiment is fading quickly, and more and more scholars are acknowledging the care with which Silius selects his names.<sup>157</sup> With that in mind, what can be said about Garganus, the name of Scipio’s horse – why did Silius choose this particular name, and how can this help shape our interpretation of the following scene?

Spaltenstein comments only that Garganus is the name of a mountain in Apulia and that Silius is the *only* author to derive a name from this source; not an interpretive commentator, he leaves it at that.<sup>158</sup> Yet the name seems especially meaningful when we understand that Silius uses *Gargani ferventia caedibus arva* to describe the battle of Cannae at 9. 483, and several other times in that same book to describe the surrounding area.<sup>159</sup> By evoking the specter of Cannae at the very moment before the elder Scipio’s triumph over Crixus, Silius adds a foreboding subtext to the duel. Furthermore, 9. 483 is spoken by Athena as Jupiter intervenes in the averted duel between Hannibal and Scipio at Cannae. This even more clearly paints the duel between Scipio’s

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<sup>156</sup> Duff 1934: xiii.

<sup>157</sup> See, in addition to the Catus and Tyrrhenus examples above, Augoustakis 2005, and Cowan 2009 for examples of Silian nomenclature and etymology.

<sup>158</sup> Spaltenstein 1986 *ad loc.*: “Le Garganus est un promontoire d’Apulie, dont Sil. est le seul à tirer un nom.”

<sup>159</sup> 9. 33 – 34: *cum spargere primis / incipiet radiis Gargana cacumina Phoebus*; 9. 212: *neu vos Garganus Daunique fefellerit ora*; Silius also refers to Cannae as *Gargani campum* at 17. 600.

father and Crixus as a stand-in for the duel between Africanus and Hannibal which never occurs; both Scipio *pater* v. Crixus and Scipio v. Hannibal occur in the presence of a ‘Garganus.’

Additionally, if we pursue Mt. Garganus further, we come quickly to the battle of Mt. Garganus, during the Spartacus War, when two consuls defeated a large army of rebels and killed Spartacus’ commander, a man who happens to be named Crixus.<sup>160</sup> This is, admittedly, according to Appian, who was born very close to Silius’ death and so cannot be the poet’s source. Livy’s *Periochae* 96 gives only (as always) tantalizing details, that a Quintus Arrius destroyed a Crixus, the *fugitivorum dux*, in battle but does not give the location. It would be, I think, surprising if Livy omitted the location of the battle, and Appian is not so far removed from Silius to make him untrustworthy; let us then imagine for the moment at least that Silius knew of a battle at Mt. Garganus during which a commander named Crixus was killed. Mt. Garganus does come up several more times in the *Punica*, for example in a simile at *Pun.* 8. 223, but it is, as Spaltenstein notes, especially interesting that here (and only here) it is the name of a horse. With that in mind, I find it not unlikely that Scipio’s horse is a reference to this battle – the coincidence of Garganus and Crixus, as well as the unique nature of the name and its placement just before the duel with Crixus, is too strong. If this is correct, the choice for Scipio’s horse’s name is in fact a reference to the battle in which a Roman consul defeated the Spartacan Crixus. Viewed from this perspective, Crixus suddenly becomes another in a line of rebellious upstarts who are put down with violent effort by Roman consuls. And yet again, as we saw with Bogus, Carthaginian power in the *Punica* is described using examples of those defeated by the Romans. Ticinus was a victory for the Carthaginians, this historical fact is unavoidable, but within that victory an entire microcosm of Roman victories is invoked: that of Camillus over Brennus and

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<sup>160</sup> Appian: BC 1.14.117.

the Gauls, Aeneas over Mezentius and Turnus, the Romans over Crixus and the Spartacan rebels – even Zeus’ victory over Typhon (as we will shortly see in 1.5.5). This fits well with Silius’ compression of history, as he seeks to squeeze the entirety of Roman history in the battles of his all-encompassing epic, including a mix of past and future events as viewed from the locus of the Second Punic War. This compression comes to a head as the two warriors exchange spear-throws, reprising the themes which first began in the death of Catus.

#### 1.5.4: Scipio vs. Crixus: Spear-throwing, Full Circle

After Scipio has urged his horse on and the battle lines give space for the two to duel, each man utters one final taunt and hurls their spear. This duel, and the concluding double simile, marks the end of the first part of the battle as delineated above by Niemann, and Silius marks this by bringing the theme of intertextual spear-throwing back to the opening of the battle. Crixus deals the first blow:

‘nemone incensae captaeque superfuit urbi,  
 ut tibi, quas Brenni populus ferremus in arma,           280  
 narraret, dextras ? disce en nunc’ inquit et una  
 contorquet nodis et obusto robore duram  
**vel portas quassare trabem.** sonat illa tremendum  
 ac **nimio iactu** servasse **improvida** campi  
 distantis spatium propiorem transvolat hostem.       285  
 (*Pun.* 4. 279 – 285)

[“When Rome was taken and burnt, was no survivor left, to tell you the strength of arm that the tribe of Brennus showed in battle? Well, learn it now!” As he spoke, he threw his spear, whose knotted strength and fire-hardened point were fit to batter down even a city gate. With a dreadful sound it flew; but it went too far, misjudging the distance to be crossed, and the foe was too close; so it passed over the consul’s head.]

Recalling his supposed ancestor Brennus for a final time, Crixus hurls a spear with mighty effort that flies harmlessly over Scipio's head. This passage brings to mind the spear-throw of Bogus, whose spear was also poorly aimed, although his was notably too weak rather than too strong. Scipio corrects Catus' behavior at the beginning of the battle, waits for the proper time to achieve *decus*, and does not vainly seek out Crixus' poorly aimed shot. Like Bogus, who dies *deceptus* at Trebia, Crixus' spear is assigned a mortal flaw which can easily be transferred from spear to spear-thrower (*improvida*). Both Bogus and Crixus are blind to their and Carthage's inevitable fate; only Silius (and his readership) know the true outcome, however unlikely it may seem at the battle of Ticinus. The one final shout-out to Brennus transforms this encounter into an epicized duel between Camillus and Brennus, which, like that between Scipio and Hannibal, never actually occurred. By highlighting a Rome vs. Gaul dichotomy, Silius raises the stakes for this battle, which looks more and more like a nightmarish recreation of that famous *dies ater*.

In fact, bringing us once again full circle, Livy's depiction of the Gaul's entry into Rome after Allia is considered to have been "inspired partly by memories of the aftermath of Cannae,"<sup>161</sup> an example, perhaps, of Van der Keur's 'retroactive intertextuality.' Simultaneously, the Camillus subtext raises Scipio (and by extension, his son) to the heights of a five-time consul and 'second founder' figure, providing an outline for Scipio Africanus' future rise and yet another link between Romulus, Camillus, Africanus, and Augustus. Finally, the mention of his spear (*trabes* is an interesting choice rather more suitable for a battering ram than spear)<sup>162</sup> being fit to shake the walls of a city paints Crixus again as a would-be Hannibal, who in Book 12 does actually strike the gates of Rome with his spear using similar language (*Pun.* 12. 565 – 6: *nunc aditus lustrat, clausas nunc cuspide pulsat / infesta portas fruiturque timore paventum*).

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<sup>161</sup> Ogilvie 1965: 720, who also cites the Persians at Delphi and the sack of Athens as other influences.

<sup>162</sup> Spaltenstein calls this word choice "hyperbolique."

The throw also recalls Turnus' stone-throw from *Aen.* 12. 905 – 7, though this one tellingly fails through too much effort (*nimio iactu*) rather than not enough. *Nimio iactu* also highlights Crixus' theomachic flaws, especially with him just having been compared to Mimas in line 276. Gigantomachic imagery will continue to be an important theme for Crixus and his death. The prideful ambition implied in *nimio iactu* ('excessive boasting?') evokes Tyrrhenus, and through him Mezentius, the *contemptor divum*,<sup>163</sup> as well as the *nec modicus* that describes Thrasymennus' father – another Tyrrhenus – in book 5. Crixus' last throw, full of double meanings, is as deceptive as Bogus' first and his great strength is really the excessive pride (*nimio iactu*) which ushers in an inevitable fall.

Scipio's throw, on the other hand, finds its mark easily, ending the duel (and this section of the battle) the same way Bogus began it – this time with a Roman, if only momentarily, in the victorious position.

cui consul: “ferre haec umbris proavoque memento,  
 quam procul occumbas Tarpeia seda, tibi que  
 haud licitum sacri Capitolia cernere montis.”  
 tum nodo cursuque levi simul adiuvat hastam,  
 dignum mole viri nisus. fugit illa per oras                    290  
 multiplicis lini subtextaque tegmina nervis  
 atque altum tota metitur cuspide pectus.  
 procumbit lata porrectus in arva ruina,  
 et percussa gemit tellus ingentibus armis.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 286 – 294)

[“But to him said Scipio: “Remember to tell the shades below and Brennus, your ancestor, how far from the Tarpeian temple you fell, and that *you* were not permitted to behold the sacred hill of the Capitol.” Then he added force to his spear by the thong and by the trotting of his horse, and threw it with an effort worthy of his huge antagonist. Through the many folds of linen it sped and through the shield fashioned of hide, and pierced with the length of its point his

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<sup>163</sup> *Tyrrhenis* appears directly above *Mezentius* in this line (*Aen.* 7. 647 – 48), an interesting coincidence considering Silius' text-based readings of his predecessors.

inmost breast. Down he sank, stretching far over the field in his overthrow, and the earth groaned, smitten by his gigantic armor.]

Scipio's attack is neither *improvida* nor *nimio iactu* but 'worthy' (*dignum*). Unlike Crixus' overweening opinion of his own strength (his high opinion of himself is literalized by the spear sailing far over his opponent's head), this throw has the proper amount of weight behind it. Duff translates *dignum mole viri nisus* as "with the effort worthy of his huge antagonist," but, while this perhaps is meant to anticipate the *ingentibus armis* of line 294, the phrase may instead be better rendered as "worthy of a hero's (as in the epic, singular *vir*) strength," contrasting Crixus' failed status with Scipio's more proper, Roman characterization. Both interpretations may be in play, in any case, since Crixus indeed falls to the ground with a pointedly gigantic crash.

#### 1.5.5: Duel Similes: Part 1

For the depiction of Crixus' death, Spaltenstein, our only commentator on the passage, rightly points us to *Aen.* 9. 709, when Turnus slays the Trojan Bitias in a very similar way:

conlapsa ruunt immania membra,  
dat **tellus gemitum** et clipeum super intonat **ingens**.  
(*Aen.* 9. 708 – 9)

[The giant limbs totter and fall; the earth groans, and the huge shield thunders over him.]

The similarities are very clear; Silius cleverly reverses the order of *tellus gemitum* into *gemit tellus* and places his Turnus surrogate (Crixus) in the position of a victim of Turnus in the *Aeneid*. Hardie also remarks that the *intonat* at the end of that line reproduces the Mother earth/Father sky motif of the mythological Gigantomachy.<sup>164</sup> The *clipeum ... ingens* is picked up in Silius' passage with *ingentibus armis*, and *immania membra* is used of Crixus when he was

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<sup>164</sup> Hardie 1986: 146.

first introduced at 4. 149. Vergil lends even more color to this death, capping it with an extended simile:

talis in Euboico Baiarum litore quondam                    710  
 saxea pila cadit, magnis quam molibus ante  
 constructam ponto iaciunt; sic illa ruinam  
 prona trahit penitusque vadis inlisa recumbit:  
 miscent se maria et nigrae attolluntur harenae,  
 tum sonitu Prochyta alta tremit durumque cubile       715  
 Inarime Iovis imperiis imposta Typhoeo.  
 (*Aen.* 9. 710 – 716)

[So on the Euboic shore of Baiae falls at times a rocky mass, which, built up first of mighty blocks, men cast into the sea: so as it falls, it trails havoc, and crashing into the waters finds rest in the depths; the seas are in turmoil and the black sands mount upward; then at the sound lofty Prochyta trembles, and Inarime's rugged bed, laid by Jove's command above Typhoeus.]

As so often, Silius uses one clear allusion (*tellus gemitum* > *gemit tellus*) as an entry-point to a longer and more sustained intertext with Vergil. And so, the simile which immediately follows the death of Crixus mirrors Vergil's simile quite closely:

haud aliter, **structo** Tyrrhena ad **litora saxo**  
 pugnatura fretis subter caecisque procellis  
**pila** immane **sonans** impingitur ardua **ponto**;  
 immugit Nereus, divisaque caerula pulsu  
**illisum** accipiunt irata sub aequora montem.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 295 – 299)

[Even so, when masons build on the Tuscan shore, they hurl a mass of stone from a height upon the water with a mighty noise, to battle with the sea and the invisible currents below; the sea roars; and the deep, parted by the blow, receives the huge mass as it crashes beneath the angry water.]

Silius follows Vergil's language here quite closely, although again never fully quoting it. The image itself is the exact same, that of the construction of shoreline buildings and the crashing sights and sounds the weight of stones create. The closeness of the two passages is further

strengthened by Silius' use of *ruina* and *procumbit* for the death of Crixus, anticipating Vergil's *ruinam* and *recumbit* in the simile; the *ruinam* of Vergil's simile becomes in Silius the downfall of Crixus, which then immediately recalls the Vergilian simile, although of course avoiding *ruina*. Silius – and Vergil – gives the simile contemporary flavor by describing the construction techniques used for Roman villas, perhaps even for his own Campanian getaway.<sup>165</sup>

With the appearance of Typhon in the final line of Vergil's simile, the gigantic imagery surrounding Crixus is extended to its maximum possible extent, that of Zeus's cataclysmic struggle with his most dangerous enemy. While not appearing here except through allusion, Typhon does appear twice in the *Punica*, both times with reference to Inarime.<sup>166</sup> With this in mind Scipio can now more fully take on a Jovian guise as he defeats the Typhonian Crixus and casts him down into the sea. So too will Hannibal, the figure ultimately lurking behind Crixus, be cast down by the commands of Jupiter before the walls of Rome in *Punica* 12. Broadly speaking, this simile touches upon the theme of the defeat of the chaotic forces of nature by divine (or Roman) order, a theme to be resumed throughout the Trebia's *mache parapotamios*.<sup>167</sup>

Finally, let us return to a momentary, and perhaps speculative, yet nonetheless interesting point on Silian nomenclature. As discussed above, Silius' names are not random, nor chosen solely for variety, but in fact carefully hand-picked, usually with a meaningful intertext in mind. Take, for example, the death in Vergil just examined, that of a certain Bitias killed by Turnus in *Aen.* 9. This death is strongly alluded to by Silius in his death of Crixus, which also serves to

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<sup>165</sup> Duff: "Silius refers to the houses built by rich Romans on the Campanian coast; these often projected over the sea." Spaltenstein: "Vergil s'inspire d'une réalité contemporaine, ce qui est assez rare."

<sup>166</sup> *Pun.* 8. 541 and 12. 148.

<sup>167</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 206 n.21 touches briefly upon the theomachic qualities of this simile, writing that "The sublime and cataclysmic imagery of a mountain clashing with the angry sea elevates the use of wealth and technology into a kind of theomachy in which the Romans dominate the realms of earth and water."

introduce an intertextual simile extending Crixus' role as a gigantic, titanic, even Typhonomachic figure; but does a Bitias ever actually appear in the *Punica*? Indeed he does, in an image on the shield of Hannibal in Book 2:

**molibus hi claudunt portus**, his tecta domosque  
partiris, iustae Bitia venerande senectae.  
(*Pun.* 2. 408 – 9)

[Some were enclosing a harbor with piers; to others, Bitias, righteous and venerable old man, you were assigning the dwellings.]

The connection is slight but perhaps not completely tenuous; Bitias retains his association with large-scale shoreline construction projects.

#### 1.5.5: Duel Similes: Part 2

The death of Bitias proves to be a turning point for the battle in *Aen.* 9 and immediately afterwards Mars gives the Trojans strength, paving the way for Turnus' eventual departure from the battle and the end of the book.<sup>168</sup> Crixus' death, too, creates an immediate turning point at the battle of the Ticinus, as Gallic morale instantly collapses at the sight of their defeated leader.<sup>169</sup> Silius reverses Vergil's situation: in Silius, the death of an enemy warrior causes a rout of his forces, while in Vergil the death of a Trojan warrior causes a resurgence among the allied defenders. Silius emphasizes the triumph of the Romans over the fleeing Gauls with another simile following immediately on the heels of the first:

ac veluti summo venator densa Picano  
cum lustra exagitat spissisque cubilibus atram  
immittit passim dumosa per inuia pestem,

<sup>168</sup> *Aen.* 9. 717 – 18: *hic Mars armipotens animum virisque Latinis / addidit et stimulus acris sub pectore vertit.*

<sup>169</sup> *Pun.* 4. 300: *ductore amisso pedibus se credere Celtae.*



**ac velut** optato ventis aestate coortis 405  
 dispersa **immittit** silvis **incendia** pastor,  
 correptis **subito** mediis extenditur una  
 horrida per latos **acies Volcania** campos,  
 ille **sedens victor flammis** despectat ovantis  
**non aliter** socium virtus coit omnis in unum 410  
 teque iuvat Palla.

(*Aen.* 10. 405 – 411)

[And as in summer, when the winds he longed for have risen, some shepherd kindles fires here and there among the woods; suddenly the spaces between catch fire, and Vulcan's bristling battleline spreads unbroken over the broad fields; he, from his seat, gazes down victorious on the reveling flames; just so all your comrades' chivalry rallies to one point in aid of you, Pallas!]

Here, the description of fires spreading over the countryside is used for Pallas' allies flocking to his aid. Silius has reversed the meaning: the Gauls flee rather than rally, broken and dispirited at the death of their leader, and the Homeric 'shepherd of the host' has now become a hunter of fearful animals.<sup>171</sup> The implication here is entirely positive: the shepherd is a *victor*, the flames are *ovantis*, and the unambiguous *virtus* of his allies comes to his aid. The scene is tinged, however, with a bittersweet tone, as this same rally will soon lead to Pallas' death at Turnus' hands.

The change from *pastor* to *venator* is interesting and deserves some examination. Similes with hunters are not uncommon in Latin poetry, but in similes of field or forest burning the figure is virtually always a *pastor*.<sup>172</sup> The change from *pastor* to *venator* highlights the change from ally-focused to enemy-focused; a *pastor* rallies cherished allies to his cause, a *venator* chases down terrified and mindless animals for sport. Scipio (and so the Romans) does not rely

<sup>171</sup> Harrison 1991: 177 describes the Homeric ποιμήν λαῶν and Vergil's use of the word *pastor*.

<sup>172</sup> Silius uses a similar image two other times, at *Pun.* 7. 351 – 366 and 9. 605 – 610, both with *pastor*; Lucan at *BC* 9. 182 – 185 is similar, but the unnamed figure is neither *venator* or *pastor*; Spaltenstein 1986: 292 comments that this technique (using fire to flush out game) is not mentioned anywhere else.

on the flocks' strength as Pallas does, instead he rushes in by himself – often to his detriment. Despite the positive portrayal of Scipio, he is still shown to have the same flawed over-eagerness that the Romans of the first half of the poem all display. Interestingly enough, there is no mention of hunting dogs, as there are during other hunting similes; this hunter apparently hunts alone.<sup>173</sup>

The quickly-spreading fires and terrified cattle anticipate another rather darker simile from Book 7 of the *Punica*. Trapped by Fabius, Hannibal implements a daring nighttime distraction, lighting the horns of cattle ablaze and releasing them into the countryside. This is a very different, more sinister and perverted kind of fire, one which places the horrified Romans in the place of the *ferae* and *volucres* of the earlier simile and transforms the *venator*'s controlled burning into the unrestrained destruction of the Italian landscape. The scene ends with a pair of similes, the second of which describes a *pastor* watching the flames from a mountainside, linking back to the *Aen.* 10 simile as well.

rapida iam subdita **peste**  
 virgulta atque altis surgunt e cornibus ignes.  
 hic vero ut, gliscente malo et quassantibus aegra  
 armentis capita, adiutae **pinguescere flammae**  
 coepere, et vincens **fumos** erumpere **vertex:** 355  
 per colles **dumosque** (lues agit atra) per altos  
 saxosi scopulos montis lymphata feruntur  
 corpora anhela boum, atque obsessis naribus igni  
 luctantur frustra rabidi **mugire iuveni.**  
 per iuga, per valles errat Vulcania **pestis,** 360  
 nusquam stante malo; vicinaque litora fulgent.  
 quam multa, affixus caelo sub nocte serena,  
 fluctibus e mediis sulcator navita ponti  
 astra videt; quam multa videt, fervoribus atris  
 cum Calabros urunt ad pinguia pabula saltus, 365  
**vertice Gargani residens incendia pastor.**

(*Pun.* 7. 351 – 366)

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<sup>173</sup> Dogs appear in hunting similes at, for example, *Aen.* 12. 749 – 755, *Met.* 1. 533 – 538, *BC* 4. 437 – 444.

[The brushwood was quickly kindled, and fire rose high from the horns of the cattle. But when the mischief spread and the beasts tossed their tortured heads, the flames, so helped, grew thicker, and their crest burst upwards through the smoke and conquered it. All over the hills and thickets, over the high cliffs of the rocky mountain, the maddened cattle rushed on panting, driven by that dreadful scourge; and the steers, their nostrils stopped by the fire, tried in vain to bellow. Nothing can check the destroying fire: it runs from place to place over hill and valley; and the sea, not far away, reflects it. It was like the multitude of stars which the sailor beholds from his ship as he ploughs the deep on a clear night, with his gaze fixed upon the sky; or like the multitude of fires that the shepherd sees from his seat on Mount Garganus, when the uplands of Calabria are burnt and blackened, to improve the pasture.]

There are several verbal parallels: the fire is a plague (*peste, Vulcania pestis*), which thickens into a dark mass of smoke (*pinguescere flammae, fumos erumpere vertex*), the cattle moan (*mugire iuveni*) and the entire scene is observed by a watchful bucolic figure, this time a shepherd. Silius reverses the order of the two scenes, placing the hunter in the first line of *Pun.* 4. 302 – 310 and withholding the shepherd until the final line of *Pun.* 7. 354 – 366. Finally, the addition of Mt. Garganus as a location hearkens back to the speech with Scipio's horse that began the duel between Crixus and the consul.

References to Garganus, in a sense, bookend the death of Crixus. Garganus also appears as a location in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* 9. 182 – 185, when he compares the funeral pyres for Pharsalus' casualties with the slash-and-burn fires around Mt. Garganus, adding to the darker tone. "This funereal image," Littlewood comments, "grimly concludes Silius' description of the torture of the cattle, which are now little more than semi-ambulant funeral pyres themselves."<sup>174</sup> By linking these two scenes, Silius gives the fires of the *venator*-simile a potentially deathly and

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<sup>174</sup> Littlewood 2011: 153.

destructive tone, subverting the victory of the Romans over the Gauls. With this passage in mind, the *ferae* and *volucres* fleeing the fires in Book 4 become the Romans stunned by Hannibal's nocturnal diversion in Book 7. As always, Silius avoids direct quotation even with himself, sprinkling the passage with indirectly allusive language. Instead, he strengthens the link between the two similes thematically.

The scene in *Punica 7* is a powerful example of the effects Hannibal's army had on the landscape of Italy. We are, for once, blessed with a detailed modern commentary on the passage, Joy Littlewood's 2011 edition on *Punica 7*, and her learned comments do much to elucidate this passage and many others. Silius successfully displays a "Virgilian empathy" with the oxen, describing them with *aegra* and anthropomorphizing them with *lymphata* as they are consumed by the fires of a perverted sacrifice.<sup>175</sup> The whole scene, as Littlewood rightly notes, has strong undertones of the sack of Troy. *Litora* has long confused commentators (there should be no nearby shoreline to light up),<sup>176</sup> but Littlewood astutely comments that it perhaps is meant to reference the fires which shone around Troy during the sack in *Aen. 2*; the *atra* which describes the fire may be a reference to the *nox atra* which covers Troy at *Aen. 2. 360*; the shepherd watching fires on the mountainside is a clear reference to Aeneas watching Troy burn at *Aen. 2. 307 – 8* (*alto / ... de vertice pastor*); finally, the destruction of so many cattle, an ancient sign of wealth (and a possible etymology for Italy), couples well with the burning of Priam's famously rich city.<sup>177</sup> These cattle may also have talismanic significance for the fate of Italy and the

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<sup>175</sup> Littlewood 2011: 149 – 50.

<sup>176</sup> Spaltenstein 1986: 470: "'Vicina' exagère sans doute et ni Liv. ni. Polyb. ne parlent de la mer : Sil. aura été attiré par cette imagination suggestive ... en négligeant ainsi le cadre historique de cette aventure."

<sup>177</sup> Littlewood 2011: 149 – 52.

Romans much in the same way as Rhesus' horses do for Troy.<sup>178</sup> References to the sack of Troy resonate strongly during the battle of the Ticinus, when Scipio saves his father in a display of Aenean piety; the Ticinus becomes the cataclysm that, like the sack of Troy, sets the Romans off on their long transformative journey. "Poetic evocation of the cataclysm which initiated the Trojans' journey to Rome," Littlewood writes, "was a powerful and emotive reminder that in the Second Punic War Rome's imperial destiny was again imperiled and that Hannibal's escape through the mountain pass would open the way for renewed conflict leading inexorably to the Roman catastrophe at Cannae."<sup>179</sup>

Hannibal's fiery destruction of the wealth of Italy is a sharp contrast to the triumphant tone of the *venator* simile after Crixus' death and the group heroism of the simile in *Aen.* 10. Silius' earlier simile now takes on a darker, more destructive tone, presaging not a Roman victory (which will not be achieved in this battle anyway) but reminding us of the loss of Italy's agricultural wealth under the Hannibalic invasion. The first Gallic half of the battle provides Silius with the opportunity to give the Romans a 'win' at the beginning of the war, but even this victory is described in terms that anticipate Hannibal's fiery escape which led directly to the major defeat at Cannae. This subtext is not immediately spelled out for the reader; both allusions, Vergil's positive depiction of rekindled *virtus* and Silius' later agricultural holocaust, are present when Crixus is defeated and the Gauls retreat at Ticinus. This dual-nature fits the moment well, since, despite the rout of the Gauls and the killing of their best warrior, the Carthaginians now

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<sup>178</sup> "Not only a symbol of Italy, which was said to derive its name, through Oscan, from *vitulus*, the oxen represented the strength of rural Italy; they are celebrated in Virgil's *Georgics* as the working companion of the hardy farmer-warriors and the finest specimens, untouched by the yoke, provided the supreme sacrifice offered to Jupiter by Rome's triumphing generals" (Littlewood 2013: 287); Littlewood 2011: xx. also discusses the scholiast on *Iliad* 10. 435 who cites the oracle involving Rhesus' horse.

<sup>179</sup> Littlewood 2011: xxxvii – xxxviii.

rush the field, Mago and Hannibal in full epic accompaniment, and the Romans will soon be following the Gauls in flight.

#### 1.6.0: Celtomachy: Ticinus' First Half

The deaths during the battle scenes of Silius Italicus' *Punica* have long been thought to be monotonous and repetitive, serving only to fill space in the poem's text and offering little to no poetic, emotional, or intertextual depth. By examining each of the minor deaths during the first half of the battle of Ticinus in *Punica* 4, I have shown that this opinion could not be further from the truth. Beginning with the death of Catus, slain by the seer Bogus at the opening of the battle, we examined how the ceremonial act of spear-throwing activates numerous intertexts with Vergil's *Aeneid*, highlighting the futility of Turnus' efforts against Aeneas, contrasting the discipline of the Trojans with the rashness of the Romans, and showcasing the dangers of false interpretations of omens. The death of Catus exemplifies Silius' poetics of contingency, the idea that the poet provides multiple possible outcomes in a single scene through the use of counterfactuals. Through an examination of Catus' namesake in *Bellum Civile*, we see how Silius uses Lucan's pessimistic epic to give his Catus an ambiguously virtuous death and how the poet continues the Lucanian theme of the glory of death and defeat – and the dubious nature of that glory. The death of Tyrrhenus, the doomed trumpeter, provides intratexts with *Punica* 5 and the story of Thrasymennus, linking the two battles and further cementing Silius' criticism of futile Roman offense when a Fabian strategy is needed. Allusions to Vergil's Misenus, another tragic trumpeter, are identified, whose death and burial just before Aeneas' descent to the underworld lead to a comparison of Lake Trasimene and Vergil's chthonic lakes and rivers. The death and decapitation of Quirinius, a surrogate for Romulus and the city of Rome, replays the

sack of Rome during the Gallic invasion of 390 BC as Silius strives to compress all of Roman history into his epic battles. The death of Crixus, the most major of these ‘minor’ deaths, conjures images of Vergil’s Mezentius and Turnus, as well as an oblique reference to the Spartan general Crixus’ death at Mt. Garganus – all failed rebels against Roman imperial dominance. The spear-throwing between Scipio and Crixus brings us, full-circle, back to the opening of the battle with Bogus and Crixus. Finally, the inter- and intratextually dense similes which end the duel reveal that a more sinister interpretation is hidden beneath the surface-level description of the fleeing Gauls.

These four minor deaths at the battle of Ticinus – Catus, Tyrrhenus, Quirinius, and Crixus – are, as are most things in Silius’ poem, anything but ‘minor.’ An enormously well-read poet, Silius uses these necrologues to explore a wide variety of intertexts, with allusions to Vergil’s Turnus, Misenus, and Mezentius, to Lucan’s civil war battles, to intratexts with later passages in his own poem. Each time, these allusions are done with typical Silian style; a slight verbal parallel leads the reader to the target passage where numerous other subsequent parallels appear surrounding the initial entry point. Although certainly subtle and exceedingly learned, these allusions are far from vain displays of literary erudition. Each one expands on themes that are fundamentally important to Silius’ poetic program. There is an incredible density to this poetry, a style which deserves to be read slowly and carefully and with a willingness to pursue the sometimes slight parallels that often hold major rewards.

## Chapter 2:

### Heroes, Brothers, Sons: Ticinus, Part II (*Pun.* 4. 310 – 479)

#### 2.0.0: Structure and Interpretation

As we have just seen, the first half of the battle of Ticinus (4. 131 – 310) is chiefly concerned with the combat between the Romans and the Carthaginians' Gallic allies led by Crixus, with the result being an epic replay of the Gallic invasions of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC. Accordingly, allusions are made to key figures from Roman history like Camillus and Brennus. In that section, major turning points and transitions consisted of allusively-loaded deaths highlighting the ignorance and flawed heroism of the victims. With the transition to the second half of the battle (4. 311 – 479) the focus is less on 'minor' characters and their deaths in favor of 'major' characters and their exploits. There is, then, a necessary decline in the number of necrologues in this battle (there are still a few), since Silius is now dealing with, for the most part, real historical actors. These include some of the most important agents in the epic: Hannibal, Mago, Scipio and his father, as well as Jupiter and the god of war himself.

Silius continues his overarching goal of the compression of Roman history, but there is now a shift in the area of Roman history that is evoked, with the regal period and the civil wars now both appearing in equal measure. With the invocation of Caesar's civil war also comes a change in tone, under the moody and pervasive influence of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Throughout this second half of the battle there are constant allusions to internal or familial conflict and self-

destructive or suicidal violence, as well an increase in Lucanian vocabulary (*furor, rabies, nefas*, etc.); Statius' doomed Theban brothers likewise become an important analogue. Finally, before the battle can completely collapse into the godless frenzy of Lucanian civil war, Silius brings us back to the safety of Vergilian epic by reintroducing divine actors in dramatic fashion and replaying Aeneas' heroics during the sack of Troy. This near-collapse into civil war violence is only a hint of what will reach its nadir in the violence of Cannae, which is filled to the brim with fratricide, patricide, and suicide.

As we saw earlier (1.1.0), the battle of Ticinus can be broken down into three major sections. The first two, beginning with the pre-battle omen and ending with the death of Catus, were just examined in chapter 1; the third major section will be here explored, further broken down into 3 subdivisions:

1. **Hannibal and the Carthaginians Arrive** (4. 311 – 354).

After the collapse of their Gallic allies, the Carthaginians finally enter the battle joined by Hannibal and Mago. Hannibal makes a dramatic epic entrance in the guise of Mars, accompanied by *Metus, Terror*, and *Furor* and equipped with the glimmering shield he received in Book 2. This depiction of Hannibal will be mirrored and superseded by the appearance of the *real* Mars, who enters combat at line 430. Silius alludes simultaneously back to Hannibal's impressive but still only mortal exploits at Saguntum in Book 2 and anticipates his humbled entrance, overshadowed by Scipio, at Zama in Book 17, giving here at Ticinus a glimpse of Hannibal at his terror-inducing height. A golden line at 354 marks the end of this important transitional section.

2. **Tergemini Fratres** (4. 355 – 400).

This complex scene is a crucial focal point in the battle's second half, as inter-familial violence anticipates the intra-familial piety at the end of the battle. This detailed, allusive passage, evoking Livy's Horatii and Curiatii, depicts two sets of triplet brothers in combat. The surprise result – mutual slaughter with no survivors – instead takes the Livian intertext in a Lucanian and Statian turn, as in their final moments the last brothers recall Eteocles' and Polynices' mutual fratricide in the *Thebaid*. Further complicating the passage, Silius ends with an authorial interlude and prayer that future generations might see brothers such as these, muddying the moral of the scene with a subtle allusion to the two brothers who ruled Rome during his lifetime.

### 3. *Consul and puer* (401 – 479)

The third and final section of Ticinus' Punic half transforms the familial conflict and fratricidal violence of the previous scene into an exemplary act of piety. As the Roman troops begin to waver and flee, Scipio Maior attempts to rally them back to the front line using language that strongly recalls Caesar at the Rubicon in *Bellum Civile*. He invokes a personified Roma, conjures up imagery of captured children and slaughtered parents and then offers, with Caesarian recklessness, to single-handedly hold back the tide. Ticinus, a river (lest we forget), becomes a reverse Rubicon, and Scipio an anti-Caesar attempting to stop the crossing. Conversely, Hannibal is Caesarized, becoming an unstoppable and destructive force invading Italy like Lucan's villain/anti-hero.<sup>180</sup> Familial imagery

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<sup>180</sup> In his Caesarization of Hannibal, Silius engages in the long tradition of viewing Caesar as another Hannibal. Connors 1998: 128 – 131 discusses how Eumolpus' Civil War poem in Petronius' *Satyricon* (118-124) makes heavy use of this characterization; Caesar had already been compared to Hannibal by Cicero (*Ad. Att.* 7.11.1: *utrum de imperatore populi Romani an de Hannibale loquimur?*); Lucan's Caesar compares himself to Hannibal at *BC* 1.303 – 5 (*non secus ingenti bellorum Roma tumultu / concutitur quam si Poenus transcenderet Alpes / Hannibal*); Caesar is worse than Hannibal at *BC* 7.799 – 803 (*non illum Poenus humator / consulis et Libya succensae lampade Cannae / compellunt, hominum ritus ut*

continues as Jupiter, in language that highlights the links between Scipio, Mars, and Jupiter, sends the god of war, who easily outdoes Hannibal's earlier entrance, to inspire Scipio to save his father. Scipio carries his father from the field and receives a prophecy from Mars of his future victory over Carthage. This marks the beginning of what Raymond Marks calls the "education of Scipio," a process which lasts until the beginning of Book 15 and which prepares him to defeat Hannibal and ascend to the heights of one-man rule at Rome.<sup>181</sup>

#### 2.1.1: Enter Hannibal (*Pun.* 4. 311 – 54, 2. 208 – 214, 4. 430 – 444)

It is important to note the significance of this opening scene: when Mago calls the Carthaginian cavalry to battle at line 313 it marks the first time in the epic and the war that the Romans engage directly with the Carthaginian troops in Italy. This important moment is marked by a simile comparing the two sides to the churning of the sea in a storm (320 – 323),<sup>182</sup> but, perhaps more importantly, this scene describes the first time that Hannibal himself is seen by the Romans. The occasion is appropriately epicized; Hannibal's entrance onto the battlefield at the beginning of the second half of the battle is one of his most unambiguously impressive moments

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*servet in hoste, / sed meminit nondum satiate caedibus ira, / cives esse suos*); For more on Caesar and Hannibal, see Ahl 1976: 105 -12, Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2511 – 15, and Stocks 2014: 67 – 70.

<sup>181</sup> "...it has not always been fully appreciated that all of the episodes in which he takes part throughout these years, though separated from one another by as much as three books in some cases, are thematically related and constitute, when read together, a coherent whole: they document Scipio's "education," a process of development or maturation in which he learns to temper his impetuosity with moderation and focus and comes to understand the central importance of dutiful service to his country" (Marks 2005b: 114 – 15).

<sup>182</sup> The simile recalls *Aen.* 11. 624 – 629, as Spaltenstein rightly notes, and so places the scene in the context of Camilla's entrance in the *Aeneid*.

in the epic – and one that he will never again be able to recreate. Gleaming in his gold and purple armor, he bursts onto the scene as a dread god of war, striking fear in the Romans.

advolat aurato praefulgens murice ductor  
 Sidonius, circaque Metus Terrorque  
 Furorque. 325  
 isque ubi Callaici radiantem tegminis orbem  
 extulit et magno percussit lumine campos,  
 spes virtusque cadunt trepidaque a mente  
 recedit  
 vertere terga pudor ; nec leti cura decori  
 sed fugere infixum est, terraeque optantur  
 hiatus.

(*Pun.* 4. 324 – 330)

[Now the Carthaginian leader flew to the spot, gleaming in purple and gold, and with him were Fear and Terror and Madness. When he raised up the beamy circle of his Gallician shield and threw a great light over the plains, then hope and courage fled, and the shame of retreat was forgotten by fearful hearts; none cared for a noble death, but all were resolved to fly and prayed for the earth to swallow them.]

Hannibal is described entering the field as the god of war, with Mars' usual company of personified attendants. This depiction is quite traditional ("habituel," as Spaltenstein notes) with a long history in epic going back to Homer. Hannibal's close connection to Mars may at first seem to imply that the god of war favors the Carthaginian side, but Mars' entrance into battle in lines 430 – 444, coming to the Romans' aid at Jupiter's behest, will soon undercut this notion. The closest echo from the *Aeneid* may be *Aen.* 12. 331 – 336, when Turnus charges into battle during the titular hero's absence like Mars accompanied by Dread, Wrath, and Deception (*circumque atrae Formidinis ora / Iraque Insidiaeque, dei comitatus, aguntur*); this link to Turnus, forever tied to his defeat by Aeneas, only serves to diminish Hannibal's sheen. This also primes the audience to expect the return of an Aeneas at the end of the battle, an expectation which is fulfilled when *pious* Scipio rescues his father with the assistance of the 'real' Mars.

Revealed later to be a failed imitator, for now Hannibal remains an overwhelmingly intimidating presence, and nowhere else in the epic is he described in as lofty terms as he is when the Romans meet him here for the first time. The importance of this scene lies in the fact that it is not only the Romans' first introduction to Hannibal, but it is the readers' first and final look at the 'complete' Hannibal which had been developing in Books 1 – 3. Hannibal will make no other grand entrance in the poem until Zama in Book 17 on the eve of his defeat – and even that final entrance serves as a sad retrospective on past deeds and reminder of current inadequacy.<sup>183</sup> As mentioned above, Hannibal makes two other dramatic appearances in battle, at the siege of Saguntum in Book 2 and at Zama in Book 17, both of which are closely tied to his entrance at Ticinus. By so strongly linking these three scenes, the rising star at Saguntum, the fully formed legend at Ticinus, and the fading name at Zama, Silius traces the arc of Hannibal's power and provides three points of comparison for his readers. By the time the two generals finally meet at Zama in Book 17, the language used to introduce Hannibal and Scipio echoes that of Saguntum and Ticinus, reminding the readers of Hannibal's former glory and fading power with verbal echoes of the two earlier scenes.

### 2.1.2: Hannibal at Saguntum: Rising Star (2. 208 – 215)

The battle outside the walls of Saguntum in Book 2 is the first battle scene of the epic, although it serves mainly as a prologue to the events of Books 4 – 10. The combat itself is rich

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<sup>183</sup> Trebia begins 4. 512 and Hannibal is shown, without introduction, fighting in close quarters. This could be attributed to the near seamlessness of the two battles, though Gracchus is given an extended introduction; see Chapter 3 for more. Trasimene begins in earnest at 5. 208 (marked by *primae Picentum*) and Hannibal is nestled away in an *ut* clause in the first sentence (*et Hannibalem ruere ut videre*). In Lucanian fashion, the battle of Cannae begins with a depersonalized crush of troops and Hannibal's presence is withheld for the first (exactly) 100 lines. Stocks 2014: 128 – 29 comments that Hannibal at Cannae “appears as one warrior among many – still capable of stopping the onset of Rome's warriors, but no longer described as causing terror wherever he goes.”

and allusively dense, as Bernstein’s fine 2017 commentary fully unpacks. Hannibal’s entrance to this first battle, then, is an especially important moment in the epic, as the readers get their first look at the famous name in action.

namque **aderat** toto ore ferens **iramque**  
**minasque**  
**Hannibal** et caesam Asbyten fixique  
 tropaeum  
 infandum capitis furiata **mente** dolebat.  
 210  
 ac simul aerati **radiavit luminis umbo**  
 et concussa procul membris velocibus arma  
 letiferum intonuere, **fugam percussa** repente  
 ad muros **trepido convertunt** agmina cursu  
 (*Pun.* 2. 208 – 215)

[For Hannibal came up, with wrath and menace expressed in every feature; with frenzied heart he raged at the slaughter of Asbyte, and at the horrid trophy of her head borne aloft. And, as soon as his shield of glittering brass shone out, and the armor on his swift limbs, rattling afar, thundered forth doom, the enemy were suddenly stricken with fear and fled in haste towards the town.]

Hannibal bursts onto the scene in Book 2 after the death of the warrior princess Asbyte, a Camilla-esque figure who had just been killed by the Saguntan Theron.<sup>184</sup> As at Ticinus, Hannibal does not enter the battle until a powerful surrogate has been killed – although at Ticinus his entrance does not seem as directly linked to Crixus’ death as it does here with Asbyte’s. This does, however, strengthen the idea that Crixus at Ticinus and Asbyte at Saguntum are stand-ins for the Carthaginian leader, surrogates whose deaths represent that which Hannibal will never receive during the war.<sup>185</sup> Both scenes are seven lines beginning with an *ad*-prefixed verb (*aderat* and *advolat*) and have many verbal parallels highlighted in bold. At Saguntum, the

<sup>184</sup> See Bernstein 2017 *ad* 56 – 221 for a detailed look at Asbyte’s interesting relationship with Camilla and other warrior women in Greek and Roman epic.

<sup>185</sup> Bernstein 2017: 115 – 16: “In the vengeance he takes for a minor character, Hannibal evokes Achilles’ vengeance for Patroclus in Homer or Virgil’s Aeneas’ vengeance for Pallas.”

name ‘Hannibal’ is given preeminent location at the beginning of line 209, while his name at Ticinus (in the same position) is replaced by *ductor Sidonius*. The name ‘Hannibal’ is withheld in Book 4 until the very end (4. 730), when Juno is the first to refer to him by name, signaling her intention to make his name a source of terror and grief among the Romans.<sup>186</sup> This reflects a long progression in the use and strength of Hannibal’s *nomen* which is brought to its completion during and after the battle of Zama, discussed in the following section (2.1.3).

The scene is replete with references forward to both Ticinus and Zama. *Ira* and *minae*, while not personified here, may reference the *Irae* which accompany Turnus at *Aen.* 12. 336, and of course this positions Hannibal firmly in the role of a traditional epic hero full of epic wrath. Bernstein comments that *toto ore* is used only once by Vergil in the *Aeneid*, when Turnus takes the battlefield for the last time at *Aen.* 12. 101 (*totoque ardentis ab ore*), further cementing this link.<sup>187</sup> In typical Silian fashion, the poet describes Hannibal’s important first battlefield entrance in the *Punica* using the language of Turnus’ final appearance in the *Aeneid*. While certainly an imposing figure at Saguntum, when compared to his appearance at Ticinus this Hannibal seems immediately less impressive. At Saguntum, Hannibal bears *ira* and *minae* in his expression, but at Ticinus he has the literalized *Metus, Terrorque Furorque* at his side; at Saguntum his shield, described simply as an *umbo*, shines light over the field, while at Ticinus this shield has been expanded to a universal *orbis*; at Saguntum Hannibal provokes a retreat back to the walls, while at Ticinus his aspect is so terrifying that the Romans wish to be swallowed by the earth and *spes* and *virtus* are wiped away.<sup>188</sup> From Saguntum to Ticinus, Hannibal has transformed from an

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<sup>186</sup> Stocks 2014: 119.

<sup>187</sup> Bernstein 2017 *ad* 208 – 9.

<sup>188</sup> Even now the Romans cannot be productive in their retreat; they *should* be retreating since they are no match for Hannibal, and this is the technique which Fabius uses to great effect later in the war, but at Ticinus their fear is a mindless, destructive, panic.

intimidating mortal presence on the battlefield to one whose powers have become supernatural. The fear that Hannibal creates on the battlefield in Book 4 is the direct result of the reputation he has gained in Books 1 – 3, back when he was merely a human warrior. By Book 4, Hannibal has fully embraced his status as a super-*vir* whose very name inspires fear.<sup>189</sup> By so closely lining up the first two of Hannibal’s entrances, Silius encourages the reader to compare the changes which have occurred to the leader’s presence since Saguntum – although in typical fashion he is built up only to be later undermined in this very battle when the true god of war joins the field.

### 2.1.3: *Fontique relabitur amnis*: Mars Corrects the Record (4. 430 – 444)

Near the end of the battle, when Scipio’s father has thrown himself into the fray, Jupiter takes notice and sends Mars to help the younger Scipio score his first victory.

Haec rerum sator. at Mavors in proelia  
 currus 430  
 Odrysia tellure vocat; tum fulminis atri  
 spargentem flammam clipeum galeamque  
 deorum  
 haud ulli facilem multoque labore Cyclosum  
 sudatum thoraca capit quassatque per auras  
 Titanum bello satiatam sanguinis hastam  
 435  
 atque implet curru campos. exercitus una  
 Irarum Eumenidesque simul letique cruenti  
 innumerae facies, frenisque operata regendis  
 quadriiugos atro stimulat Bellona flagello.  
 fertur ab immenso tempestas horrida caelo  
 440  
 nigrantesque globos et turbida nubilia  
 torquens  
 involvit terras; quatitur Saturnia sedes  
 ingressu tremefacta dei; ripasque relinquit,  
 audito curru, fontique relabitur amnis.

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<sup>189</sup> Stocks 2014: 114 – 116 comments on this development: “This is Hannibal on the ascendancy; the man in the process of creating his myth, who, save for brief moments of self-doubt which he displays before his family, appears invincible to the majority of those within the epic.”

(*Pun.* 4. 430 – 444)

[Thus spoke the Father of all things. And straightaway Mars summoned his chariot from the land of Odrysae. Then he took the shield that scatters flames of terrible lightning; he put on the helmet too heavy for any other of the gods to wear, and the breastplate which cost the Cyclopes who wrought it much sweat; he brandished aloft the spear that had its fill of blood in the war with the Titans; and he filled the fields with his chariot. With him went his train – Wrath accompanied by the Furies, and countless forms of bloody death; and Bellona, busy with the reins, urged on the four coursers with her fatal scourge. A fearful storm burst from the boundless sky and shrouded the earth, driving back dark masses of stormy cloud. The land of Saturn trembled and shook at the approach of the god; and the Ticinus left its banks at the sound of the chariot and flowed backwards to its source.]

*At* begins Mars' introduction with a strong adversative, contrasting the war god's action with Jupiter's speech, but perhaps also offering a delayed response to Hannibal's entrance. Silius will employ a similar use of this conjunction when he contrasts Hannibal's and Scipio's entrances before the battle of Zama at *Pun.* 17. 391 – 398 (*ibat Agenoreus praeifulgens ductor ... at contra ardenti radiabat Scipio cocco* – see section 2.1.4 below). Unlike Hannibal, whose attributes only hint at a divine status, Mars here is the epitome of a god on the battlefield: his shield scatters the flames of terrible lightning, his armor is made by the Cyclopes (contrasting sharply with Hannibal's man-made shield), his spear is that which Mars used in the war with the Titans, and, in complete fulfillment of the archaic epic archetype, he enters the battlefield in a massive chariot.<sup>190</sup> The mention of the Titans picks up the imagery of Titanomachic or Gigantomachic combat that we saw back in Scipio's duel with Crixus (1.5.5) and hints at an incoming clash between Mars and Titano-Hannibal. Although this never occurs at Ticinus, it does anticipate the

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<sup>190</sup> The detail of a helmet "too heavy for any other of the gods to wear" may also be a subtle dig at Hannibal's vain attempts at divinity; Hannibal is not even considered a feasible option.

full-on theomachy that occurs at Cannae between Mars (with Scipio) and Athena (with Hannibal) at *Pun.* 9. 438 – 485, yet even *this* duel is interrupted when Jupiter takes notice.

Mars brings with him the *Irae*, now fully personified unlike Hannibal's angry features in Book 2, and the primal *Eumenides* (perhaps because his usual accompaniment, *Metus*, *Terrorque Furorque*, has already found employment in this battle). He also one-ups Hannibal's personified attendants by bringing along Bellona, so that now there are *two* war gods arrayed against the Carthaginian. Mars embraces the world-shaking aspect only implied in Hannibal's *orbis*, shaking the whole land of Italy with his arrival. Even the Ticinus bursts its banks at the coming of the god, anticipating Scipio's battle with the river Trebia later in this same book.

The section ends with the phrase *fontique relabitur amnis* ("the river flowed backwards to its source"), which hammers home not only the war god's supremacy but also his claim to originality; the arrival of Mars redirects the imagery of Hannibal's entrance back to its poetic 'source', it corrects Hannibal's pretensions to martial godhood by presenting the *original* war god in his traditional Homeric aspect.<sup>191</sup> While Hannibal's impressive entrance is already undermined by Mars' even more exaggerated appearance, the completeness of his slow decline will be finalized at the battle of Zama in Book 17. Let us now take a look at this, his final entrance in the epic, noting the similarities and differences it has with the scenes in Books 2 and 4.

#### 2.1.4: Hannibal at Zama: Shadow of a Great Name

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<sup>191</sup> The phrase is also a classic *adynaton* (see, for example, *Aen.* 11.405: *amnis et Hadriacas retro fugit Aufidus undas* and *Ov.Trist.* 1.8.1-2: *in caput alta suum labentur ab aequore retro / flumina*), fitting, perhaps, of a god's abilities. Trebia as well will end with a river subjected to the power of a god.

When Hannibal is introduced before the battle of Zama in Book 17, he retains some of the sheen that was present at Saguntum and Ticinus, but this is directly undercut by Scipio's appearance immediately afterwards as the now fully realized Roman hero usurps much of Hannibal's former power and presence.

ibat Agenoreus **praefulgens** ductor in **ostro**  
 excelsumque caput penna nutante levabat  
 crista rubens. saevus magno de nomine  
**terror**  
 praecedit, Latioque micat bene cognitus  
 ensis.

(*Pun.* 17. 391 – 394)

[The Punic leader came forth, glittering in purple; and the head he bore so high was made higher by his ruddy crest of nodding plumes. Dread and terror of his might name went before him; and his sword that Rome knew so well flashed brightly.]

The similarities to his first two entrances are quite clear: the leader arrives (now *Agenoreus* instead of *Sidonius* or *Hannibal*), gleaming (*praefulgens*) in purple (now *ostro* compared to *aurato ... murice* at Ticinus) and brings *terror* in his wake. The differences, however, are even starker: this appearance is only allotted four lines, while those at Saguntum and Ticinus filled 7 each; *terror*, fully personified at Ticinus, is now demoted back to the abstract noun as Hannibal loses his semi-divine attributes; gone now is Hannibal's impressive shield, whose terrifying radiance was a focal point for both the Saguntum and Ticinus scenes, and has instead been replaced by his "well-known" sword, highlighting Hannibal's transition from physical presence to an abstract concept; it is only Hannibal's reputation (*bene cognitus*) that terrifies the Romans. The reference to Hannibal's sword is strange, since it seems that his shield would be a better candidate. This is made even stranger by the fact that the readers may recall that Hannibal's

sword was liquefied by the lightning of Jupiter at 12. 622 – 26.<sup>192</sup> The presence of *bene cognitus ensis*, then, purposely references Hannibal’s most dramatic failure in the poem, his defeat outside the walls of Rome, and so is “well known” to the Romans (and the reader) from this earlier passage. Finally, the *terror* that Hannibal inspires is now directly linked with his name (*magno de nomine*), further placing the emphasis on Hannibal the *nomen* rather than Hannibal the man.

No longer an *unus vir*, Hannibal must now share the stage with Scipio, whose entrance is described directly afterwards.

at contra ardenti **radiabat Scipio cocco**  
**terribilem** ostentans **clipeum**, quo patris et  
 una  
 caelarat patruī spirantes proelia dira  
 effigies; flammam ingentem frons alta  
 vomebat

(*Pun.* 17. 395 – 398)

[Over against him was Scipio, arrayed in glowing scarlet, and displaying his dreadful shield, on which were engraved the figures of his father and his uncle, breathing fierce battle; and his lofty front sent forth a mighty flame.]

*At contra* introduces a sharp contrast, even more strongly marked than Mars’ entrance at Ticinus because of the juxtaposition of the two descriptions. The name *Scipio* opposes the oblique *Aganoreus ... ductor*, with the Roman *nomen* given precedence over the Carthaginian – in fact, when Hannibal reappears at line 444 he is described as *Hamilcare creatus*, a patronymic that brings “him full circle in the *Punica* by re-associating him with his father.”<sup>193</sup> Like Hannibal’s shield at Saguntum and Ticinus (*radiavit ... umbo* and *radiantem ... orbem*) Scipio glows

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<sup>192</sup> *celsus summo de culmine montis / regnator superum sublata fulmina dextra / libravit clipeoque ducis non cedere certi / incussit. summa liquefacta est cuspis in hasta / et fluxit ceu correptus fornacibus ensis. Fornacibus ensis* is perhaps a reference to *Aen.* 7. 636 (*recoquunt patrios fornacibus ensis*); the end of Hannibal’s power in Italy is described using the language of the beginning of the conflict in *Aen.* 7.

<sup>193</sup> Stocks 2014: 212.

(*radiabat*) in scarlet red,<sup>194</sup> displaying a *terror*-inducing shield, hijacking the imagery of Hannibal's earlier appearance. Hannibal is now accompanied only by the shadow of his father's name (*Hamilcare creatus*), but Scipio enters battle in the full presence of his family members, highlighting the strength derived from his Roman background. The archaic-epic figures of *Metus*, *Terrorque Furorque* have been replaced by the power of the Roman collective; there is no need for personified Fear this time, Scipio can depend on the strength of his ancestors.<sup>195</sup> With his mighty shield and ancestral imagery, Scipio has fully usurped this strongly Aenean and Achillean symbol from Hannibal, whose family members (dead or alive) are notably absent from this battle.<sup>196</sup>

The changes which Hannibal undergoes in his three major entrances in the *Punica* underscores the transition from man, to super-*vir*, to mythical *nomen*. This transition gives Hannibal more power, as he ultimately becomes a specter that will forever haunt the minds of Romans, and yet simultaneously and paradoxically makes him powerless, *only* a name.<sup>197</sup> The ambiguity of this new state is hinted at in the final scene of the epic, when the image of Hannibal is paraded through the streets of Rome in Scipio's triumph. While no longer a physical threat,

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<sup>194</sup> Stocks 2014: 211 highlights the visual aspects of this scene; Hardie 1993: 24 – 5 comments on the interchangeability of the two heroes, remarking that “both generals wear purple – the Punic color!” Tipping 2010: 80 – 1 discusses the nuances of *ostrum* and *coccum*, concluding that, while *coccum* can certainly have non-Roman connotations, it is likely still more Roman than *ostrum*.

<sup>195</sup> Marks 2005: 93 describes Scipio here as a “synecdochic hero ... not simply an *unus*, but an *unus pro omnibus*, a ‘one’ who shoulders the burden of his people’s fate and represents the collective interests of the ‘many’.”

<sup>196</sup> “With his son absent, his brothers dead, Hannibal appears not just as the last bastion of the state, but the sole survivor of his family and his generation. Scipio represents a new generation and a new style of warfare in which Rome no longer defends herself against Hannibal in Italy, but pro-actively takes the war to Carthage” (Stocks 2014: 198).

<sup>197</sup> Hannibal utters his final threat at *Pun.* 17. 609 – 10: [to Jupiter] *decedesque prius regnis quam nomina gentes / aut facta Hannibalis sileant*. Stocks 2014: 230 observes that *sileant* may be a reference to the poet's own name and also (229 n. 23) comments that this passage has several close resonances with Ovid's own claim to epic achievement at *Met.* 15. 871, writing that Hannibal becomes a “pseudo-author to his myth and the *Punica*.” See also Tipping 2010: 104.

Hannibal has become fully transformed into an *imago*, but one which still has the power to capture the minds of the Roman people (*sed non ulla magis mentesque oculosque tenebat / quam ... Hannibalis ... imago*) and, even in his absence, continues to outshine Scipio.<sup>198</sup> These three interconnected scenes, Hannibal's entrances at Saguntum, Ticinus, and Zama, mark crucial turning points in the *Punica* and track Hannibal's changes throughout the epic. By so closely connecting these scenes, Silius continuously reminds the reader of Hannibal's rise and eventual fall; at Saguntum his shield inspires fear among the Romans, looking ahead to the literalized fear that accompanies super-Hannibal at the Ticinus but also anticipating the relegation of that same *terror* to a mere *nomen* at Zama; at Ticinus his shield, enlarged now into an *orbis*, reflects a dramatic increase in Hannibal's power, but these lofty heights only serve to enhance the commensurate fall at the end of the poem; at Zama, Scipio's appropriation of the attributes seen at Saguntum and Ticinus is keenly felt and Hannibal's physical presence gives way to an abstract *nomen*, an *imago* which, while stripped of most of its power, still has the ability to astound and terrify the Romans. Hannibal's progression from man to menace to *nomen* is tracked consistently throughout the *Punica* in many different ways, but these three battle entrances are key turning points around which Silius structures this narrative.

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<sup>198</sup> Stocks 2014: 217 comments on Hannibal's transition to an *imago* in a quasi-funeral procession and how this, in some ways, positions him as an ancestor and superior to Scipio, writing that "By casting Hannibal in the role of the *imagines* of Scipio's ancestors and by having that *imago* captivate the attention of all viewers, Hannibal threatens to steal Scipio's show. His status as a pseudo-ancestor ties him to Scipio and emphasizes his seniority over him, whilst the undivided attention that he can command from his audience, even in his absence, confirms the threat that Hannibal proffers in his final words of the epic." Even in the final moments of the epic, with Hannibal powerless and defeated in the physical world, the *idea* of Hannibal remains potentially dangerous.

### 2.2.1: *Tergemini Fratres*: Brothers at War (*Pun.* 4. 355 – 400)

The next major scene after Hannibal's impressive entrance is the combat between two sets of triplet brothers. Silius makes it very clear that this scene has an important function in the battle through its position directly after Hannibal's appearance, its length (45 lines – much longer than any previous necrologue), its complexity, and its strong Livian parallels. The passage also continues Silius' use of compressive history, as the poet takes the opportunity to replay the battle between the Horatii and Curiatii in miniature, as well as introducing imagery of fraternal or civil war violence through connections to Lucan's *cognatasque acies* (*BC* 1. 4) and Statius' *fraternas acies* (*Theb.* 1. 1). The scene itself can be broken into four sections. In the first (*Pun.* 4. 355 – 372), Silius quickly and clearly marks the passage as Livian with the phrase *tergemini ... fratres*, priming the readers' expectations, but then spends the next 14 lines describing the brothers' names and origins; as always, Silius' use of nomenclature and identity is subtle and purposeful. The second (4. 372 – 379) is a short transitional simile, comparing the brothers to lions fighting lions (an important and revealing image). The third section (*Pun.* 4. 382 – 395) contains the actual combat between the brothers and here Silius continues closely to parallel the structure of Livy's Horatii and Curiatii episode, seemingly fulfilling the expectations introduced with *tergemini ... fratres*, only to suddenly subvert our expectations in the final two lines when the final brothers kill each other as it is revealed that there are no survivors in Silius' retelling of this traditional story. Instead we are left with images of futile violence that recall civil war and the fratricide of Eteocles and Polynices.<sup>199</sup> The fourth and final section (*Pun.* 4. 396 – 400) is an epitaph to the dead brothers, as the poet praises their deaths and wishes for their memory – and

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<sup>199</sup> “However, whereas the last Horatius also killed the last Curiatus, the final confrontation between Virbius and Critias lurches suddenly into a replay of the mutual killing of Eteocles and Polynices...” (Cowan 2007: 17)

his poetry – to last forever. This strange and troubling eulogy recalls the brothers of the Flavian dynasty and leaves the reader unsure of the meaning behind these brothers' deaths.

A tight structure can be discerned throughout, with two longer sections (the 17-line introduction and 15-line combat) each followed by short transitional sections (the 7-line simile and 5-line epitaph). The passage as a whole also acts as a transition between the Carthaginian section dominated by Mago and Hannibal (4. 311 – 354, beginning with *at Mago*) and the Roman section dominated by Scipio and his son (4. 401 – 479, beginning with *at consul*). Furthermore, the triplet battle appears to be constructed as a lead-in and contrast to the following scene involving Scipio's rescue of his father, with Scipio acting to preserve rather than destroy his family.<sup>200</sup> As a unit, the battle of the triplets is a fine example of Silius' ability to interweave skillfully his historical and poetic sources into the battle narrative, alluding, modifying, and commenting on important scenes from the Roman past while simultaneously situating them firmly in the context of his Flavian present.

I will tackle this intricate scene in four sections as well. First, I examine the many parallels to Livy's book 1. I argue (after Cowan) that this unusually close parallelism sets up a last-minute surprise as Silius overturns our expectations with the mutual death of the final two brothers, leading the audience to consider the ramifications of these new contingencies. With the close approximation of Alba and Carthage, what does it mean that in Silius' recreation of this Livian scene there are no survivors? Vergil's Nisus and Euryalus and Statius' Eteocles and Polynices will be important points of comparison. Next, I analyze the names and origins of the six brothers (in two sections), arguing that the Greco-Punic brothers' names connect them to the

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<sup>200</sup> Hardie 1993: 97 comments that the triplet episode gives context to the following scene with Scipio and his father, adding that "this is one of those mirror combats whose limiting case is the fratricide of civil war, and which forecloses the future through the extirpation of the present generation."

Barcids (especially the three famous sons of Hamilcar), while the Italian brothers are linked with early Roman history (especially that found in Livy's first book), Egeria, Numa, and Hippolytus/Virbius. Capua and Alba, both historical rivals to Rome's hegemony in Italy, are referenced in the names Capys and Albanus. Following this thread to the retaking of Capua in Book 13, I discuss the significance of a similar triplet scene there. In the final section I will explore the civil war undertones as present already in the Livy passage. Two similar scenes will be examined, Vergil's Nisus and Euryalus (verbally) and Statius' Eteocles and Polynices (thematically), providing an example of Silius' ability to interact with two sources simultaneously. If these brothers are meant to represent the Barcids and Scipiones, what does it mean that each side destroys the other, especially when considering that the next and final scene in the battle is Scipio's rescue of his father? I also analyze the short but very intriguing epitaph that marks the end of the passage. The hope for *similes fratres* in his own time seems to be a reference to the imperial brothers, Titus and Domitian, but the clear presence of civil war imagery and fratricide problematizes this relationship.

### 2.2.2: The Horatii and Curiatii in Livy and Silius: Bait and Switch Allusion

Let us begin by briefly and superficially comparing Silius' brothers with Livy's regal triplets, before diving into issues of identity. First, the brothers are introduced:

*Punica* 4. 355 – 369:

**Tergemini** primam ante aciem fera proelia **fratres**  
 miscebant, quos Ledaeo Sidonia Barce  
 Xanthippo felix uteri inter bella creatat.  
 res Graiae ductorque parens ac nobile Amyclae  
 nomen et iniectus Spartanis colla catenis  
 Regulus inflabant verteri praecordia fama. 360

Three brothers, all of an age, fought fiercely in the first rank. They were the sons of Barce, a Carthaginian, whom their fertile mother bore, during the wars, to Xanthippus, the Spartan. Their hearts swelled with pride for the past – the victory of Greece when their father led the host, the famous name of Amyclae, and the fetters that the Spartans fastened upon the neck of Regulus.

Marte probare genus factisque Lacona parentem  
 ardebant gelidosque dehinc invisere montes  
 Taygeta et tandem bellis innare subactis  
 Eurotan patrium ritusque videre Lycurgi.  
 Sed Spartam penetrare deus fratresque negabant  
 Ausonii, totidem numero, quos miserat altis  
 Egeriae genitos immitis Aricia lucis,  
**aetatis mentisque pares**; at non dabat ultra  
 Clotho dura lacus aramque videre Dianae.

They burned to prove by deeds the valor of their descent  
 from a Laconian sire; and then they were fain to visit the  
 cold heights of Taygetus, and at last, when the war was  
 over, to swim in their native Eurotas, and see the laws of  
 Lycurgus. But they never went to Sparta; for heaven and  
 three Italian brothers prevented them. The three were of  
 the same age and the same spirit; they were bred in the  
 tall groves of Egeria, and ruthless Aricia sent them forth;  
 but stern Fate suffered them not to look again upon  
 Diana's lake and temple.

Livy 1.24.1 – 3:

Forte in duobus tum exercitibus errant **trigemini fratres nec aetate nec viribus  
 dispares**. Horatios Curiatiosque fuisse satis constat, nec ferme res antiqua alia est  
 nobilior; tamen in re tam clara nominum error manet, utrius populi Horatii, utrius  
 Curiatii fuerint. Auctores utroque trahunt; plures tamen invenio qui Romanos  
 Horatios vocent; hos ut sequar inclinatus animus. Cum trigeminis agunt reges, ut pro  
 sua quisque patria dimicent ferro; ibi imperium fore unde Victoria fuerit. Nihil  
 recusatur; tempus et locus convenit.

[In each army there happened to be a set of three brothers who were not unlike the  
 other in age and strength. It is generally agreed that their names were Horatii and  
 Curiatii, almost no other ancient tradition being better known. Despite such a  
 famous story, there is uncertainty, regarding their names, as to which nation the  
 Horatii belonged and to which the Curiatii. The authorities are divided. But I find  
 that more call the Horatii Roman, and theirs is the opinion that I am inclined to  
 follow. The kings proposed to these young men a combat in which each should  
 fight for his own country, with dominion going to the side that was victorious.  
 There being no objection, a time and place were fixed.]

The brothers are both introduced in similar ways (*tergemini ... fratres* is an especially clear  
 allusion), but the greatest difference between the two passages is that of identity. Silius will  
 spend much more time establishing the origins of each side, listing their names, lineage, and  
 homeland. Livy, on the other hand, is not concerned with the individuals' names, using only  
*Albanus* and *Romanus* to distinguish the two sides. In fact, Livy tells us that there is a dispute  
 among the *auctores* as to which side the Horatii and Curiatii belonged. He eventually sides with  
 the majority opinion that the Horatii were Roman and the Curiatii Alban. This confusion of

identities reflects the interrelatedness of the Albans and Romans which Livy highlights at the beginning of the narrative, even comparing the conflict between Alba Longa and Rome to a civil war – a comparison which will have important ramifications for our interpretation of Silius’ retelling.<sup>201</sup> Silius picks up on this ambiguity, loving issues of confused identity as he does, and conspicuously names one of his *Roman* brothers Albanus, literally ‘the Alban’, reversing Livy’s decision.<sup>202</sup> This creates a bit of a problem for the readers’ expectations. They will of course remember this famous story (*nec ferme res antiqua alia est nobilior*, after all) and will consequently suspect a few things, namely that the Curiatii are identified with the Albans and that a single Roman brother defeated all three Albans. Silius is not so hasty as to completely overturn his source yet, as we will see by his close adherence to Livy in the combat which follows next, but by naming a Roman brother Albanus he leaves a subtle hint of his greater intentions.

As the combat begins, it seems the Silius will be sticking closely to his Livian source; two Italian brothers quickly fall (*Pun.* 4. 380 – 389), leaving only one left to take on the three remaining Greco-Punic brothers. This primes the audience to expect a predictable sequence of events based on their knowledge of Livy: the final remaining Italian will outrun his three enemies, defeat them one by one, and eventually triumph despite his desperate odds in a brilliant display of Roman tenacity and cunning. As we read along, this seems to be precisely what is happening.

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<sup>201</sup> Livy 1.23.1: *Et bellum utrimque summa ope parabatur, civili simillimum bello, prope inter parentes natosque, Troianum utramque prolem, cum Lavinium ab Troia, ab Lavinio Alba, ab Albanorum stirpe regum oriundi Romani essent* (“Both sides prepared for war with all their resources. It was like a civil war, virtually between fathers and sons; for both sides were of Trojan origin, since Lavinium had been planted from Troy, Alba from Lavinium, and the Romans were descended from the line of Alban kings”).

<sup>202</sup> I further discuss Albanus and the other brothers’ names and origins below, at 2.2.3.

subsidens paulum perfossa proruit alvo  
 Albanum Critias; ast illi cuncta repente  
 implerunt clipeum miserando viscera lapsu.  
 Eumachus inde Capyn; sed tota mole tenebat  
 ceu fixum membris tegimen; tamen improbus ensis  
 annexam parmae decidit vulnere laevam,  
 inque suo pressa est non reddens tegmina nisu  
 infelix manus atque haesit labentibus armis.  
 ultima restabat fuis iam palma duobus 390  
 Virbius. huic trepidos **simulanti ducere** gressus  
 Xanthippos gladio, rigida cadit Eumachus hasta,  
 et tandem aequatae geminato funere pugnae.  
 inde alterna viris transegit pectora mucro,  
 inque vicem erepta posuerunt proelia vita.  
 (*Punica* 4. 382 – 393)

Critias, crouching down a moment, stabbed Albanus in the belly and overthrew him; and at once his bowels all gushed out and filled his shield – a piteous sight. Next Eumachus attacked Capys; and though he clutched his shield with all his strength as though it were fastened to his body, yet a cruel sword-cut lopped off the left arm as it clung to the shield; and the luckless hand, refusing to surrender the buckler, still kept its grip and clung to the armor as it fell. Two were now slain, and Virbius alone was left to conquer. He, while shamming flight, slew Xanthippus with his sword and Eumachus with his unbending spear. So at last, when these two were slain, the combat was on equal terms. Then each ran his sword through the other's breast, and they ended the combat by mutual slaughter.

Two of the Greek brothers (Critias and Eumachus) quickly slay two of the Italian brothers (Albanus and Capys). The third remaining Italian, Virbius, then pretends to flee (*simulanti ducere gressus*) and kills two of the Greek brothers (Xanthippus and Eumachus), making the combat even. *Geminato funere* describes these two back-to-back deaths but does double duty in describing the double fratricide coming in the next two lines. The events in Livy follow nearly the exact same sequence:

Consertis deinde minibus cum iam non motus tantum corporum  
 agitatioque anceps telorum armorumque sed vulnera quoque et  
 sanguis spectaculo essent, duo Romani, super alium alius,  
 vulnerates tribus Albanis exspirantes corruerunt.

...

Forte is integer fuit, ut universis solus nequaquam par, sic adversus  
 singulos ferox. Ergo, **ut segregaret pugnam eorum, capessit  
 fugam**, ita ratus secuturos ut quemque vulnere adfectum corpus  
 sineret.

(Livy *AUC* 1. 25.5-7)

[Then, in the hand-to-hand fighting that ensued, they beheld not only the movement of bodies and the interplay of weapons and shields, but also wounds and blood. The three Albans were wounded, but two Romans fell, one upon the other, as they breathed their last ...

By chance Horatius was unharmed. Though no match for the three of them together, he was fierce to take them on one at a time. To divide their attack he fled, reckoning that each would pursue him with such speed as his wounded body would allow.]

The strategy of the final Horatius is successful and he is able to easily kill the three Curiatii, separating each of them into single combat. So far, Silius has stuck quite closely to his source, but in the final two lines the two remaining brothers kill each other simultaneously and, in so doing, shatters the storyline of Livy's first book.

inde alterna viris transegit pectora mucro,  
 inque vicem erepta posuerunt proelia vita.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 394 – 95)

[Then each ran his sword through the other's breast, and they ended the combat by mutual slaughter.]

Suddenly this exemplary story of traditional Roman tenacity and martial prowess has become a tragic depiction of two brothers engaged in destructive and ultimately pointless bloodshed. Rather than a Horatii (i.e. Roman) victory and consequent victory over Alba/Carthage, the audience experiences the complete collapse of the Livian narrative as, once again, Silius' Romans are unable to recreate the achievements of their exemplary ancestors.

By ending his triplet battle in this way Silius not only surprises the audience with a twist ending, but he also engages once again in the poetics of contingency. What would have happened if there was no battle between the Horatii and Curiatii, or if that battle ended in a draw with the deaths of all combatants? The result, perhaps Silius answers here, could have been a long and destructive war, *civili simillimum bello*, between Alba and Rome instead of the more or less peaceful integration that occurs in Livy. Through this Silius also teases a third and even more disastrous alternate ending, the victory of the Albans, the subordination of Rome to Alba, and, consequently, the end of Roman history. The story of the Horatii and Curiatii is one of many

examples of close calls in Roman history, as an internecine and potentially disastrous war is narrowly avoided by the heroics of one Roman warrior. The Italian brothers in Silius are incapable of living up to this *exemplum*. Instead, the death of all six is a reminder that this war will not be ended so easily and instead will only come to an end after terrible, unprecedented losses on each side.

### 2.2.3: The Sons of Barce: Xanthippus, Eumachus, and Critias (*Pun.* 4. 355 – 372)

Having examined the first passage of this scene from a Livian perspective, let us now reexamine it with an eye towards nomenclature, continuing to focus on identity, civil war, and the poetics of contingency.

Tergemini primam ante aciem fera proelia  
 fratres  
 miscebant, quos Ledaes Sidonia Barce  
 Xanthippo felix uteri inter bella creatat.  
 res Graiae ductorque parens ac nobile  
 Amyclae  
 nomen et iniectus Spartanis colla catenis  
 Regulus inflabant veteri praecordia fama.

360

Marte probare genus factisque Lacona  
 parentem  
 ardebant gelidosque dehinc invisere montes  
 Taygeta et tandem bellis innare subactis  
 Eurotan patrium ritusque videre Lycurgi.

(*Pun.* 4. 355 – 364)

[Three brothers, all of an age, fought fiercely in the first rank. They were the sons of Barce, a Carthaginian, whom their fertile mother bore, during the wars, to Xanthippus, the Spartan. Their hearts swelled with pride for the past – the victory of Greece when their father led the host, the famous name of Amyclae, and the fetters that the Spartans fastened upon the neck of Regulus. They burned to prove by deeds of valor their descent from a Laconian sire; and then they were eager to visit the cold heights of Taygetus, and at

last, when the war was over, to swim in their native Eurotas, and see the laws of Lycurgus.]

The first set of triplets is part Punic and part Greek, born to a Carthaginian woman named Barce and a Spartan man named Xanthippus, names positively dripping with symbolism. Xanthippus is the name of the Spartan mercenary commander who so famously defeated the Romans during the First Punic War and captured the Roman general Regulus (the subject of the upcoming Book 6). Once again, Roman history is compressed at Ticinus; Xanthippus joins the field against the Romans one more time and, as we saw with Crixus/Brennus above, the readers witness an infamous Roman enemy dragged back out of history and defeated before their eyes. Additionally, by describing Xanthippus as “proud to bear his father’s name,” Silius further portrays the war as the continuation of a generational conflict. The boys’ mother, Barce, recalls the name of Hannibal’s clan, Barca, and by lining up the Carthaginian general (who also has two brothers) with the Greco-Punic brothers in this way, Silius is able to give a preview of the Barcid brothers’ defeats.<sup>203</sup> Xanthippus’ link to a general from the first war, his pride in his father’s achievements, and his prominent position among his brothers even more strongly align that brother with Hannibal, and, with his death at line 392, he becomes yet another in a long line of Hannibalic stand-ins.<sup>204</sup> Finally, the failure of Xanthippus – indeed of all the brothers in this scene – to replicate the achievements of their forefathers touches upon the same collapse of generational continuity present so strongly in Lucan’s civil war narrative.<sup>205</sup>

While much is made of the first brother, Xanthippus, in the opening lines of this section, the names of the other two brothers, Eumachus and Critias, are withheld until line 372, perhaps

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<sup>203</sup> One would, in fact, be justified in calling these three brothers ‘Barcids’, though this formation does not appear in Latin.

<sup>204</sup> As a potential Hannibal surrogate, it is significant that Xanthippus dies before slaying any Italians.

<sup>205</sup> Hardie 1993: 94 – 97.

to keep the focus on the name of the well-known general. If the name Xanthippus activates a nexus of images referencing the first war and the mother Barce establishes the brothers as ‘Barcids’, what can we say about the names of the two remaining brothers? Both names are “usuel”, as Spaltenstein is apt to note; Eumachus is “transparent et convient à un Spartiate,” while with Critias Silius may perhaps be thinking of the Greek κρινῶ, which can be used to mean ‘combatant.’<sup>206</sup> Spaltenstein also notes, and then characteristically dismisses, the idea that Silius may be thinking of the historian Eumachus, who wrote, according to Athenaeus, a work entitled “The History of Hannibal.”<sup>207</sup> Though there is little more to confirm this as a reference to the now-lost historian, it seems to deserve at least *some* speculation, given what we know about Silius’ carefully chosen nomenclature and his penchant for giving combat cameos to famous authors.<sup>208</sup> Perhaps the poet is engaging in some playful competition with this rival Hannibalic historian; Eumachus’ death may represent Silius’ supremacy in telling Hannibal’s story – and the scene becomes explicitly metapoetic at line 400 when he wishes that his poetry last forever (see 2.2.5). If this is the case, it seems that Silius got his wish; the *Punica* survives (mostly) intact, while Eumachus’ work comes down to us only in fragments.

Little can at first be said about the choice of Critias’ name – Spaltenstein offers no theory other than the just-mentioned etymology. In the spirit of speculation and, following in the theme of Silius’ inclusion of authors into his battle scenes, I put forward the Athenian tyrant Critias as a possible namesake for this Greco-Punic brother. Although the name is not especially uncommon,

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<sup>206</sup> Spaltenstein 1986 *ad loc.*

<sup>207</sup> *Deipnosophists* 13. 37: “Εὐμαχος δὲ ὁ Νεαπολίτης ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν περὶ Ἀννίβαν Ἱστοριῶν...”; Spaltenstein disagrees with Klotz (*PW* 3A 86. 35) who writes, “Eumachus, einer der Söhne des Xanthippos, hat seinen Namen sicher von dem Verfasser der Geschichte Hannibals bezogen.”

<sup>208</sup> Ennius is the most direct example, who appears on the battlefield at 12. 387-414; see Casali 2006, who argues that the Carthaginian Hostus, whose spear is turned aside by Apollo, may be a reference to Hostius, an author and near contemporary of Ennius. “Silius is much more interested in puns about proper names than one would normally think,” he remarks (592).

there are several aspects of Critias' life that support the connection. First of all, Critias played a major role in that most infamous example of Athenian civil strife (the tyranny of the thirty), a point which plays directly into the civil war imagery of brothers fighting brothers. Critias was, according to Xenophon, a strong supporter and admirer of Sparta, mirroring Silius' brothers' Lacedaemonian origin, and purportedly wrote several works on Spartan society, including a 'Constitution of Laedaemon', of which some fragments still remain.<sup>209</sup> Finally, Critias, like his namesake here, died in battle. Though there are few verbal parallels between Silius' Critias and the Athenian tyrant, we must keep in mind the poet's distinctive use of allusion, that he often needs only a single word or name, or a similar situation, to activate an extended reference (see 1.0.0). With that in mind, it might not be so speculative after all that a Roman reader of this scene might recall the (in)famous Critias from that dark period of Athenian history. Indeed, Critias was so well known to the Romans as an exemplary figure of tyranny that he was described by Valerius Maximus in *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* as '*ex XXX tyrannis crudelissimus*.'<sup>210</sup> Though there is little left of this 'most cruel of tyrants' in Silius' Critias, the self-destructive tyrant remains lurking behind the civil-war imagery of this scene and his presence further detracts from the seemingly positive message of Silius' eulogy at the end of the section. Critias, as it turns out, may in fact be the perfect choice of names for the final surviving brother, whose very death in a final act of fratricidal bloodshed mirrors his namesake's fate.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> "In the fragments from his 'Constitution of the Lacedaimonians' Critias never fails to record his admiration for even the most mundane features of Spartan society" ("Critias," by William Morison, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [www.iep.utm.edu/Critias](http://www.iep.utm.edu/Critias), accessed 22 November 2017); Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.34: "The finest constitution it is reputed to be, I suppose, that of the city of Sparta" (Trans. Marincola). For the full description of his time as tyrant, see Xen. *Hell.* 2.3 – 4. For the fragments, see fr. 32 – 37 in Diels and Kranz 1960 – 1961.

<sup>210</sup> Val. Max. *FDM* 3.2(ext).6.7.

<sup>211</sup> Critias is killed in battle against Thrasybulos and his pro-democracy forces at Xen. 2.4.18.

By now it appears quite clear that Silius did not choose names that were merely ‘usuel’ or ‘traditionnel.’ Rather the poet has carefully selected names which recall the multigenerational nature of the war, Hannibal and his brothers, and the ‘cruellest’ example of civil strife from that most famous of Greek cities.

#### 2.2.4: The Italian Brothers: Virbius, Capys, and Albanus (*Pun.* 355 – 381)

The Italian brothers are introduced immediately afterwards, although their names (Virbius, Capys, and Albanus) are withheld until just after the eight-line simile at 372 – 379).

sed Spartam penetrare deus fratresque  
negabant  
Ausonii, **totidem numero**, quos miserat  
altis  
Egeriae genitos immitis Aricia lucis,  
**aetatis mentisque pares** ; at non dabat ultra  
Clotho dura lacus aramque videre Dianae.  
namque ut in adversos impacti turbine  
pugnae 370  
Eumachus et Critias et laetus nomine patris  
Xanthippus iunxere gradus ...  
(*Pun.* 4. 365 – 372)

[But they never went to Sparta; for Heaven and three Italian brothers prevented them. The three were of the same age and the same spirit; they were bred in the tall groves of Egeria, and ruthless Aricia sent them forth; but stern Fate suffered them not to look again on Diana’s lake and temple. For Eumachus and Critias, with Xanthippus, proud to bear his father’s name, were swept on by the tide of battle, and confronted the Romans.]

*Deus fratresque negabant / Ausonii* is a powerful phrase, immediately connecting the Italian brothers to Jupiter, the divine plan, and, consequently, with Scipio, who likewise forms a trio in the poem with his father and uncle. *Totidem numero* and *aetatis mentisque pares* highlight the parity of the two sets of triplets and recall the language used of the Horatii and Curiatii at Livy

1.24 (*nec aetate nec viribus dispares*) and anticipate the words used of Hannibal and Scipio during their aborted duel at Cannae in Book 9:

stabant educti diversis orbis in oris,  
 quantos non alios vidit concurrere tellus  
**Marte viri dextraque pares**, sed cetera  
 ductor  
 anteibat Latius, melior pietate fideque.  
 (*Pun.* 9. 434 – 37)

[There they stood, the two mightiest warriors that earth has ever seen meet in battle; in in far distant lands, in martial prowess they were well matched; but otherwise the Roman was superior – in sense of duty and of honor.]

With these lines the scene has now fully become a miniaturized duel between the Barcids and Scipiadae, leading the audience to expect the victory of the Italian brothers, an assumption seemingly confirmed by the allusion to the Horatii and Curiatii as well, the victory of the Italian brothers but which, as we saw above, will be overturned at the end of the duel.

The Italian brothers were, as Silius tells us, raised near the spring of Egeria and are from Aricia, a small town very near Rome. Both Egeria and Aricia play important roles in Roman myth and history that would be immediately recognized by Silius' audience (and modern readers as well). Egeria appears in Livy's first book, not long before the episode of the Horatii and Curiatii, first as a goddess whom Numa pretends to consult at 1.19.5 (*simulat sibi cum dea Egeria congressus nocturnos esse*) and then at 1.21.3 as Numa's wife (*cum coniuge sua Egeria*). Through Egeria, the scene's connections to Livy's first book are strengthened and the Italian brothers are linked with Numa and the very earliest days of Rome's foundation – a prestigious pedigree. There may also be a metapoetic angle through Egeria's association with the Camenae as the Latin analogue of the Hippocrene, anticipating Silius' self-reflexive prayer for poetic

longevity at the end of the section.<sup>212</sup> The name Aricia also provides connections to early Roman history and clear-cut allusion to the *Aeneid*. The town, located at the foot of the Alban hills, has a long history in the affairs of early Italy: it was temporarily the leading city of Latium and Rome's chief rival, a prominent member of the Latin league, and eventually became a prosperous *municipium*.<sup>213</sup> The connection to Alba Longa is especially important, as the city was, like Carthage, a major rival to Rome's power and, tellingly, the hometown of the Curiatii in Livy.

On the issue of nomenclature, Aricia also helps us identify the literary origin of a specific brother. During the catalogue of Italian forces in Book 7 of the *Aeneid*, Aricia is listed as the birthplace of another Virbius, with language closely matching the scene in Silius:

ibat et Hippolyti proles pulcherrima bello,  
Virbius, insignem **quem mater Aricia**  
**misit.**  
eductum **Egeriae lucis** umentia circum  
litora, pinguis ubi et placabilis **ara Dianae.**  
(*Aen.* 7. 761 – 764)

[Likewise went to war Hippolytus' son, Virbius, most fair, whom his mother Aricia sent forth in his glory. In Egeria's groves he was reared round the marshy shores, where stands Diana's altar, rich and gracious.]

Both Virbii hail from Aricia, with mentions of Egeria and the altar of Diana following close behind. Vergil's is the son of Hippolytus, whose story and name change to Virbius appear in the following lines.<sup>214</sup> Horsfall 1999 reminds us of the boldness of the phrase *Hippolyti proles*

<sup>212</sup> "One etymology of Camenae linked them with prophecy (*carmina*) so that it was natural to suppose that Numa had consulted them in devising his religious system. A Greek equivalent was forthcoming in the spring Hippocrene frequented by the Muses which invited the identification of the Camenae and the Muses" (Ogilvie 1965: 102 – 103).

<sup>213</sup> "Aricia." In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press. 2012.

<sup>214</sup> The story is also told in Ov. *Met.* 15. 497 – 546 (Hippolytus, son of Theseus, was rescued by Asclepius and transported to Italy by Diana, who gave him the name 'Virbius' (*iubet deponere 'qui' que 'fuisti' /*

(“startling; indeed an oxymoron”), so famous was Theseus’ son for his rejection of reproduction. Like Xanthippus above, Silius’ Virbius enters battle with the name of a famous ancestor, although the lineage here is traced in myth through the *Aeneid* rather than through history.<sup>215</sup> Virbius’ links to Hippolytus may also lend a foreboding quality to the character, famously doomed as the Greek hero was. Horsfall comments that, in Vergil, “nothing suggests that Virbius Jr. will enjoy a distinguished career as a warrior; his doom has been signaled more discreetly but no less unambiguously than Umbro.”<sup>216</sup> It perhaps should also be remarked that Hippolytus’ famous father was ultimately the source of his destruction, problematizing the links between fathers and sons in this passage (and anticipating the rather more positive father-son interaction in the following scene). So, Silius’ Virbius seems to be the descendant of the son of Hippolytus, giving him an ancestry rooted deep in the Greco-Roman mythological tradition. By tying this character to an ancestor in the *Aeneid*, Silius once again constructs his war as a continuation of the war in Vergil, with the descendants of the one participating in the other. There also seems to be a pattern emerging: the three Greco-Punic brothers all have ties to historical figures, Xanthippus, Critias, and Eumachus (also a *writer* of history), while Virbius (and Capys, as we will soon see) draws his lineage from the epic and mythic tradition. By providing a brother with paternal links reaching back to Theseus, Silius is able to provide a deep and prestigious pedigree that easily supersedes Xanthippus’ worldly and more recent claims to fame, though one that is also tinged with tragedy.

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*Hippolytus*,’ dixit ‘nunc idem Virbius esto!’) See Green 2007: 208 – 231 for a thorough discussion of relationship between Virbius, Hippolytus, Egeria, and Diana Aricia.

<sup>215</sup> This ‘Virbius’ is, Cowan 2007: 18 writes, “clearly a descendant of the Virgilian son of Hippolytus...”

<sup>216</sup> Horsfall 1999 *ad* 781; Paschalis 1997: 272 also remarks that “Virbius, the son of Hippolytus-Virbius, is probably destined to suffer a death analogous to the one suggested in the name ‘Hippolytus’ and therefore not to return from war.”

Additionally, Silius seems to recognize an ambiguity in the Vergilian source passage, although he recreates it in typically oblique fashion. In the Virbius scene, there remains some scholarly debate as to whether ‘Aricia’ refers to the name of a woman or the name of the physical location.<sup>217</sup> Silius does not seem to clarify this ambiguity with the origin of his Italian brothers, instead he adds an additional ambiguity in the origin of his Greco-Punic brothers: ‘Barce’ could be the name of their mother or the name of the Greek town in Cyrenaica.<sup>218</sup> The Greek town is compatible with the brothers’ Greek ancestry and the fact that they have never visited mainland Greece, while the female name recalls most notably Sychaeus’ nurse at *Aen.* 7. 732, whom Dido calls just before her suicide and whose name even in the *Aeneid* is meant to evoke Hannibal’s clan.<sup>219</sup> Vergil employs this ambiguity again with Nisus in *Aeneid* 9, whose mother is confusingly named ‘Ida’, and this doomed pair will be another important analogue for Silius’ brothers (see 2.2.5 below).<sup>220</sup> By providing *Barce* as an ambiguous name with maternal or geographical meaning, an ambiguity paralleled by Vergil in two relevant passages, Silius even more firmly links his doomed brothers with characters from the *Aeneid*.

Capys is the next Italian brother named (*Pun.* 4. 381) and his name activates still more Vergilian resonances, as well as further strengthening the links to Alba Longa and the Horatii and Curiatii of Livy. Spaltenstein notes the many occurrences of the name, from the father of

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<sup>217</sup> Horsfall 1999 *ad loc.*: “Mater is an old problem: local or personal?”

<sup>218</sup> Spaltenstein is undecided, writing first that “Barce était Carthaginoise et a eu ces enfants de Xanthippe lorsqu’il se trouvait en Afrique, donc aux environs de 255” but later adding that “Barce était une ville de la Cyrénaïque.” Barce (the town) is also appears in the list of places ruled by Asbyte’s father at *Pun.* 2. 62 (*aeternumque arida Barce*) and in the catalogue of Hannibal’s troops before he crosses the Pyrenees at *Pun.* 3. 250 – 1 (*nec, terete dextras in pugnam armata dolone, / destituit Barce sitientibus arida venis.*)

<sup>219</sup> “Barce’s name also recalls (a) the Barcaeans, who are among Dido’s North African foes and (b) the Carthaginian Barcas family, the most famous of whom was Hannibal” (Ahl 2007: 354).

<sup>220</sup> See Hardie 1994 *ad* 177, who comments that “Ida here is probably the name of Nisus’ mother (rather than the mountain as his place of origin)” and compares the problem with *mater Aricia* at *Aen.* 7.762.

Anchises to the founder of Capua and a king of the Albans.<sup>221</sup> While the commentator prefers the founder of Capua as the main influence for Silius here, we should not completely write off the father/grandfather of Anchises, given the patrilineal weight of Xanthippus' and Virbius' names. I do, however, agree with Spaltenstein that the founder of Capua was the *main* influence on Silius' selection, since Capua, as another historical contender to Rome's hegemony, fits in very nicely as a surrogate for both Alba and Carthage, as Cowan 2007 rightly argues.<sup>222</sup> By supplying the name Capys to this warrior in Book 4, Silius conjures up the mythical figure and founder of Capua, the city whose fall to Hannibal and retaking by the Romans will be a major storyline in Books 11 – 13.

The source-Capys has a brief cameo in *Pun.* 13, just before the Romans retake Capua. While he was surveying the walls of the city, Capys found a beautiful white deer which, tamed and cared for by the people, became the *numen* of the city. As the Romans advance on Capua, this deer is driven out of the gate by a pack of wolves, captured by the Romans, and sacrificed as an offering to Diana by Fulvius (*Pun.* 13. 115 – 137). Besides being replete with references to *Aen.* 7. 482ff., when Ascanius shoots Silvia's deer and ignites the war between the Trojans and Italians, the invocation of Capys' name here serves as a bookmark linking the Capys of Book 4 with Capua and its fall in Book 13.<sup>223</sup> As usual, a tenuous link between scenes is cemented by a

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<sup>221</sup> Father of Anchises at *Fasti* 4. 34 and *Il.* 20. 239; grandfather of Anchises in Ennius fr. 34 (Vahlen 1903); king of the Albans at *Aen.* 6. 768; founder of Capua at *Aen.* 10. 145.

<sup>222</sup> "In her role as rival for supremacy she resembles Alba Longa, Veii and all the other cities which must by necessity fall for Rome to stand. The fall of the city – even though it is spared an actual sack – echoes that of Saguntum in many ways, as both recall the sack of Troy and prefigure that of Carthage, and stand as surrogates for the fall of Rome which will not come to pass, or at least not yet" (Cowan 2007: 1).

<sup>223</sup> For a complete look at the scene in the *Aeneid* and possible interpretations vis-à-vis Silius, especially the significance of the (Roman) wolf chasing the (Capuan) deer and the ambiguous nature of the sacrifice of a sacred animal, see Cowan 2007. The scene also closely mirrors the events before the battle of Sentinum against the Samnites in Livy's tenth book (10.27.8-9): a deer, chased by a wolf from the hills, runs into the enemy army and is slaughtered, while the wolf is given passage through the Roman army.

stronger connection in the surrounding lines. As the attack on Capua begins, the Capuan Taurea challenges the Roman Claudius to a duel outside the city walls. What appears at first to be the start of an important scene is quickly left unfinished, as the duel dissolves into a brief chase scene with neither warrior wounding the other.<sup>224</sup> This duel is present in Livy (23.46), and that is perhaps why Silius feels the need to include it, but the following scene is where the connections between the brothers in Book 4 meet a set of counterparts in Book 13.

Three brothers guard the gate to Capua, and their appearance immediately recalls the brothers of Book 4.

**Tres** claustra aequaevae servabant corpore  
**fratres,**  
 quis delecta manus centeni cuique ferebant  
 excubias unique locum statione tenebant.  
 forma ex his Numitor, cursu plantaque  
 volucris  
 praestabat Laurens, membrorum mole  
 Taburnus.  
 sed non una viris tela: hic mirabilis arcu,  
 ille hastam quatere ac medicatae cuspidis  
 ictu  
 proelia moliri et nudo non credere ferro,  
 tertius aptabat flammis ac sulphure taedas.  
 qualis Atlantiaco memoratur litore quondam  
 monstrum Geryones immane tricorporis  
 irae,  
 cui tres in pugna dextrae varia arma  
 gerebant.

(*Pun.* 13. 191 – 202)

[Three brothers of equal age guarded the gate, and each has a chosen band of a hundred men who kept watch and were stationed together. Among the brothers, Numitor excelled in beauty, Laurens in speed of foot, and Taburnus in size and stature. Nor were they armed alike: one was a

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<sup>224</sup> “The *Zweikampf* of Taurea and Claudius ... is a narrative dead end. It ends – or rather stops – abruptly, bathetically, and despite its tenuous causal connection with what follows, this abrupt, bathetic full stop draws attention to its futility, its status as a self-contained episode contributing nothing to the advance of the narrative, as a solipsistic action contributing nothing to the prosecution or raising of the siege” (Cowan 2007: 14).

marvelous archer; another brandished the spear and fought with an envenomed point, distrustful of the naked steel; while the third was skilled in hurling fire-brands and lighted torches. They were like Geryon, that dread monster with triple body who is said to have lived long ago on the beach of Atlas: when he fought, his three hands plied different weapons.]

Although this time there is only one set of brothers, the connection is nonetheless strongly marked, given the brief appearance of Capys not long before (and the scene's very setting in Capua), the similarity of word order (*tres ... fratres* and *tergemini ... fratres* both bookend their opening line), and the implication (with *aequaevo ... corpore*) that they are triplets. *Tricorporis* in line 201 also recalls the *tergemini/trigemini* of Silius' Book 4 brothers and Livy's regal triplets, especially since *tergeminus* was often used to describe monsters like Cerberus, Scylla, and Geryon.<sup>225</sup> The triplets at the gates of Capua also allude, in a bit of poetic *aemulatio*, to the twins Bitias and Pandarus who guard the gate to the Trojan camp at *Aen.* 9. 672 – 755 and are killed by Turnus.<sup>226</sup> This has the interesting result of placing Fulvius, who slays Numitor at *Pun.* 13.210-11, in the position of Turnus, the enemy assaulting the Trojan camp. In this way, there is a close relationship between the *tergemini fratres* of Book 4 with Bitias and Pandarus and, as will be discussed below at 2.2.5, with Nisus and Euryalus – pairs who are also closely linked in *Aeneid* 9.<sup>227</sup> Once again, Silius delights in issues of identity, blurring the lines between Trojan, Italian, Capuan, and Roman, and compressing a variety of mythological or historical *exempla* into a single, complex passage.

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<sup>225</sup> Cowan argues that the triplets should be thought of as three parts of one unit, like a Geryon. *Tergeminus* appears in this context in Lucr. *dRN* 5.28: *quidve tripectora tergemini vis Geryonai ...*; Tib. *c.* 3.4.88f.: *cui tres sunt linguae tergeminumque caput, / Scyllaque virgineam canibus succincta figuram ...*; *Aen.* 8.201-3: *nam maximus ultor / tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus / Alcides aderat taurosque hac victor agebat*; Ovid *Ars* 3.322: *tartareosque lacus tergeminumque canem.*

<sup>226</sup> Spaltenstein 1990 *ad loc.* and Cowan 2007: 15ff. both note the allusion. Bitias' death already served as the source for the language of Crixus' death earlier in the battle; see 1.5.5.

<sup>227</sup> Hardie 1994: 14 – 18.

The presence of triplet brothers and the confusion of the roles of enemy and ally highlight the messy situation at Capua during the Second Punic War, where, as with the brothers at Ticinus in Book 4, Silius uses fraternal bloodshed to represent civil war violence. The two scenes are linked in several and subtle ways. First, close verbal and thematic parallels between the Ticinus brothers and Livy's Horatii and Curiatii are used to recreate Rome's historical contest with Alba Longa, a city which becomes an archetype for Rome's other major historical rivals, Carthage and Capua. 'Albanus' and 'Numitor'<sup>228</sup> both enhance the Alban flavor of these scenes, while Capys is an important link between the Ticinus brothers in Book 4 and the Capua brothers in Book 13.<sup>229</sup> Second, at both Ticinus and Capua Silius uses fraternal bloodshed to represent civil war violence. Hannibal's invasion of Italy, of which Ticinus is the first major battle, is described by Silius in reference to Caesar's invasion in 49 BC and the conflict between the Trojans and Italians in the second half of the *Aeneid* (see especially 1.2); likewise, Capua's role as former Roman ally creates an atmosphere of civil war, and the ambiguous position of each side is highlighted by the sacrifice of Diana's deer by Fulvius and the Roman general's depiction as a Turnus assaulting the Trojan camp.

The appearance of the triplets at Capua in Book 13 ties this all together, binding Ticinus, Alba, and Capua into a tightly woven nexus of ideas. The Capuan triplets are in some ways a redemptive rewrite of the triplets at the Ticinus, as often happens in the second half of the poem. While the triplets in Book 4 die together in mutual and pointless slaughter, only one triplet in

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<sup>228</sup> Surely the death of 'Numitor', whose own twins Romulus and Remus were so important to the Roman origin story, carries some counterfactual or compressive weight.

<sup>229</sup> "Capys ... has a very important name for establishing parallelism between Capua and Alba" (Cowan 2007: 18).

Book 13 is shown to be killed in battle;<sup>230</sup> while the battle of Ticinus is a scene of destruction and defeat for the Romans, the retaking of Capua happens, through the intervention of Pan at 13. 314 – 347, without needless and internecine violence (*Pun.* 13. 324f.: *paulatim atrocibus irae / languescunt animis, et vis mollita senescit*), just as the war between Alba and Rome is avoided by the duel of the Horatii and Curiatii; finally, while the deaths of the triplets at Ticinus take place in the context of a Roman defensive loss, the triplets in Book 13 appear in the context of a Roman offensive victory. By mirroring the two scenes in this way, Silius is able to ‘correct’ the bad behavior of the characters in the first half of the epic.

There is one more layer to this already multilayered scene which will be of great importance to the battle’s final episode: the relationship between fathers and their sons. As we noted before, each set of triplets at the Ticinus has one or more connections to a famous father, in one case highlighting the intergenerational links between the first and second wars.<sup>231</sup> The Greco-Punic Xanthippus rejoices in the name of his father (*laetus nomine patris*), while the name Virbius links that Italian brother back to the already multigenerational pair in *Aen.* 7. There is a tinge of irony to each of these connections, however, as both famous ancestors died ignominious deaths that rather undercut their descendants’ ancestral pride.<sup>232</sup> These six brothers ultimately fail to reproduce the glory of their famous names and, instead of the continuation of their legacies,

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<sup>230</sup> The absence of the deaths of Laurens and Taburnus puzzles Spaltenstein (“on pourrait donc penser à une lacune”), while Cowan 2007: 19 suggests that the triplets formed a single unit, like Geryon, and so the death of one can represent the death of the others.

<sup>231</sup> As Silius tells us in his proem, this is a war “handed down to grandsons” (*Pun.* 1. 18: *mandata nepotibus arma*); cf. Hardie 1993 ch. 4, especially 96 – 7.

<sup>232</sup> Hippolytus died the unwitting pawn of a jealous god (killed on the orders of his own father, no less). Xanthippus – so the story goes – was sabotaged by the Siceli, who were envious of his success, and drowned in the sea: “Yet for his good service he received a recompense worthy of and appropriate to that perverse people [the Siceli], since the foul wretches set him in a leaking ship and sank him beneath the swirling waters of the Adriatic, in their envy of the hero and his nobility” (Diod. Sic. 23.16 trans. Walton). The story is related to us by Diodorus Siculus through John Tzetzes and so should be perhaps taken with a grain of salt.

the result is the complete destruction of both sides. This is to be directly contrasted with the very next sequence of events, in which Scipio Maior wades heroically into combat and is saved by his son in what becomes the first step on his path towards becoming ‘Africanus’, that most famous of names. Before that, however, there still remains the strange matter of Silius’ praise of the fratricidal sextet that immediately follows their mutual deaths.

### 2.2.5: Brotherly Love: Nisus and Euryalus, or Eteocles and Polynices?

Immediately following the twin deaths of the final two brothers, Silius launches into an authorial interlude, praising the pious pair and hoping for similar brothers in future ages, provided, of course, that his poetry has a long and successful life.

felices leti, pietas quos addidit umbris!  
 optabunt similes venientia saecula fratres,  
 aeternumque decus memori celebrabitur  
 aevo,  
 si modo ferre diem serosque videre nepotes  
 carmina nostra valent, nec famam invidit  
 Apollo.

(*Pun.* 4. 396 – 400)

[Fortunate in death were they, whom love of kin and country sent down to join the dead! Coming ages will pray for brothers like them, and their undying fame shall be forever remembered, if only my verse has power to endure and see a distant posterity, and if Apollo has not begrudged me fame.]

These apostrophes may be, as Spaltenstein dryly observes, “traditionnellement pathétiques”, but upon close examination it is clear that this interlude is more than simply traditional. *Pietas* is given the central position in the first line, anticipating Scipio’s Aeneas moment in the following sequence and setting his actions in direct contrast with the deaths of the brothers. Verbally, although in typically sparse and subtle manner, Vergil’s eulogy of Nisus and Euryalus at *Aen.* 9.

446ff. is alluded to, but the troubling figures of Eteocles and Polynices appear to be a better thematic fit.<sup>233</sup> Finally, Silius' prayer for *similes fratres*, just after the sight of two brothers murdering each other (though, we might easily forget, these two brothers are technically unrelated), leads to a startling question: which pair is to be compared with the imperial brothers Titus and Domitian: Nisus and Euryalus, or Eteocles and Polynices?

The story of Nisus and Euryalus is one of the best loved episodes in the *Aeneid*'s second half, and the tale of the doomed youths' failed nocturnal raid has attracted a large amount of scholarship.<sup>234</sup> What specifically has attracted Silius' eye, however, is Vergil's depiction of the pair's deaths at *Aen.* 9. 446 – 449.

Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina  
possunt,  
nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo.  
dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile  
saxum  
accolet imperiumque pater Romanus  
habebit.

(*Aen.* 9. 446 – 449)

[How fortunate, both at once! If my songs have any power, the day will never dawn that wipes you from the memory of the ages, not while the house of Aeneas stands by the Capitol's rock unshaken, not while the Roman Father rules the world.]

These four lines of praise have long been thought problematic, since the pair of youths has failed in virtually every way and provided no benefit to their allies.<sup>235</sup> Contrary to scholarly opinion on the scene in the *Aeneid*, however, this futility in death meshes perfectly with Silius' depiction of

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<sup>233</sup> Spaltenstein *ad loc.*

<sup>234</sup> See Hardie 1994: 23 – 31 for a thorough overview of the episode, its structure, and models.

<sup>235</sup> “Even if we remain at the most immediate level of reading, we cannot but notice that it is at the very least remarkable that Virgil declares two soldiers *fortunati* and promises them undying glory when they have failed spectacularly in their mission and both of them die without delivering any advantage to their side; on the contrary, they bring harm to it, because their disaster weakens the morale of their own comrades in arms” (Casali 2004: 353).

battle deaths so far in the *Punica*.<sup>236</sup> Silius closely follows his Vergilian source, although in his usual way he avoids direct quotation, tip-toeing his way lightly around Vergil's language as if picking his way through a flower patch, careful not to trod upon any of Vergil's creations.

*Fortunati ambo* becomes *felices leti*, but is it a synonym or is *felices* a stronger word choice?<sup>237</sup>

*Si quid mea carmina possunt* is expanded into Silius' longer line ending with the echo *carmina nostra valent* (Silius also shows that he is aware of Vergil's self-reference to *Ecl.* 9. 11 – 13: *sed carmina tantum / nostra valent, Lycida, tela inter Martia quantum / Chaonias dicunt aquila veniente columbas*. Hardie calls Silius' *si quid mea carmina possunt* "more optimistic," and so it is interesting that Silius chose the former to imitate).

Vergil's apostrophe ends with a very clear reference to the Augustan family (*domus Aeneae*),<sup>238</sup> but such language does not seem to be overt in Silius' version. There is, perhaps, a covert reference in *similes ... fratres* to the current imperial family, Vespasian and his sons Titus and Domitian, and this would not be the first time that Silius compares the imperial brothers to fraternal relationships in his poem. Littlewood 2016 follows the thread of brothers in the *Punica*, arguing that the Scipiones and Barcids are both equally available parallels for the Flavians and that Domitian can be read in the consistently loyal and valiant youngest Barcid Mago.<sup>239</sup> The Barcids and Scipiones, as I have argued above, can be seen in the brothers of Silius' triplet battle, and so Littlewood's remarks may be in play here in miniature. Furthermore, Titus is only ever described in the *Punica* as *iuvenis* or *frater* (*Pun.* 3. 603, 628) and thus becomes associated with

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<sup>236</sup> Compare, for example, the futile and avoidable death of Catus which began the battle (see 1.2.1).

<sup>237</sup> Hardie 1994 *ad* 446 disagrees with Page's argument that *fortunati* is a weaker word than *felices*.

<sup>238</sup> Hardie *ad loc.* reminds us that the only other occurrence of this phrase in the *Aeneid* is in the prophecy of Rome's eternal power at 3. 97 – 8: *hic domus Aeneae cunctis dominabitur oris / et nati natorum et qui nascentur ab illis. Domus Aeneae Capitoli* is actually a bit problematic, since it is agreed that Augustus deliberately sought to move the locus of power to the Palatine where the *domus Augusti* was located; see Casali 2004: 351 -2.

<sup>239</sup> Littlewood 2016: 223 – 4.

both Hannibal and Scipio, the former being one brother among three and the latter so famously youthful.<sup>240</sup> If *similes fratres* is meant to invoke the Flavian brothers in the context of Nisus and Euryalus, how are we meant to understand the tone of this reference? As an ode to fraternal piety in the vein of that pious pair, whose deaths carry an ambiguous meaning even in Vergil? Or as a reminder of the dangers of fraternal strife exemplified in mythology through Statius' Theban brothers and which were a continual stain upon Roman history even up to Silius' day?<sup>241</sup> A look to the brothers' deaths and aftermath in Statius will do much to both explicate and complicate this matter.

The infamous Theban fratricide occurs at *Theb.* 11. 403 – 579 (the killing blows at 552 – 573) and, like Silius, Statius follows their deaths with a brief coda.

Ite, truces animae, funestaque Tartara leto  
polluite et cunctas Erebi consumite poenas.  
vosque malis hominum, Stygiae, iam  
parcite, divae:  
omnibus in terris scelus hoc omnique sub  
aevo  
viderit una dies, monstrumque infame  
futuris  
excidat, et soli memorent haec proelia reges.  
(*Thebaid* 11. 574 – 579)

[Away, brutal souls! Pollute the gloomy Abyss with your deaths! Exhaust all the torments of Erebus! Away, you Stygian Goddesses: spare our world such woes! In all lands and in every age, let one day alone have seen this breed of foul deed, let this monstrous infamy fall from memory – only kings should recall such a duel]<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Stocks 2014: 168 – 9.

<sup>241</sup> “This is one of those mirror combats whose limiting case is the fratricide of civil war, and which forecloses the future through the extirpation of the present generation” (Hardie 1993: 97).

<sup>242</sup> Translations of Statius by Joyce 2008, lightly adapted.

The epitaph begins with a brief echo of Aeneas' speech at *Aen.* 11. 24ff. (*ite, ait, egregias animas...*) in the aftermath of Pallas' death, positioning an authorial condemnation of Eteocles' and Polynices' strife in direct contrast with the *pietas* of Aeneas towards Pallas. As McNelis rightly notes, Aeneas is able to praise the virtue of his fallen men while Statius cannot; the noble spirits (*egregias*) of the *Aeneid* have become *truces*, and instead of receiving honor from the living Statius' dead brothers will suffer punishments in the underworld.<sup>243</sup> Aeneas is another point of comparison just before this passage, at *Theb.* 11. 564 when Polynices stands over (*superstantem*) Eteocles, which Hardie compares to Aeneas at the end of the *Aeneid*.<sup>244</sup> As in Silius, Statius' heroes cannot recreate the achievements of the Vergilian predecessors. Polynices stands triumphant over his enemy, on the cusp of victory, but that victory would be the an empty triumph over his own blood brother.<sup>245</sup>

McNelis also connects this passage with Vergil's eulogy of Nisus and Euryalus, arguing that the *nulla dies ... aevo* of Vergil is countered and negated by Statius' *aevo ... una dies*. Rather than everlasting memory, Statius instead consigns the Theban brothers to oblivion, only to be remembered by kings. "The desire that the battle will be recalled only by kings," McNelis concludes, "condemns – or at least circumscribes – the ability of epic to commemorate events. The authority of the genre has been seriously diminished."<sup>246</sup> The denial of memory stands in direct contrast with the language of Vergil's coda to Nisus and Euryalus and Silius' to Virbius and Critias. Both Vergil and Silius pray for the everlasting memory of their fallen heroes and, by

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<sup>243</sup> McNelis 2007: 147 – 48.

<sup>244</sup> Hardie 1993: 78.

<sup>245</sup> One could perhaps argue that the final explosion of insanity and *ira* at the end of the duel (*Theb.* 11. 568: *ira superstes*) is an expansion of the already darker themes underlying Aeneas' defeat of Turnus in *Aeneid* 12; the 'pessimistic' reading of the *Aeneid* is taken to its fullest possible extent.

<sup>246</sup> Hardie, 1993: 148.

extension, their own poetry.<sup>247</sup> While the duel between Eteocles and Polynices implicates all spectators in the guilt of their crimes and condemns its memory to near-oblivion, the duel between the brothers of *Punica* 4 is instead broadcast by Silius as the supreme example of *pietas* worthy of eternal memory. By returning the tone of the scene to its Vergilian origin, Silius may be attempting to give a counter-example to Statius' doomed brothers by showing the 'correct' way for men to die in a duel. However, even if this is the case, the whole episode remains forever stained by its close proximity to the Theban duo. Silius strives to 'Aeneadize' this famous scene from the *Thebaid* by returning the epic warrior to his heroic and exemplary state – to be remembered forever rather than forgotten in shame. This is made even more clear by the readdition of *pietas* into Silius' epitaph (*Pun.* 4. 396: *pietas quos addidit umbris*), a figure who (in Statius' personification) was purposely and conspicuously absent from Statius' scene (*Theb.* 11. 495 – 96: *deiectam in lumina pallam / diva [Pietas] trahit magnoque fugit questura Tonanti*). Silius, in other words, attempts to correct Statius' pessimistic portrayal of brotherly strife by reintroducing *pietas*, changing Statius' negative view of memory to a more positive conception, and overall returning the tone to that of Aeneas' speech in Book 11 and the Nisus and Euryalus story of Book 9, though he does so – perhaps intentionally – with mixed success.

But where do Domitian and Titus fit into all of this? Silius' prediction that coming ages will hope for similar brothers (*Pun.* 4. 397: *optabunt similes venientia saecula fratres*) leaves the question open-ended: similar to whom? If Nisus and Euryalus are meant to be evoked, then the audience must reckon with their vain intentions and mortal failure, the cause of not only their

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<sup>247</sup> Statius includes a direct evocation of Nisus and Euryalus in the deaths of Hopleus and Dymas at *Theb.* 10.445 (*vos quoque sacrati, quamvis mea carmina surgent / inferior lyra, memores suberabitis annos. forsitan et comites non aspernabitur umbras / Euryalus Phrygiique admittet gloria Nisi*). Hinds 1998: 92 comments on Statius' 'self-conscious' and 'overtly deferential' use of the Vergilian model and notes, citing Vessey 1986: 2966 n. 3 that a stichometric allusion may be in play.

own deaths but also the imperilment of their companions. If, instead, the Theban brothers are summoned before our eyes, how can we reconcile the jealous and fratricidal strife which led to the self-annihilation of their family name with Silius' last-minute call for *aeternum decus*? There does not seem to be a clear answer here. Instead, this uncertainty showcases Silius' skillful and nuanced readings of Livy, Vergil, and Statius. Silius recognizes the ambiguities already inherent in his source passages – Livy's depiction of the war between Rome and Alba as *civili simillimum bello*, the problematic failure of Nisus and Euryalus, and the potentially troubling parallels between Statius' Theban brothers and the contemporary imperial siblings – and constructs a multilayered duel that compresses multiple sources into a compact combat narrative while simultaneously developing the theme of familial (dis)unity crucial to the following scene and the epic at large.

The appearance of two sets of opposed yet similar triplet brothers during the battle of Ticinus activates a remarkable complexity of intertexts with Vergil, Livy, and Statius, as well as intratexts with the second half of the poem. Close parallels to Livy's Horatii and Curiatii place the battle in the context of the winner takes all duel during the conflict between Alba and Rome. Alba, as an important historical rival to Rome, is a useful surrogate for Carthage in the Punic wars, but while that conflict is resolved (to the Romans' advantage) by a duel between triplets, the battle in Silius collapses at the very end into the complete destruction of both sides. As he does so often with the *Aeneid*, here Silius provides an important *exemplum* from Livy which the Romans fail to emulate. In addition to important Livian intertexts, the names and backgrounds of each Silian brother are of crucial importance. On the Carthaginian side, Xanthippus evokes the famous general of the first Punic war, Eumachus has the same name as a Greek historian of Hannibal, and Critias recalls the cruelest member of Athens' thirty tyrants. On the Italian side,

Virbius seems to be a descendant of the Virbius named at *Aen.* 7. 761 – 64 who in turn was a descendant of the Hippolytus of Greek myth, Capys evokes the name of, among other things, the founder of Capua and so activates a number of important links with that rebellious city and the subplot of Books 11 – 13, and Albanus provides yet another link to the conflict between Alba and Rome in Livy’s first book, although this time the ‘Alban’ is fighting on the Roman side. Allusions to Vergil’s Nisus and Euryalus and Statius’ Eteocles and Polynices further complicate the matter by creating flawed analogues to Silius’ Italian brothers, calling into question the poet’s praise of their deaths. Finally, the complete destruction of both sets of brothers anticipates the very next scene of the battle, when Scipio prevents his father’s death and, in contrast to Eteocles and Polynices, preserves his noble lineage and inaugurates the process that will lead him to eternal fame.

### 2.3.1: *Consul* and *puer* (*Pun.* 4. 401 – 479)

*At consul* (*Pun.* 4. 401) marks the transition from the authorial interlude of *Pun.* 4. 396 – 400 back to the main narrative of the battle. Despite the simplicity of this transition, the two words have several important functions. *At* does double duty, simultaneously marking the commencement of a new episode<sup>248</sup> and positioning it in contrast to the previous.<sup>249</sup> *Consul* names the subject and hero of the following passage and returns the narrative to a republican context, in contrast to the regal and mythological tones of the previous scene. The stately title of a mature *vir* also sets up a contrast between Scipio Maior (*at consul*) and his son (*Pun.* 4. 454: *hic puer*), the future Africanus, and this contrast will be the dominant theme of the final episode.

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<sup>248</sup> OLD 2: “in narrative, to introduce a change of subject.”

<sup>249</sup> OLD 1: “expr. contrast between two persons, things, etc.”

The episode itself unfolds in four subsections. In the first, from *Pun.* 4. 401 – 416 (beginning with *at consul*), a domineering and (in Lucanian terms) recklessly Caesarian Scipio throws himself into the fray and seeks to reverse the mounting Roman flight, threatening suicide (and the fulfilment of the familial violence hinted at by the *tergemini fratres* scene) as punishment for his troops' disgraceful retreat, only to become surrounded and wounded in the process. The second subsection, from *Pun.* 4. 417 – 429, depicts Jupiter (*genitor*) intervening to prevent Scipio's death and enlisting his son Mars to redirect the future Africanus' grief towards action. The third subsection, from *Pun.* 4. 430 – 444, consists of Mars' dramatic entrance onto the battlefield, completely overshadowing Hannibal's earlier entrance and undermining the Carthaginian's semi-divine attributes with the full-blown appearance of a war god.<sup>250</sup> In the fourth and final subsection, from *Pun.* 454 – 480 (beginning with *hic puer*), a pious and obedient Scipio, who embodies not only Aenean and Ascanian virtues but also Augustan ideals, also contemplates suicide, only to be inspired by Jupiter and Mars to rescue his father and take the crucial first steps in his heroic journey.

### 2.3.2: *Quo signa refertis?* Two Caesars at the Ticinus (*Pun.* 4. 401 – 416)

To begin this final scene, let us return to *at consul*, as Scipio Maior recklessly attempts to goad his troops back from retreat, and examine Silius' creative implementation of a scene from *Bellum Civile* 1.

At consul toto palantes aequore turmas  
 voce tenet, dum voce viget: **quo signa  
 refertis?**  
 quis vos heu vobis pavor abstulit? horrida  
 primi

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<sup>250</sup> This scene is discussed above, at 2.1.

si sors visa loci pugnaeque lacessere  
 frontem,  
 post me state viri et pulsa formidine tantum  
 adspicite! has dextras capti genuere  
 parentes,  
 quas fugitis, quae spes victis? Alpesne  
 petemus?  
**ipsam turrigeros portantem vertice muros  
 credite summissas Romam nunc tendere  
 palmas.**  
 natorum passim raptus caedemque parentum  
**Vestalesque focos** exstingui sanguine cerno.  
**hoc arcete nefas!** postquam inter talia  
 crebro  
 clamore obtusae crassoque a pulvere fauces,  
 hinc laeva frenos, hinc dextra corripit arma  
 et latum obiectat pectus strictumque minatur  
 nunc sibi, nunc trepidis, ni restent,  
 comminus ensem.

(*Pun.* 4. 401 – 416)

[When the ranks were straggling over all the plain, Scipio's voice (while his voice lasted) stopped them: "Where do you carry back your standards? What panic has robbed you of yourselves? If it seemed a dreadful thing to stand in the front rank and challenge the van of the foe, then take your stand behind me, soldiers, dismiss your fears, and merely look on! Those warriors are the sons of our prisoners. Where do you fly? What hope have you, if defeated? Shall we make for the alps? Believe me that Rome in person, with her walls and her head crowned with towers, is now stretching out her hands in supplication. I see all our children carried captive, our parents slain, and the fires of Vesta quenched with blood. Keep this sacrilege far away!" Thus he shouted again and again, till the effort and the thick dust choked his voice; then he seized his reins with the left hand and his sword with the right, and exposed his broad breast to the foe, threatening to use his bare blade at once, now against himself and now against the fugitives, if they refused to stand.]

The parallels here to the first book of *Bellum Civile* have been well noted by several scholars, most especially Raymond Marks in a 2010 chapter. *Quo signa refertis* is a direct allusion to lines spoken to Caesar by the *imago* of Roma at *BC* 1. 190 – 91: *quo tenditis ultra / quo fertis mea signa, viri?* There, the image of the goddess Roma appears before Caesar just before he crosses the Rubicon and attempts to prevent this heinous act of war. Scipio invokes the image of Rome

as well, and his language parallels Lucan's description of the city (*BC* 1. 188: *ipsam turrigeros protantem vertice muros* and *BC* 1. 191: *vestalesque foci*). The connection between *Punica* 4 and *BC* 1 has several immediate effects. First, it creates a parallel between the Rubicon and Ticinus, equating the stakes of this first battle of the war with the importance of Caesar's crossing in 49 BC.<sup>251</sup> In so doing, this also equates the function of the Rubicon and Ticinus scenes as the 'beginnings' of their respective wars.<sup>252</sup> Second, it casts Scipio Maior, the Roman general at the river, in the role of Caesar, though in a classic Silian inversion he is now the defender rather than the attacker. Finally, and conversely, it also removes the *imago* of Roma as a character and instead gives her words to Scipio himself with the result that Scipio both matches Caesar in his ferocity and swiftness yet also is opposed against Caesar as Roma seeking to turn the troops around. This role reversal creates two Caesars at the Ticinus; Scipio himself becomes a sort of anti-Caesar, recklessly ferocious in his *defense* of the city, and Hannibal by contrast takes on the more villainous and inimical aspects of Lucan's Caesar – though it should be noted that the Carthaginian leader is almost entirely absent from this important scene.

Likewise, the *nefas* invoked at *Pun.* 4. 412 has multiple layers of meaning. On the surface level it signifies the disgrace of retreat, but the word is also strongly Lucanian and so, placed in this already Lucanian context, carries strong civil war undertones. "By these allusions," Marks concludes, "Silius suggests that the war between Rome and Carthage, which gets under way in this book, will be a kind of civil war or, perhaps, a pre-play, so to speak, of Rome's civil wars

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<sup>251</sup> The river is called *puniceus* by Lucan at *BC* 1. 215 (*fonte cadit modico parvisque impellitur undis / puniceus Rubicon...*), a *figura etymologica* that has an intriguingly Punic potential double meaning. This is likely intentional, as the poet Lucan frequently frames Caesar's invasion of Italy as Hannibal 2.0. See n. 1 above for some examples of Caesar as Hannibal; see also Masters 1992: 1 – 10 (with n. 1) for a reading of Caesar's Rubicon crossing in *BC* 1 that highlights his transgressive and Hannibalic aspects, though Masters does not seem to make much of *puniceus*.

<sup>252</sup> Silius often makes use of Lucan in 'beginnings' or 'firsts', and that perhaps cements the argument that book 4 is the beginning of a new sequence; cf. Marks 2010: 132 – 33.

later in her history.”<sup>253</sup> The recent scene of fratricidal violence which ended only 10 or 15 lines ago, with its disturbing allusive entailments, only strengthens this argument. Furthermore, the actions of the soldiers and their sudden fear of the front line (*Pun.* 4. 403 – 4: *horrida primi / si sors visa loci pugnaeque lacessere frontem*) mark an important change in their behavior from the beginning of the battle, emblemized in the figure of Catus and his vain desire for *primae decus ... pugnae* (*Pun.* 4. 138). Now, the soldiers are quite justified in fleeing; they cannot win this battle (nor any major engagement until after Cannae) and so a quasi-Fabian avoidance of battle (i.e. a retreat) becomes the only rational choice. This decision, despite the sense it may make in hindsight, is contested by Scipio Maior’s aggressive and reckless behavior, the old-school mentality of ‘death before dishonor’, and this clash between Fabian deferment and Caesarian aggression will be a continual problem for the Romans over the first the two-thirds of the epic until Scipio Africanus finally ascends to sole leadership. In full accordance with his Caesarian archetype, Scipio Maior rushes blindly into battle, exposing his chest to the enemy and even threatening his own suicide.<sup>254</sup> It is at this moment, just when it seems that the familial destruction of the preceding scene will be recreated and the course of the *Punica* will derail just as it is beginning, that Jupiter and Mars finally intervene.

### 2.3.3: *Servasse parentem*: Father(s), Son(s), and the Preservation of the Family

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<sup>253</sup> Marks 2010: 133.

<sup>254</sup> A Caesarian archetype from Silius’ 1<sup>st</sup> century AD perspective, that is; Silius’ models and archetypes are in the historical future even as they are in the literal past.

As Jupiter watches Scipio Maior rush headlong into battle at the risk of death and the derailment of the divine plan, the father of the gods orders Mars to put the Scipiones back on track.

Quas acies alto **genitor** dum spectat  
 Olympo,  
 consulis egregii movere pericula mentem.  
 Gradivum vocat et **patrio** sic ore profatur:  
 ‘magnanimi me, **nate, viri**, ni bella capessis,  
 haud dubie extremus terret labor. eripe  
 pugnae  
 ardentem oblitumque sui dulcedine caedum.  
 siste ducem Libyae; nam plus petit improbus  
 uno  
 consulis exitio tota quam strage cadentum.  
 praeterea, cernis, tenerae qui proelia dextrae  
 iam credit **puer** atque annos transcendere  
 factis  
 molitur longumque putat pubescere bello,  
 te duce primitias pugnae, te magna magistro  
 audeat et primum hoc vincat, servasse  
**parentum.**’  
 haec rerum **sator**.

(*Pun.* 4. 417 – 430)

[When the Father of Heaven beheld this battle from the height of Olympus, his heart was moved by the danger of the noble consul. He summoned Mars and addressed him with paternal voice: “Son, unless you take part in the strife, this will surely be the last fight of that hero; and I fear for him. Snatch him away from the battle; so fiery is he, and he forgets himself in the joy of slaughter. Stop Hannibal; for the insatiate African hopes for more from the death of Scipio than from all the heaps of slain. You see, moreover, that boy who already relies on his youthful arm for battle, and aims at prowess beyond his years, and thinks that ripeness for war is slow to come. You must be his leader when he wins his maiden spurs; you must teach him to aspire to great deeds; and let his first victory be the rescue of his father.” Thus spoke the Father of all things.]

The preservation of the family and unity of the state are important overarching themes in the *Punica*, as Hannibal’s independence from the state is contrasted with the great Roman leaders’

integration within it, and this theme now becomes a significant part of this passage.<sup>255</sup> The passage begins and ends with Jupiter in his role as the ultimate father of gods and men (*genitor* and *rerum sator*) and the passage overflows with familial language; Jupiter, with paternal voice (*patrio ore*), orders his son Mars (*nate*) to lead Scipio (*puer*) to rescue his father (*servasse parentem*). Similarly, stages of development within the family and state are contrasted in the figures of the two Scipiones; Scipio Maior is described in terms of his dual roles as fully developed hero and head of the family (*magnanimus vir*) and as a leader of the state (*consul*),<sup>256</sup> while Scipio the younger is portrayed as a developing young man (*tenerae ... dextrae, puer, pubescere*) and student (with *magistro*). These relationships are complicated by the (soon-to-be-revealed) fact that Scipio the younger is descended from Jupiter, making him not only to be a son of Scipio Maior but also a son of Jupiter and, consequently, a brother of Mars. These familial connections exist on two different levels, with Jupiter and Mars representing the divine father and son pair and Scipio and his son the human equivalent.<sup>257</sup> There is also a connection between the two spheres, with the divine son (Mars) and human son (Scipio) working together to save the human father (Scipio Maior), all under the watchful eye of the divine father (Jupiter). We have now returned full circle to the triplet battle, with the brothers now fighting to preserve their (divine and human) family rather than to destroy it; for once, and only with divine intervention, Silius' Romans do not repeat the mistakes of the mythological, historical, or literary past.

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<sup>255</sup> “In contrast to the other Flavian epics, which involve civil and intrafamilial conflict, the *Punica* presents a narrative of external conflict and familial solidarity ... The intertwined familial and political concerns of the epic’s principal characters provide a structural foundation for the massive narrative” (Bernstein 2008: 132).

<sup>256</sup> The balance of family and state (*Pun.* 16. 593: *patriae domusque*) is an important theme in the *Punica*; cf. Bernstein 2008: 158, who contrasts Scipio Africanus’ equal balance with Hannibal’s obsessive devotion to family and neglect of the state.

<sup>257</sup> This ‘double paternity’, in which Scipio’s divine and human parentage are held in equal and sometimes problematic balance, is examined by Marks 2005: 187 – 194.

This begins what Marks calls the ‘education of Scipio’, a process in which he “learns to temper his impetuosity with moderation and focus and comes to understand the central importance of dutiful service to his country.”<sup>258</sup> Scipio’s rescue of his father is, as Marks notes, not only his first victory in battle (*primum hoc vincat*) but also a learning experience. Specifically, the young hero learns what *not* to do from the example of his father. Scipio Maior rushes into battle with – quite literally – suicidal eagerness, fighting against the triple tide of Punic superiority, historical inevitability, and the will of Jupiter. In this way, Scipio’s father represents writ large what Catus did in miniature: the madness and futility of Roman strategy at the beginning of the Second Punic War. The younger Scipio must learn *when* and *how* to participate in battle. In contrast to his father who has completely lost track of his purpose (*oblitumque sui dulcedine caedum*), the younger Scipio must take a more measured and calculated approach – Aenean rather than Turnian, Augustan rather than Caesarian – if he is to emerge victorious in this conflict with Hannibal. There will be a time, when he has completed his education and risen to the status of heroic *vir*, that Scipio can answer Hannibal’s aggression with aggression, but now is not that time.

The idea of ‘wrong time, wrong place’ occurs many times at the battle of the Ticinus, most notably in the ever emblematic figure of Catus, and is repeated several times during this scene as well. Scipio Maior is described as *oblitumque sui dulcedine caedum* by Jupiter; he has ‘forgotten’ his proper role in this battle. In fact, he actively fights against his fate (*Pun.* 4. 448: *stabat Fortunae non cedere certus*), and these theomachic tendencies will be on full display during the subsequent battle of the Trebia. Criticism of Scipio’s misplaced heroism is followed immediately by a similar comment about Hannibal (far be it from Silius to criticize *only* the

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<sup>258</sup> Marks 2005: 114 – 15.

Roman side). Mars is ordered to stop the Libyan general because he seeks “more from the death of Scipio than from all the heaps of slain” (*Pun.* 4. 423 – 24: *nam plus petit improbus uno / consulis exitio tota quam strage cadentum*). Like Scipio Maior himself, Hannibal misunderstands the time and place of Scipio’s death. He seeks ‘more than’ he should, and this *plus ... quam*, though separated by six words, seems suddenly and plainly Lucanian.<sup>259</sup> This close relationship between Scipio Maior and Hannibal is made clear in the very opening lines of this battle: “Each had the same restless valor, and the same thirst for glory, united in their insanity for war and battle” (*Pun.* 4. 99 – 100: *ambobus velox virtus geminusque cupido / laudis et ad pugnas Martemque insania concors*). The younger Scipio has much to learn from these two flawed figures.

At first, the future Africanus seems to follow his father’s (and Hannibal’s) example, with similar *plus quam* language as he “aims at prowess greater than his years” (*annos transcendere factis / molitur*) and seeks to outpace his father’s fate (*Pun.* 4. 457: *praecurrere fata parentis*) with suicide, but he is redirected by Mars towards a more productive path (*Pun.* 4. 458 – 59: *transtulit iras / in Poenos Mavors*), not to be a hero and win the war (for now) but to the more immediate act of saving his father. Scipio Maior has lessons to learn as well, and by Book 13 he is paraphrasing Jupiter’s words to his son.<sup>260</sup> When we finally get a closer look at the younger Scipio he is stuck in the same self-destructive, Lucanian loop that has imprisoned Hannibal and

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<sup>259</sup> cf. the opening programmatic words of Lucan’s hyperbolic epic: *bella per emathios plus quam civilia campos*. Henderson expounds on the meaning behind *plus quam* in Lucan: “The struggle to forge a new (anti-)poetic and escape *belatedness* begins in the rhetoric of hyperbole and *Extremformel* announced in the first verse... the phrase challenges readers to name this *excess*, this *plus quam*, to offer the code of (social) ‘kinship’ with Caesar-Pompey as *socer-gener*, the paradox of *Roman Civil War* fought out in *Thessaly*, the sheer scale of World Civil War or whatever... (Henderson 2010: 455-56 (a minor revision of his famous *The Word at War*); the italics and the second ellipse are the author’s).

<sup>260</sup> *Pun.* 13. 669 – 71: *per nostri, fortissime, leti / obtestor causas, Martis moderare furori. / sat tibi sint documenta domus!* Bernstein 2008: 115 finds this anger management lesson to have tacit contemporary meaning for Domitian, who was, like Hannibal and Scipio, the son of a victorious commander.

his father, but the cycle will soon be broken by a flurry of productive action as the battle is brought to an orderly and Vergilian end.

#### 2.3.4: *Vera proles Iovis*: Scipio, An Enigmatic Hero

In this final crucial scene of the battle we are introduced to a new and totally unique type of hero, different both from the ignorant, doomed-to-die figures of Bogus and Catus and from the bombastic Achillean figures of Hannibal and Scipio Maior. This hero hesitates before rushing in and concedes to the will of the gods; his name will be Scipio Africanus. This passage, being so important to the narrative of the epic as a whole, has been well examined by many scholars. My goals are twofold: first, to summarize the excellent work done on Scipio Africanus, ‘the most perplexing Roman hero in the *Punica*,’<sup>261</sup> by Raymond Marks and others, in order to give some background to this intriguing passage and secondly, since much of that work has read this passage in relationship to the later books in the epic, to contextualize this important scene within Book 4 and the battle itself.

hic puer ut patrio defixum corpore telum  
 conspexit, maduere genae, subitoque  
 trementem  
 corripuit pallor, gemitumque ad sidera rupit.  
 bis conatus erat praecurrere fata parentis  
 conversa in semet dextra, bis transtulit iras  
 in Poenos Mavors. fertur per tela, per hostes  
 intrepidus puer et Gradivum passibus  
 aequat.  
 continuo cessere globi, latusque repente  
 apparet campo limes, metit agmina tectus  
 caelesti clipeo et sternit super arma iacentum  
 corporaque auctorem teli multasque parentos  
 ante oculos animas, optata piacula, mactat.  
 tunc rapta propere duris ex ossibus hasta

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<sup>261</sup> Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2542.

innixum cervice ferens umeroque parentem  
 emicat. attonitae tanta ad spectacula turmae  
 tela tenant, ceditque loco Libys asper, et  
 omnis  
 late cedit Hiber, pietasque insignis et aetas  
 belligeris fecit miranda silentia campis.

(*Pun.* 4. 454 – 471)

[When the boy saw the weapon lodged in his father's body, tears wetted his cheeks, he trembled and turned pale in a moment, and his loud cry went up to heaven. Twice he sought to lay violent hands on himself and die before his father; but twice Mars turned his fury against the Carthaginians instead. Boldly the boy rushed on through missiles and through enemies, keeping pace with Mars himself. At once the ranks gave way, and a wide passage was seen suddenly upon the plain. Protected by the god's shield, he mowed down the host; over the armor and bodies of the slain he laid low the thrower of the dart, and many a life – the atoning sacrifice he longed for – does he immolate before his father's eyes. Then in haste he drew the spear from the tough bone, and sped away, bearing his father supported on his neck and shoulders. Amazed at such a sight, the soldiers lowered their weapons; every fierce Libyan and every Spaniard everywhere gave ground: his youth and *pietas* brought about a wondrous silence on the field of battle.]

Scipio's rescue of his father at Ticinus was well known in ancient literature, found in Livy *AUC* 21.46.7-10, Polybius 10.3 (when describing Scipio's character— interestingly, he does not include it in his description of the battle of Ticinus), Valerius Maximus 5.4.2 (under the category *de pietate erga parentes et fratres et patriam*), and Seneca *De Ben.* 3.33, but no source includes the young Scipio's contemplation of suicide, both a humanizing touch that goes beyond the details in Livy and Polybius and an epic detail that aligns Scipio with the 'Hellenistic' heroes of Jason and, especially, Aeneas.

In the span of 18 lines, the younger Scipio transitions through several heroic archetypes yet never fully embraces any. He begins with a self-destructive outburst in the manner of Catus and the *tergemini fratres*, threatening suicide in the face of his father's own suicidal charge. This suicidal ideation first takes place in the form of an allusion to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, as Raymond

Marks notes, comparing *comversa in semet dextra* with *BC 1.3: in sua victrici conversum*.<sup>262</sup> In an earlier book, Marks also notes the similarities in these lines to Turnus' despondency at *Aen.*

10, when Juno removes the hero unwillingly from battle.<sup>263</sup>

haec memorans animo nunc huc, nunc  
 fluctuat illuc,  
 an sese mucroni ob tantum dedecus amens  
 induat et crudum per costas exigat ensem,  
 fluctibus an iaciat mediis et litora nando  
 curva petat Teucrumque iterum se reddat in  
 arma.  
 ter conatus utramque viam, ter maxima Iuno  
 continuit iuvenemque animi miserata  
 repressit.

(*Aen.* 10. 680 – 686)

[Now, as his thoughts found words, his mood wavered this way and that way. Should he, since overwhelming shame was crippling reason, cover up guilt with a sword, run his pitiless blade through his own ribs? Or throw himself in the pitching waves and swim for the curving shore, thus restoring himself once more to the fight with the Teucrians? Two choices: each one he tried three times; each time mighty Juno stopped the young man and suppressed the attempt.]

Vergil's *ter conatus* is echoed by Silius with *bis conatus* and in both scenes a god prevents the hero from following through with his threats. The difference, as Marks observes, is that in the *Aeneid* it is a female goddess who prevents the hero from joining the battle, while in the *Punica* it is a male god who urges the hero towards offensive action; a classic Silian reversal of a Vergilian moment. Furthermore, with *bis conatus* Silius subtracts an attempt in his depiction of Scipio rather than increasing the number in *aemulatio* (as Vergil so famously does with Turnus and his rock in *Aen.* 12. 899). This numerical downgrade not only provides some pleasant *variatio* but also puts a limit on the comparison between Turnus and Scipio; Scipio's despair is

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<sup>262</sup> Marks 2010: 141.

<sup>263</sup> Marks 2005: 117 – 18.

similar to Turnus in this scene, but not *quite* as extreme – he only tries to kill himself two times. The comparison is not perfect and there are several more revealing differences between the two heroes, once again as noted by Marks. Scipio’s decision to kill himself is instantaneous, unlike Turnus who wavers back and forth before reaching a decision. “These reactions,” Marks concludes, “show the two heroes to be motivated by fundamentally different concerns.” Turnus is motivated by the loss of honor and the shame of his absence, while Scipio never considers joining the fray to begin with and so “must be doing so without an understanding of or regard for his heroic duty.”<sup>264</sup> Of course, the comparison can never be perfect due to fundamental differences in each hero’s character; Scipio’s hesitation occurs at the beginning of his rise to glory, while Turnus’ occurs at the beginning of the end; Scipio is destined for victory and everlasting fame, while Turnus’ fate can only be defeat and death. It is nonetheless very interesting that Silius chose to compare Scipio to someone like Turnus in such an important scene. By comparing these two figures at the end of the battle and during Scipio’s first big scene, Silius provides one example of the type of hero Scipio will *not* be: the self-destructive and honor-obsessed warrior in the style of Achilles, Turnus, Hannibal, or Roman generals such as Scipio Maior.

Scipio’s fearful introduction must also bring to mind our first meeting with Vergil’s hero in *Aen.* 1. 92 -101, when, in despair of Juno’s storm, Aeneas wishes he had died on the Trojan battlefield. Though there are few verbal parallels,<sup>265</sup> the comparison is apt: both heroes are

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<sup>264</sup> Marks 2005: 118.

<sup>265</sup> Few, but there are still some echoes; *ingemit et duplicis tendens ad sidera palmas* (*Aen.* 1.93) can be seen in Silius’ *gemitum ad sidera rupit* (*Pun.* 4. 456), *extemplo* (*Aen.* 1. 92) is substituted with *subito* (*Pun.* 4. 455), and *solvuntur frigore membra* (*Aen.* 1. 92) is hinted at with *tremetem / corripuit pallor* (*Pun.* 4. 455 – 56).

introduced in specifically non-heroic ways, and both will go on very similar journeys.<sup>266</sup> Marks sees another similarity between Scipio and Aeneas. When Scipio overcomes his sudden suicidal breakdown, he enters the battle with godlike swiftness (*Gradivum passibus aequat*) and mows down the enemy (*metit agmina*) under the protection of Mars, creating many hoped-for sacrifices from his victims (*optata piacula, mactat*). Each of these statements has direct verbal or thematic parallels with *Aen.* 10, as Aeneas frantically seeks to avenge the death of Pallas.<sup>267</sup> These echoes serve the dual and contrasting purposes of reminding us of Scipio's Aenean archetype (and preparing us for the imminent Aeneas moment) and furthering the problematic relationship between Aeneas, Turnus, and Achilles. By embracing his martial side in response to an attack on a loved one, Scipio imitates Aeneas' famous *pietas* towards his father and Pallas, but in so doing he also – like Aeneas – embraces the wild and uncontrollable anger of Achilles in his fury after Patroclus' death; the tension between these two aspects of heroism are forever at play and were never fully resolved in the *Aeneid*. Finally, we see Scipio fully recreate the heroism of Aeneas during the sack of Troy, as he, remarkable for his piety and youth (*Pun.* 4. 470: *pietasque insignis et aetas*), carries his father on his shoulders safely away from the battlefield (*Pun.* 4. 467 – 68: *innixum cervice ferens umeroque parentem / emicat*).<sup>268</sup> This not only fully and clearly equates Scipio with his Vergilian archetype, it also creates a link between the sack of Troy and the Roman defeats at the beginning of the Second Punic War. Scipio and the Romans are reliving their traditional role as defensive Trojan losers; just as the fall of that city began Aeneas' long

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<sup>266</sup> Both experience the death of their father, both organize lavish funeral games in his honor, both descend to the underworld.

<sup>267</sup> Marks 2005: 119 – 20.

<sup>268</sup> Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2545 note the parallel to *Aen.* 6. 403 (*pietate insignis et armis*); Marks 2005: 121 notes also *Aen.* 1. 10 (*insignem pietate*) and adds that “mindful of his hero's age, though, Silius expands on this formula, setting Scipionic youth (*aetas*) alongside Aeneadic piety.”

quest, so too does this defeat at the beginning of the war begin Scipio's.<sup>269</sup> This is the second aspect of heroism that Scipio will attain in the course of his 'education', the Aeneas-type, which merges the martial efficacy of the Homeric hero with Aeneas' piety towards family, the gods, and the state. This is but a momentary glimpse of things to come, however, since to present Scipio now as a fully realized hero would undercut large chunks of Silius' narrative. So, to avoid a 'zero-to-hero'<sup>270</sup> Scipio, Silius adds one final heroic archetype to the mix, that of the young Ascanius.

After Scipio has dominated the battlefield and rescued his father, Mars heaps praise upon him in what are the very final lines of the battle.

tum celso e curru Mavors 'Carthaginis arces  
exscindes' inquit 'Tyriosque ad foedera  
coges.  
nulla tamen longo tanta exorietur in aevo  
lux tibi, care puer. macte, o macte indole  
sacra,  
vera Iovis proles. et adhuc maiora supersunt,  
sed nequeunt meliora dari.'

(*Pun.* 4. 472 – 477)

[Then Mars spoke from his lofty chariot: "You shall sack the citadel of Carthage, and force her people to make peace. But the glory of this day surpasses all that a long life will offer you, dear boy. Blessing on thy glorious promise, true child of Jupiter! Greater things are yet to come, but a better gift Heaven cannot give."]

This speech of Mars, coming here at the closing of the combat, is in simultaneous connection with several important turning points in the epic. It recalls the beginning of the battle, when the seer Liger interpreted a bird omen with a prophecy of Scipio's future greatness; omens of

<sup>269</sup> See 1.2.2 for more on the Romans as defensive Trojan losers in the first half of the poem.

<sup>270</sup> The theme song to Disney's *Hercules* (1997). With Hercules' strong presence in the *Punica* (cf. Stocks 2014: 218- 21, Tipping 2010: 14 – 35 and 174 – 85, and Asso 2010), a Disney reference seems, perhaps, obligatory.

Scipio's triumph thus open and close the battle. It also looks ahead to the very final verses of the epic, connecting the prophecy of Scipio's future with the its realization in Book 17. Finally, it provides two more points of contact for Scipio's character. The first, and clearest, resonance is with Ascanius, Vergil's own heroic *puer*, who provides a basis for Scipio's heroic education. The second, surprisingly, hints towards a retrospective view of Scipio's achievements through the figure of Pompey, whose legacy is to be both contrasted to and compared with Scipio Africanus.

Let us begin with Ascanius. Marks, in his typically insightful and thorough way, notes the similarities of this passage to the scene in the *Aeneid* when Apollo addresses Ascanius.<sup>271</sup>

**macte** nova virtute, **puer**, sic itur ad astra,  
dis genite et geniture deos. iure omnia bella  
gente sub Assaraci fato ventura resident,  
nec te Troia capit.

(*Aen.* 9. 641 – 644)

[Blessings on your new manhood, my boy. That is the pathway to heaven, you, who are born of a god, and will someday beget gods! For all wars fated to come will subside when Assaracus' people is ruling justly. And Troy does not set its restrictions on you.]

Silius, as Marks delineates, connects these two scenes in three ways: through language (with *macte*, and *puer*), content (both are prophecies and contain references to the hero's divine lineage), and context (both depict a god addressing a young hero after his first success in battle). First a self-destructive hero in the mold of Turnus, then a hesitant and pious Aeneas-type, now Scipio is shown to us as a new Ascanius/Iulus, descendent of a god, and just beginning his first steps on the road to manhood; three contrasting heroic archetypes in the span of 20 lines. There are, as so often in Silius' poetry, multiple levels of interpretation in such an allusion. The first is

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<sup>271</sup> Marks 2005: 121 – 22.

a clear surface level, one-to-one equation of Scipio and Ascanius as *pueri*, sons of *viri* in the traditional heroic sense, whose journeys lead to the foundation (or re-foundation) of the Roman people. This is a simple yet effective and compelling interpretation and does much to help define Scipio's character at this dramatic turning point. Though Ascanius/Iulus, Silius also connects Scipio Africanus with the Julian clan, introducing a complex, cyclical genealogy for his hero that symbolizes both Scipio's multifaceted nature and that of the *Punica* itself. As the son of a hero, destined for great things, Scipio and his father line up with Aeneas and Ascanius, but an even better fit may be Julius Caesar and his adopted son Octavian, the future Augustus. The Augustan Scipio tempers the personality and learns from the mistakes of his bold father, the Caesarian Scipio Maior; the Caesarian Scipio will die a premature and violent death, while the Augustan Scipio will survive all his rivals and enemies to military and political triumph. The contrast between the lifelong generalissimo father and urbane, cultured son works equally well for Vespasian and Domitian. So, Scipio Africanus is *both* Aeneas *and* Ascanius, he is the historical predecessor of men like Julius Caesar and Augustus, Vespasian and Domitian, yet also the literary descendant of Lucan's Caesar. Scipio's descent from Lucan's Caesar works on multiple levels as well; he is both a literary descendent, in that he is a Roman hero written into being after (in historical time) and in reaction to Lucan's Caesar, and a literal descendent, in that he is the son of a strongly Caesarian figure in the *Punica*. Furthermore, the relationship between Scipio the father and Scipio the son is in some ways akin to the relationship between the *Bellum Civile* and the *Punica*; the successor mollifies the excess of its predecessor, pulling back from Lucan's pessimistic abyss, just as Africanus must adapt to and learn from the conduct of his father.

There are several similarities between the prophecy of Mars given here and the prophetic interpretation of Liger that began the battle way back in *Pun.* 4. 120 – 30, and it is clear that Silius constructed these two as bookends marking the beginning and end of the battle.

nosco te, summe deorum.  
 adsis o firmesque tuae, **pater**, alitis omen.  
 nam tibi servantur, ni vano cassa volatu  
**mentitur** superos praepes, postrema  
 subactae  
 fata, **puer**, Libyae et **maius** Carthagine  
 nomen.

(*Pun.* 4. 126 – 130)

[“I recognize your hand, O mightiest of the gods. Be present, O Father, and confirm the omen of your bird! For, unless the eagle is false to the gods and his flight means nothing, it is reserved for this boy to seal the fate of conquered Libya, and to gain a name greater than that of Carthage.”]

The prophet Liger, whose interpretation was contested by Bogus and the death of Catus, is now shown to have been, of course, correct. Jupiter is now present (*Pun.* 4. 417: *genitor dum spectat*), Carthage’s defeat is unambiguously confirmed (*Pun.* 4. 472 – 73: *Carthaginis arces / excindes*), and the language of falsity (*vano cassa volatu / mentitur*) gives way to the proclamation of truth (*Pun.* 4. 475: *vera Iovis proles*). Mars repeats Liger’s *puer*, while the use of the comparatives *maiora* and *meliora* echoes Liger’s *maius Carthagine nomen*. *Maius nomen*, besides alluding to Scipio’s famous *agnomen*, may also be a subtle allusion to Lucan’s Pompeius Magnus, who Africanus surpasses with a classic Lucanian comparative.<sup>272</sup> Additionally, *ni vano cassa volatu / mentitur superos praepes* anticipates the final two verses of the epic, when Scipio has finally

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<sup>272</sup> Once again, Silius plays with the literary and historical timeline; Scipio Africanus will surpass the achievements of the *literary* Pompey, who came before Silius and Scipio, even though Africanus historically predated Pompey by many generations.

ascended to the heights here prophesied, and it is through this allusion that Silius connects his Scipio even more closely with the great name of Pompey.

nec **vero**, cum te memorat de stirpe deorum,  
**prolem** Tarpei **mentitur** Roma Tonantis  
 (*Pun.* 17. 653 – 54)

[Rome tells no lie, when she gives thee a divine origin and calls you the son of the Thunder-god who dwells on the Capitol.]

The repetition of *mentitur* from Liger's prophecy and the echo of *vera Iovis proles* from Mars' speech creates a link between Ticinus' prophetic bookends and the final confirmation of Scipio's triumph at the end of the epic; here, at the very beginning of Scipio's journey, Silius looks to its end. Marks notes the similarities to Lucan's description of Pompey's death in *BC* 8. 871 – 72

(*atque erit Aegyptus populis fortasse nepotum / tam mendax Magni tumulo quam Creta*

*Tonantis*) and argues that Silius wishes us to contrast Scipio and Rome's fate with Pompey's and Carthage.

“Whereas people will one day doubt the truth of Pompey's place of death, the Romans will not doubt one day the truth of Scipio's divine paternity, and whereas the Cretans claim that Jupiter died, Rome's final victory proves that the god is alive and well and that his reign and his city will continue to thrive.”<sup>273</sup>

In addition to contrasting these two men, Silius may also want us to *compare* the fates of Scipio and Pompey. Despite the legendary status he achieved during this war, historically Scipio Africanus reached a rather ignominious end in voluntary exile in Liternum, defeated by his political enemies and bitter even in death towards what he considered an ungrateful *patria*. Like

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<sup>273</sup> Marks 2010: 149 – 50; important allusions to Pompey's defeat, he adds, occur at the end of each half of Silius' epic – the first being Paulus' death in book 10 (*Pun.* 10. 305: *hic finis Paulo* and *Pun.* 17. 618: *hic finis bello* both allude, through *Aen.* 2. 554: *haec finis Priami*, to Pompey's death).

Pompey, his outstanding achievements early in life were followed by a glory that faded in old age.<sup>274</sup> By invoking the death of Pompey at the height of Scipio's triumph, Silius provides a poetic *memento mori* of sorts, a reminder that perhaps Scipio and Pompey are not so different after all. After all, even Scipio's tomb, like Pompey's, remains undiscovered.

The final scene in the battle of Ticinus repeats many of the same themes found throughout the battle and which will be repeated across the entire epic. Scipio Maior's futile attempt to rally the Roman troops nearly results in his own self-destruction, mirroring Catus' useless charge at the opening of the battle. In his speech to the fleeing Romans, the Caesarian Scipio mimics the language of Roma when she appears to Caesar at the Rubicon in *BC 1*, a paradox which highlights the futility of his actions and the schizophrenic nature of the Roman leadership. Jupiter, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Liger at the beginning of the battle, appears and, invoking the familial links between himself, Mars, Scipio, and his son, sends the god of war to rescue a narrative at risk of going off the rails. Finally, the younger Scipio is introduced in his fully enigmatic form. First, he appears as both a Turnus, suicidal over being removed from battle by Juno, and an Aeneas, wishing for death at the opening of the *Aeneid*. Unlike Turnus, who was removed from battle by a goddess, Scipio is prodded towards it by a male god, and enters battle as Aeneas in his warlike state after the death of Pallas. A step in the right direction, but this too

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<sup>274</sup> The full account of his death in Livy (38.53) brings the arc of his life even closer to Pompey's: *vitam Literni egit sine desiderio urbis: morientem rure eo ipso loco sepeliri se iussisse ferunt monumentumque ibi aedificari, ne funus sibi in ingrata patria fieret. vir memorabilis, bellicis tamen quam pacis artibus memorabilior. Nobilior prima pars vitae quam postrema fuit, quia in iuventa bella adsidue gesta, cum senecta res quoque defloruere, nec praebita est materia ingenio* ("He spent his life at Liternum, with no desire to return to the City; when dying they say that he gave orders that he should be buried in that same place in the country and that his tomb should be erected there, that his funeral might not be held in an ungrateful homeland. He was a man to be remembered for his achievements in war than his deeds in peace. The first part of his life was more distinguished than the last, since in his youth he was continually waging wars, while with old age his deeds too faded, nor was any opportunity afforded to display his talent." Trans. Page.) See also Val. Max. 5.3.2b (under the chapter *de ingratis*), who records the inscription on his tomb: *ingrata patria, ne ossa quidem mea habes*.

presents a flawed example for Scipio with its allusions to Achilles' mad rage in the *Iliad*. Continuing his encore of Aenean piety, Scipio cuts a path to his now wounded father, lifts him upon his shoulders, and carries him safely from the field. Just as he seems to reach his most fully Aenean state, Mars addresses the new hero in words that now recall Apollo's speech to Ascanius. Rather than a reborn Aeneas, Scipio now becomes the son of Aeneas, a young hero only now at the beginning of his journey.

Scipio Africanus in the *Punica* is a complex, enigmatic character, and nowhere else in the poem is he portrayed in as many forms in quick succession. In this short scene he is both a son of Caesar (i.e. an Augustus and a Domitian) and a predecessor/ancestor of Caesar (both as Ascanius/Iulus and as coming before him in historical time); he is both a Turnus, despondent and suicidal at the outcome of the battle, and a pious Aeneas confidently following the divine path set forth for him; as an Ascanius he is a young hero at the beginning of his journey who must learn to temper the boldness that doomed his Hannibalic, Scipionic, and Caesarian predecessors, but he must also embrace this very same trait if he wishes to prevail in this conflict; finally, though predictions of his future glory are constant reminders of the fame that awaits him at the end of his journey, allusions to the death of Pompey hint at the fading glory that historically followed. Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy give a useful, finalizing summary of this perplexing hero:

“Silius' Scipio moves before our eyes as Iulus, Aeneas, and a host of other figures, past and future, but is never really like any of them. He is, above all, *sui generis*, an archetype rather than a copy. The poet leaves us to make what we will of the incongruities and conflicting tensions within his character, juxtaposing his brilliance with his eccentricity and his divine pretensions ...”<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy 1986: 2543.

#### 2.4.1: Ticinus: A Microcosmic *Punica*

We have now, at last, arrived at the end of the battle. Darkness falls upon the battlefield and, for a brief moment, there is a break in the unending combat. Let us now take a step back from our close reading of Ticinus and take one final, conclusive look at the battle as a whole, observing how Silius weaves together these individual episodes to create the unified whole that is the battle of Ticinus.

The battle began with the omen of the birds at *Pun.* 4. 101 – 119 and the interpretations of Liger and Bogus. The veracity of Liger's prophecy at the beginning of the battle is confirmed by Mars at its end, and these two prophecies about Scipio's future, one mortal and one divine, act as bookends to the battle; Ticinus begins and ends with Scipio Africanus. Furthermore, these prophecies also allude to the description of Scipio's triumph in Book 17, leading to the creation of additional bookends at the beginning and end of the war itself.<sup>276</sup> The prophecies given to Scipio in Book 4 of the *Punica* have an interesting dual purpose; they work both within the battle itself, with a contested mortal interpretation confirmed by an uncontested, divine repetition of the prophecy at the end, and they work to unify the epic as a whole, framing the entire war around Scipio's journey. Many of the other passages examined in these first two chapters can be read in the same way, serving important functions both within the battle and for the epic as a whole, leading to a battle structure that in many ways contains the whole of the *Punica* in miniature.

After the omen and prophecies comes the death of Catus (discussed in 1.2). His futile self-destruction, with its allusions to the failures of Turnus and the insanity of Lucan's civil war, is unambiguously programmatic, setting the tone for the subsequent deaths of Tyrrhenus,

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<sup>276</sup> This also perhaps lends credence to the idea that book 17 is the real ending, since it so clearly references the prophecy at the beginning of the war.

Quirinius, and Crixus. Like Scipio's prophecy, Catus' death is replayed a second time in the battle, this time inverted, when the Roman hero Scipio Maior overwhelms the spear-throw of Crixus, atoning for Catus' failure. Yet the death of Catus is also programmatic for the entire war, representing the succession of flawed Roman leaders like Scipio Maior, Gracchus, Flaminius, Paulus, and Varro. This dual function is made most clear by the position of Catus' death, just after the description of Scipio's fate. By positioning Catus in this way, Silius not only undercuts the positive language of Liger's interpretation with a sharp reminder of the deaths to come, he also anticipates the end of the battle and the transition to Trebia, when Mars' hopeful prophecy is quickly followed by the arrival of Gracchus, who, like Catus, rushes forward first into battle (*Pun.* 4. 514: *cunctisque prior volat*).<sup>277</sup>

The other 'minor' deaths follow this same pattern, both serving important thematic roles within the battle and alluding to future scenes in the epic. Tyrrhenus (section 1.3), whose lips still blow the horn even in death, not only symbolizes the irresistible Roman urge for death but also, through his name, connects Ticinus to Trasimene in Book 5, linking the two books together as a single unending conflict. Quirinius (section 1.4) actively seeks death and a vain glory, furthering the themes of futility and anticipating Scipio Maior's suicidal charge later in the battle. He is also, through his name and decapitation, a human substitute for the sack of Rome in Book 12 which is only narrowly averted by divine intervention. Finally, the success Scipio Maior has against Crixus at the end of the battle's first half not only puts a stop to this succession of futile deaths but is also mirrored and inverted by his dramatic failure at the end of the battle. A

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<sup>277</sup> Interestingly enough, Gracchus does not die during Trebia (once again the historical record constrains Silius) and in fact dies offscreen, so to speak, in book 12 (*Pun.* 12. 477 – 78: *Gracchus, caeco circumdatus astu, / occiderat*); despite this tangential death, *caeco ... astu* highlights the same ignorance that dooms Catus and so many other Roman leaders.

Scipio thus appears at the three major turning points of Ticinus: the glory of Africanus is predicted at the battle's opening, the (fleeting) success of Scipio Maior is showcased at its middle point, and the failure of Maior's archaic style is contrasted with the lasting success of Africanus' new heroism at the end of the battle.

The second half of Ticinus ramps up the themes of violence and civil war but also, like the second half of the *Punica* itself, begins to show the slow decline of Hannibal and the Carthaginians. We began with – finally – the entrance of the Carthaginians and, most importantly, the Romans' first in-person sighting of Hannibal. This passage is yet another example of Silius' ability to create a complex internal structure for the battle, while simultaneously replaying important scenes from past books and anticipating future ones. Hannibal's dramatic entrance (section 2.1) was compared to his previous entrance on the field of Saguntum in Book 2 and his final appearance in Book 17 at the battle of Zama, with the conclusion that it is here, at Ticinus, that Hannibal is in his most legendary and impressive form. This establishes the Carthaginian leader as a terrifying presence on the battlefield, driving the Romans into headlong flight, but it is significant that Hannibal has already peaked during the first real battle of the war. Within the battle, this depiction of a new god of war with the attributes of Mars anticipates the actual war god's entrance later in the battle, whose appearance on the side of Scipio and the Romans severely undercuts Hannibal's pretensions. The contrast between Hannibal's rise and inevitable fall with Scipio's prophesied ascension to even greater heights gives an additional layer of unity to the second half of the battle.

Hannibal's entrance is followed by arguably the most complex and intertextual passage of Ticinus, the battle of the triplet brothers (section 2.2). This long duel begins with a clear allusion to Livy's Horatii and Curiatii, but whereas in Livy the Roman brother eventually prevails, in

Silius there is no victor; the final two brothers instead commit what amounts to a recreation of Statius' *Thebaid* fratricide. Within the battle, this scene of familial destruction anticipates the very next scene of familial salvation, when Scipio-as-Aeneas saves his father's life. Within the macrostructure of the *Punica*, the deaths of the triplet brothers and images of civil war violence look ahead to the terrible intrafamilial deaths that occur before and during the battle of Cannae, aligning the moral low points of Ticinus and the war itself.

We have now returned to the final and most recently discussed scene, when Scipio Maior's suicide by combat is averted by his divinely guided son. Yet another self-destructive and futile death is prevented and Scipio's final triumph in Book 17 is prophesied. The cycle may have ended within Ticinus, but there is much more for the Romans to learn and they will immediately relapse into their former bad habits in the following battle of the Trebia. The younger Scipio will not appear again in battle until Cannae in Book 9, when his duel with Hannibal is diverted at the last moment, and even so will not be seen in his full heroic might until the battle of Zama in Book 17. Instead, Scipio will give way to a succession of flawed Roman generals, each one placing their own might against Hannibal's and failing, until Roman fortunes slowly improve after Cannae in Book 10. Silius wastes no time; the next general, the hasty Gracchus, appears only a few lines after the end of the battle.

The battle of Ticinus is a long, complex, and programmatically significant tour-de-force at the beginning of the Italian campaign and the *Punica* proper. In it, Silius establishes the crucial themes of self-destructive violence and civil war imagery, the confusion of roles and identities, familial dissolution and salvation, and hubristic theomachy, themes that are not only echoed within the battle itself but which also resonate throughout the entire epic. The influence of his literary predecessors is everywhere apparent, but nowhere is Silius content only to imitate.

Instead, his masterful use of allusion, inversion, the poetics of contingency, and the compression of history builds up to a remarkably complex battle scene, as the poet refers to familiar passages from Vergil, Lucan, Statius, and Livy only to subvert his audience's expectations with fresh twists, unexpected juxtapositions, and creative inversions. Silian nomenclature is also on great display, with even the most minor of warriors receiving an allusively significant name. Nearly the entirety of Roman history is replayed, from Aeneas' heroics during the sack of Troy, to the battle of the Horatii and Curiatii during the reign of Tullus Hostilius, to the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 BC, to the civil wars at the end of the republican era. The battle also contains a microcosmic recreation of the *Punica* itself, with a parade of vain Roman deaths slowly giving way to the unity of Rome under the Scipionic hero. The battle of Ticinus in *Punica* 4 is far from the 'monotonous and repulsive' slog that it is called by J.D. Duff in the opening quote of chapter 1. When read without prejudice and with an appreciation for Silius' unique style – its density, its complexity, and its subtlety – there can be no doubt that the Flavian poet has left behind a significant achievement, worthy to be read and studied by every scholar of ancient epic. But let us cut this applause short for the moment; we have still only reached the halfway point of this fourth book of the *Punica*, and Trebia looms close on the horizon.

## Chapter 3:

### *Iam superest consul: The Battle of Trebia, Part I*

(*Pun.* 4. 480 – 569)

*“Life is brief but Silius is not. In his poetry, he is a leviathan, wallowing in shallow waters that have been made turbid by his own frantic efforts to reach the open sea”*

D.W.T.C. Vessey, 1982.<sup>278</sup>

#### 3.1.0: Trebia in History

Like Ticinus, our main ancient sources for the battle of Trebia (December 218 BC) are Livy (21.54 – 56) and Polybius (3.70 – 74).<sup>279</sup> In Livy the build up to Trebia begins as far back as 21.49 – 51, when the historian describes the affairs of the consul Sempronius (our ‘Gracchus’) in Sicily before he joins Scipio in Italy, a long digression that Silius compresses into a few lines (*Pun.* 4. 493 – 95). Livy returns to the Italian campaign at 21.52 and describes Sempronius’ incomplete victory over Hannibal’s Gallic allies (a detail Silius does not include with his Sempronius, although this detail is quite close to Flaminius’ very similar Gallic adventure

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<sup>278</sup> From the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature, Volume 2: Latin Literature*.

<sup>279</sup> Appian also gives a brief synopsis of the battle at Hann. 2.7.

described after the conclusion of Trebia at 4.704 – 706).<sup>280</sup> Flushed with success and eager for battle, Sempronius is contrasted with Scipio, who, still suffering from his wound at Ticinus, wishes to delay battle. Hannibal is aware of Sempronius' temerity and sets an ambush for the Roman army. The battle itself takes up 21.54 – 56, with Hannibal sending his Numidian cavalry to lure the Romans from their camps (Silius describes rather Massilians at *Pun.* 4. 510). The battle is even for some time – Livy describes that the Romans were even able to hold the elephants off for a time, a detail that perhaps gives Silius the material for his own elephantomachy at *Pun.* 4. 598 – 621 – but eventually the Roman line disintegrates and retreats. The additional detail of the cold, pouring rain may be the origin of Silius' river battle.

Polybius provides many of the same details as Livy (unsurprisingly, as he was one of Livy's major sources); the overconfidence of 'Tiberius' (=Sempronius =Gracchus) is noted, as is his disagreement with Scipio and Hannibal's awareness of this weakness, at 3.70; the Numidians goad the Romans from their defensive positions; and the weather is cold, rainy, and miserable. As in Livy the Roman line achieves some success but is limited by the collapse of the flanks. Polybius' final detail that many were killed near the river by the elephants and cavalry may have also given Silius license to expand his elephantomachy and river battle.<sup>281</sup>

Both Polybius and Livy take measures to excuse the defeat at Trebia; Livy focuses on the effects of the cold and hunger on the Roman troops, while Polybius points to character flaws of the Roman general and Hannibal's tactical advantage. Jessica Clark notes that the Romans in

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<sup>280</sup> Cf. *AUC* 21.52.11 – 21.53.1: *cumque ad extremum aequassent certamen, maior tamen hostium numerus cecidisset, penes Romanos fama victoriae fuit. Ceterum nemini omnium maior ea iustiorque quam ipsi consuli videri ...* and *Pun.* 4. 704 – 706: *Boiorum nuper populos turbaverat armis / Flaminius, facilisque viro tum gloria belli, / corde levem atque astus inopem contundere gentem.*

<sup>281</sup> Polyb. 3.74.8: τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν οἱ μὲν πλεῖστοι περὶ τὸν ποταμὸν ἐφθάρησαν ὑπὸ τε τῶν θηρίων καὶ τῶν ἰππέων.

Livy were consistent in their downplaying of these two battles, especially Ticinus, and even left Ticinus out of the list of defeats; Hannibal, on the other hand, always includes both in his speeches in Livy.<sup>282</sup> This may be, as she notes, due to the severity of later defeats, but it may also be evidence of the creation of a ‘canon’ of defeats in the Second Punic War, one that was designed to “provide a careful selection of instructive or inspiring anecdotes” and “could set the memory of Cannae in a broader context, and lend support to a version of the war in which Rome defeated Carthage through strength of character alone.”<sup>283</sup> With this in mind, it is all the more interesting that Silius devoted so much time to these two battles. As they are in Livy, the defeats at Ticinus and Trebia are used by Silius as framing devices, battles that introduce the different types of heroes in the *Punica* (Scipio, his son, and Gracchus), establish the motif of civil war violence and self-inflicted wounds, and foreshadow both the great defeat at Cannae in the middle of the epic and the ascension of Scipio Africanus at and after Zama in book seventeen.

Polybius’ and Livy’s accounts of the battle of Trebia are quite close to each other; both speak of the disagreement between the two consuls before the battle, both mention the fact that Hannibal took great advantage of Sempronius’ flaws, both begin the battle with a Numidian skirmish, and both describe the ill effects of the cold and rainy weather. The major sections of Silius’ version, as will become clear below, are almost completely different, and almost all these changes result from Silius’ wish to epicize the accounts in Livy and Polybius. So, Hannibal and Sempronius (=Gracchus) are given an epic side-by-side *aristeia*, the river floods at Juno’s behest, and Scipio himself engages in battle with the now personified Po with the aid of Venus

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<sup>282</sup> “Thus despite the importance of both battles for Polybius’ and Livy’s historiographic framing of the war, they [Ticinus and Trebia] did not engage the commemorative imagination of our (surviving) sources as widely as, for example, the defeat at Lake Trasimene” (Clark 2014: 56).

<sup>283</sup> Clark 2014: 56.

and Vulcan. While Silius has almost completely left the grounded worlds of Livy and Polybius, the seeds of his battle narrative can still be seen within the historiographical accounts.

### 3.1.1: Scholarship on the Trebia

The battle of the Trebia river, as detailed below in section 3.1.1, exhibits a structure that is in many ways similar to that of Ticinus: a speech precedes the mass combat, with necrologic splashes here and there, followed by the arrival of an important Roman hero at the climax. Scholarship on the battle of Ticinus, as we have just seen, tends to cherry pick from that final scene and so the greatest density of work is clustered around Scipio's rescue of his father at the end of the battle. Though admittedly an important part of the battle and a crucial piece of character development for Silius' nascent hero, few scholars seek to place the scene within the context of the battle itself and the preceding scenes. Trebia exhibits an even worse myopia. Unlike Ticinus, where one can find articles or chapters on the prophecy of Bogus, the death of Catus and the duel between Crixus and Scipio, in addition to much work on Scipio's rescue of his father, the Trebia, despite taking up nearly 250 lines, has apparently only one passage worthy of scholarly interest, that of Scipio Maior's battle with the river god, which takes up about 60 lines at the end of the battle. A noteworthy scene, to be sure, and the work on it has been very revealing, especially that of Santini, who examines the theme of rivers in Silius, and Chaudhuri, who explores the battle as a theomachy in a Flavian context.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Santini 1991: 63 – 113, esp. 80 – 91 and Chaudhuri 2014: 195 – 230.

Our list of modern scholarship on the Trebia scene quickly runs dry; Feeney rather briefly discusses the river battle in the context of “pervasive narrative weaknesses” in Silius’ treatment of the divine while Hardie avoids the topic altogether.<sup>285</sup> With such a dearth of scholarship on the Trebia and its many interesting and meaningful scenes, we are left with some old and reliable, though at times frustratingly laconic, mainstays: Spaltenstein’s steady commentary, quick to spot many of Silius’ intertexts and even quicker to dismiss them, Juhnke’s magisterial 1972 *Homerisches in römischer Epik flavischer Zeit*, especially useful for his discussion of the many Homeric parallels in the river battle, and Niemann’s 1975 *Die Darstellung der römischer Niederlagen in den Punica des Silius Italicus*, still perhaps the only modern work that examines the battles of book 4 from start to finish. These five authors, Juhnke, Niemann, Spaltenstein, Santini, and Chaudhuri will be valuable allies in the coming battle.

With that in mind, let us now examine the structure of this new battle in its entirety, including the remarkable scene of Scipio’s *mache parapotamios* but not neglecting the many scenes which anticipate it and build on themes established at Ticinus. As with Ticinus, I follow Niemann’s structural analysis closely while adding a few details of my own.

### 3.1.2: Structure and Interpretation

Like Ticinus, Trebia is divided into two main parts, the land battle and the river battle, in addition to small pre- and post-battle sections. The Trebia also begins with a pre-battle speech (Hannibal, this time) and contains several necrologues and *aristeiai* before reaching its climax with a dramatic, though of less narrative importance, set piece. A major difference between the two battles is, of course, that the Trebia is the second in a series rather than the first and, because

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<sup>285</sup> Feeney 1991: 302 – 11 and Hardie 1993; Hardie’s discussion of the *Punica* skips from 4. 479 to 722, the exact lines of the battle of Trebia.

of that, requires Silius to transition from one to the other, though at other times the poet is keen to blur the lines between Ticinus and Trebia. As I did with the battle of Ticinus, I have divided the two parts of the battle of Trebia into two chapters; the first covers the transition between battles through the death of Allius (*Pun.* 4. 480 – 572) and the second covers the scenes in the river, Scipio’s river battle, and Vulcan’s intervention (*Pun.* 4. 573 – 721).

Prologue: A Fluid Transition (*Pun.* 4. 480 – 511)

Silius completes a series of important tasks during this short transition between Ticinus and Trebia. First, he briskly describes the passage of time and the movement of troops. Night, having fallen at 4. 479, is over already by 4. 480 – 82. Scipio Maior retreats to the relative safety of the hills around the Trebia river, though the audience will know by now that the Romans and Scipio are psychologically incapable of utilizing this defensive terrain, and Hannibal follows in hot pursuit. A new *vir*, Tiberius Sempronius Longus (referred to by Silius as ‘Gracchus’) is introduced at 4. 493, marked by *ecce aderat*, who replaces Scipio during the first part of the battle. Silius will use a similar construction (*Pun.* 4. 622: *ecce per adversum*) when Scipio makes a dramatic return in the final third of the battle. Despite this transitional passage’s position outside the main narrative of the battle, and so absent from Niemann’s study, it contains a great amount of foreshadowing and connects as much forward with Trebia as it looks backward to Ticinus. Finally, Hannibal makes a dramatic speech, mocking the Romans’ need for multiple *viri* to oppose him, though unwittingly undermining himself through allusions to the abandoned lovers of Aeneas. The speech itself is divided into three parts, as Niemann delineates, and marked by a high degree of symmetry. Silius’ masterful use of compression guides the narrative swiftly on to Trebia while simultaneously establishing a number of important thematic goals.

Phase 1: The Land Battle (*Pun.* 4. 512 – 569)

The first major phase of the battle begins at line 512, when the Romans are goaded from their camp. As at the opening of the Ticinus, the Romans once again fail to emulate the Trojans' patience and discipline in *Aen.* 9 and charge recklessly out of their defensive positions; Catus' individual folly at Ticinus is now embraced by the Roman collective (*Latius ... miles*). Gracchus is at the front of this charge (*prior volat*), highlighting yet another Roman leader's over-eagerness for battle, and his superficially heroic description contains yet more undertones of Turnus. A simile and authorial interlude (4. 520 – 528) marks the transition to the combat proper. Gracchus and Hannibal compete for kills in what Niemann calls a "Simultanaristie" as the pace of slaughter ramps up – necrologues will again be important. Lucan's pervasive shadow makes itself known once more with another allusion to the death of (Lucan's) Catus and examples of civil war violence from the time of Sulla. Everywhere *Aeneid* 12 is in play, with Hannibal and Gracchus replaying the double *aristeia* of Turnus and Aeneas, although, disturbingly, both heroes channel Turnus as much as Aeneas. Finally, Silius gives space to an extended necrologue for the Roman Allius, a soldier from southern Italy whose death by opposing spear points symbolically foreshadows the fate of Rome's southern Italians in book 11.

#### Phase 2: The River Battle (*Pun.* 4. 570 – 621)

The death of Allius 4. 568 – 69 marks the end of the first phase, the end of chapter 3, and the beginning of chapter 4, as the more or less even combat between Hannibal and Gracchus now becomes a one-sided massacre. This second phase of the battle is greatly expanded, taking up some two-thirds of the entire battle description and is itself divided into three scenes.<sup>286</sup> First, the Trebia river, in accordance to the wishes of Juno, rises up as the Romans retreat and overwhelms

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<sup>286</sup> "... hat Silius diesen Passus seiner Schlachtschilderung am breitesten ausgeführt – er umfaßt nahezu zwei Drittel der gesamten Schlachtbeschreibung – ..." (Niemann 1975: 89).

the soldiers in a watery deluge (4. 570 – 597). In a remarkably vivid passage that recalls Lucan's descriptions of the tyranny of Sulla (*BC* 2. 201 – 226), Roman soldiers desperately clamber over their own comrades in a panicked scene of mass drowning; just as Sulla's reign of terror was only a precursor to an even bloodier conflict, so too is Trebia only the beginning of Rome's manifold doom. In the second part (4. 598 – 621), the Roman slaughter comes to a climax (marked pointedly by *accumulat clades* at 4. 598) with Fibrenus' defeat of an elephant in the river, a valiant, if vain, victory that engages with the death of Hippomedon – another theomach – in *Thebaid* 9.<sup>287</sup> The death of this elephant marks yet another turning point in the battle as the group slaughter of the preceding section gives way to duel of sorts: Scipio's super-Achillean river battle.

Scipio, absent since the beginning of the battle, now makes a dramatic reappearance, suddenly entering the river and laying waste to the Carthaginians. Verbally similar entrances (*ecce aderat* at 4. 493 and *ecce per adversum* at 4. 622) subtly align Scipio and Gracchus, asking the reader to compare and criticize the personalities and efficacy of these two examples of Roman leadership. Despite his superhuman attributes, exceeding even his Homeric predecessor, it quickly becomes apparent that Scipio is no more effective than Gracchus at preserving a Roman victory. His excessive and theomachic behavior serves only to reiterate the flaws displayed at Ticinus; he is *violentius* and marked by an Achillean *ira* (4.642), his threats are arrogant (4.660: *poenas superbas*), he pushes beyond the bounds of acceptable human behavior (*adde modum*), and he once again wishes for death in a suicidal outburst (4.673-74: *redde o me,*

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<sup>287</sup> The chronology of Statius' and Silius' epics is difficult – perhaps impossible – to pinpoint with any certainty; recently, scholars have begun to embrace a more flexible understanding of their relationship, preferring the idea that the epics were written during the same time period or at least had some overlap. See Lovatt 2009 and Ripoll 2015 for nuanced interpretations; the question of primacy is taken up again below at 3.6. See also 13 – 17 above.

*nate, periclis, / redde hosti!*). In Scipio's impressive yet ultimately futile *mache parapotamios* we can see the irrepressible flow of history made literal. Despite Scipio's (and Silius') best efforts, this defeat cannot be changed retroactively into a victory – no matter the power of poetry. The battle becomes ever more superlative, reaching an elemental climax in *aemulatio* of Homer as Vulcan intervenes with an all-destructive conflagration that anticipates the imagery of Hannibal's ravaging of Italy in book seven, before *finally* ending at line 698 (*ac tandem*) with the Romans retreating yet again to a more defensive position (4.699: *munitum in collem*). They and the reader, however, are allowed little respite, as Silius quickly begins ramping up again for ever worse defeats.

Epilogue: The Cycle Continues (*Pun.* 4. 704 – 721)

Silius wastes no time after Trebia and immediately begins foreshadowing Trasimene in book five with a short and ominous post-battle scene that mirrors the battle's prologue. Flaminius, a new Roman actor, is introduced as yet another in a long line of overconfident and incompetent Roman *duces*, whose easy triumphs against the Boii have resulted in a false sense of superiority. This transitional scene is brought to a full stop with an allusive and highly revealing simile in which Flaminius is compared to an inexperienced captain (*nescius*), more dangerous to his own ship than a storm. As often in Silius, the simile marks the end not only of a discrete section of the narrative but also the of entire battle sequence of book four; after 600 lines of virtually non-stop warfare, the destruction is brought – temporarily – to an end.

3.2.1: Transition and Repetition (*Pun.* 4. 480 – 497)

The transition from the end of Ticinus to the beginning of Trebia occurs at a forced march, with Silius only taking five lines from sundown at Ticinus to sunrise at Trebia.

Condebat noctem devexo Cynthia curru	480
fraternis afflata rotis, et ab aequore Eoo	
surgebant roseae <b>media</b> inter <b>caerula</b> flammae.	
at <b>consul</b> tristes campos Poenisque secundam	
planitiem metuens <b>Trebiam</b> collesque petebat.	
iamque dies rapti cursu navoque labore,	485
et <b>medio</b> abruptus fluitabat in amne solutis	
pons vinclis, <b>qui Dardanium travexerat agmen,</b>	
Eridani rapidas <b>aderat</b> cum Poenus ad undas,	
dumque vada et molles aditus per devia flexo	
circuitu petit et stagni languentia quaerit,	490
interdum rapta vicinis saltibus alno	
flumineam texit, <b>qua travehat agmina,</b> classem.	
ecce <b>aderat Trebiae</b> que simul vicina tenebat	
Trinacrio accitus per <b>caerula</b> longa Peloro	
Gracchorum proles, <b>consul.</b>	495

(*Pun.* 4. 480 – 495)

[Cynthia with downward course was ending the night, while her brother's coursers breathed fire upon her; and from the eastern wave roseate lights ascended amid the blue waters. Then Scipio, fearing the fatal plain and the level ground so favorable to the Carthaginians, made for the Trebia and the hills. The days flew by, as they marched and toiled busily; and, when Hannibal reached the swift stream of the Po, the bridge by which the Roman army had crossed was broken down and floating in midstream, with its cables cut. When Hannibal marched round by devious paths, seeking a ford and an easy approach and a peaceful stretch of the river, meantime he felled with speed the trees that grew hard by, and build barges, to take his army across the stream. And now, behold! a consul, a scion of the Gracchi, arrived and encamped near his colleague beside the Trebia. In answer to a summons he had made the long voyage over the sea from Pelorus in Sicily.]

The shadows of night cover the weary soldiers in their camps at Ticinus in line 479, and only two lines later rosy-fingered dawn is already rising in the east; *at consul* at line 483 snaps us to

attention and back into the battle narrative; by 484 we already have our first mention of Trebia, prominently positioned in the middle of the line.

Silius, infamous as he is for verbosity, gives a marvelous lesson in compression and his careful language in these first lines subtly foreshadows the major events of the battle. *At consul*, besides marking the sharp transition from traditional epic language of the passage of time to the continuation of the battle narrative, is a conspicuous repetition of *at consul* less than 100 lines earlier at 4. 401, then an introduction to Scipio's suicidal attempt to rally the troops. By repeating this phrasing here at the opening of Trebia, Silius hints that this battle will be a repeat and that the Romans will make the exact same mistakes they made at the beginning of Ticinus. The Romans' inability to learn from their mistakes is hammered home by their vainglorious charge from the safety of their defensive positions at 512 and following, discussed below at 3.3.2. Scipio himself, at the height of his *mache parapotamios*, will even wish for a replay of that final rescue scene (*Pun.* 4. 473 – 74: *redde o me, nate, periclis, / redde hosti*). *Aequore* (481) and *caerula* (482) is another conspicuous repetition and, despite Spaltenstein's disparaging comment, creates a meaningful contrast with the *flammae* at the end of 482, just as the battle ends with an elemental clash of fire and water; the lovely sunrise tones of *surgebant rosae media inter caerula flammae* are violently recreated with *flamma vorax ... absorbet latices* at 4. 685 – 86 and *iacta / lampade Vulcanus mersit fumantibus undis* at 4. 693 – 94.<sup>288</sup>

This repetitive language and imagery creates a sense of repetition for the battle itself as a 'second' or repeat Ticinus. *Media* at the middle of 4. 482 not only describes the position of the

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<sup>288</sup> I follow Spaltenstein in translating *caerula* as the blue of the sea rather than of the sky. Spaltenstein *ad loc.* seems to think Silius' use of *caerula* so near to *aequore* is a mark of his limitations as a poet: "Caerula reprend alors 'aequore' du vers précédent, ce qui ne gêne pas chez Sil." Duff translates *media inter caerula* rather as "amid the blue of heaven"; perhaps "between sky and sea" would better capture a potential double meaning.

sun's rosy flames in the water but also highlights this battle's position as the 'middle' of the three opening battles (Ticinus, Trebia, and Trasimene). With this in mind, *Poenisque secundam / planitiem* in the following lines takes on a double meaning: a 'favorable' plain for the Carthaginians (due to their superior cavalry) and a 'second' plain, 'another' Ticinus – or, even, a second war.<sup>289</sup> The repetitions pile up: *medio* is repeated in line 486, Hannibal's arrival in line 488 (*aderat ... Poenus*) is mirrored by Gracchus' in line 493 (*ecce aderat*) which in turn looks ahead to Scipio's entrance with *ecce per adversum* (4. 622), the crossing of the river Trebia is verbally repeated in only six lines (*qui Dardanium travexerat agmen* at 4.487 and *qua travehat agmina* at 4. 492), and the *caerula* which reflect the sun's rays in line 482 reappears in 494 as the sea that Gracchus hastens over. Finally, Gracchus' hasty arrival from overseas (4. 494: *Trinacrio accitus per caerula longa Peloro*) is itself a recreation of Scipio's arrival to Ticinus at the beginning of that battle (4. 51 – 52: *iam consul, volucris pervectus litora classe, / Scipio Phocaicis sese referebat ab oris*), further aligning the two *viri* and the situation as a whole.<sup>290</sup>

Overall, this short passage displays a well-crafted ring composition that reinforces the cyclic nature of these battles and is a testament to Silius' compositional skill. The passage opens with the sea (4. 482: *caerula*) and a consul (4. 483: *at consul*), followed by the first river crossing (4. 486 – 87, esp. *qui Dardanium travexerat agmen*). Hannibal occupies the middle section (as he does the middle war) (4. 488 – 92), followed by another river crossing (4. 492: *qua travehat agmina*) and the arrival of another consul (4. 493: *ecce aderat*) from over the sea (4. 494: *per caerula longa*). The structure is more clearly shown in list form:

A. The sun rises over the middle of the sea (*surgebant roseae media inter caerula flammae*)

<sup>289</sup> OLD definitions 5-10 confirm the multiple and potentially ambiguous meanings of *secundus*.

<sup>290</sup> The single line description of Gracchus' arrival from Sicily is itself the compression of a large digression in Livy (21.49 – 51).

- B. A consul appears (*at consul*)
- C. The river is crossed (*qui Dardanium travexerat agmen*)
- D. Hannibal appears (*aderat cum Poenus*)
- C. The river is crossed again (*qua travehat agmina*)
- B. A consul appears ... (*ecce aderat*)
- A. From over the sea (*per caerula longa*)

The verbal and thematic repetition in the opening lines of the battle of Trebia creates a sense of *déjà vu*, as the Romans and the reader become trapped within a recurring nightmare that will repeat nearly continuously until its final and most vivid recreation at the battle of Cannae in books nine and ten. Furthermore, with Silius' constant allusions to the Roman civil wars, both in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and his own lifetime, the cycle of violence seems unending. The recreation of Ticinus and the mistakes made there will become even clearer as Trebia begins in earnest, but let us first take a closer look at the description of this new, yet strangely familiar Roman *vir*.

### 3.2.2: *Ecce aderat*: A Second Consul Arrives (*Pun.* 4. 493 – 497)

As mentioned above, Gracchus' introduction with *ecce aderat* places him in comparison with Scipio later in the battle, but it also aligns him with Hannibal who is introduced in line 488 with the similar *aderat cum Poenus*. This creates a more immediate comparison between the two leaders, who will soon enter into direct competition with each other on the battlefield (see 3.5.1 below). Silius devotes three lines to the initial description of the consul (with six additional lines at the beginning of the combat) and it will be useful to examine them in detail before moving on to Hannibal's pre-battle speech.

ecce aderat Trebiaeque simul vicina tenebat

Trinacrio accitus per caerula longa Peloro  
 Gracchorum proles, consul, gens inclita magno      495  
 atque animosa viro, multusque in imagine claris  
 praefulgebat avus titulis bellique domique.  
 (*Punica* 4. 493 – 497)

[And now, behold! a consul, a scion of the Gracchi, arrived and encamped near his colleague beside the Trebia. In answer to a summons he had made the long voyage from Pelorus in Sicily. The family of this great man was famous for its high spirit; and, among the busts of his ancestors, many were conspicuous for distinctions won both in war and peace.]

This is Tiberius Sempronius Longus, as he appears in Livy, though here Silius has curiously changed his name to Gracchus. What is the meaning behind this nomenclature? Spaltenstein comments that Silius has reversed the relationship between the Gracchi and Sempronii (“les Gracchi sont une branche de la gens Sempronia”) and notes that Silius is the only author to use this appellation. He also suggests that Silius is attempting to rehabilitate Sempronius’ name by distancing it from the character in Livy (“Liv. critique Sempronius, alors que Sil. l’exalte”). But, as we have seen with several other Romans including Scipio Maior, Silius is just as apt to criticize the Roman leadership as the Augustan historian. In fact, as discussed below, our first look at Gracchus in battle suggests he displays the same flaws as his colleague, the same vainglory as Catus, the shortsightedness of Turnus, and, in fact, many of the same attributes as Hannibal himself. So, why call him Gracchus? Metrical necessity may be the reason, as the forms of ‘Sempronius’ are difficult to fit into hexameter; ‘Gracchus’ on the other hand is much easier.<sup>291</sup> However, metrical convenience may not be the *only* reason; that is, why did Silius

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<sup>291</sup> Martial is up to the challenge and includes an example of *Sempron-* in the verses of his epigrams, at 7.41 (*cosmicos esse tibi, Semproni Tucca, videris; / cosmica, Semproni, tam mala, quam bona sunt*), both times forced into the vocative. Martial’s epigrams, of course, are of a lower register than Silius’ epic and more accommodating to awkward Latin names.

choose Gracchus as the solution to his metrical needs? The answer may perhaps be found in the vestiges of the Gracchi brothers' Republican legacy.

### 3.2.3: Which Gracchus? More Silian Nomenclature

Silius does not shy from including figures whose names recall major actors from Rome's civil wars, including, for example, figures with names like Brutus, Catilina, Crassus, Galba, Marius, Piso, Sulla, and Tullius at various times in the poem.<sup>292</sup> These figures, as McGuire writes, not only recall famous and sometimes controversial figures from the Roman future (Silius' past), but the poet also often places them in situations that further these comparisons.<sup>293</sup> I believe the same is true for 'Gracchus' at the battle of Trebia. The Gracchi brothers are often thought to have been the first, or the first major, example of violence in the Roman political system, inaugurating Rome's long march towards despotism.<sup>294</sup> The Gracchi also have close links to the Second Punic War, coming to political prominence on a platform of land reform caused by the social, economic, and demographic devastation of the wars with Carthage, and

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<sup>292</sup> Many of these names are found in the catalogue of troops before Cannae at *Pun.* 8. 349 – 621.

<sup>293</sup> McGuire 1997: 136 writes that “the most consistent technique used by Silius to keep the issue of civil war steadily before the reader's eyes is his use of suggestive and anachronistic names for his Roman and enemy warriors alike.” He continues at 138 – 39: “more simply put, the narrative surrounding these names recalls the details of civil war as clearly as the names themselves do.”

<sup>294</sup> “The Gracchi mark a watershed moment in the political life of the Roman Republic ... their deaths, obtained under the pretext of national security, opened the door to the widespread and systematic use of violence in public life, a development which, if it did not cause the fall of the Republic, certainly hastened it” (Le Glay, Voisin, and Le Bohec 2005: 113 – 14); Plutarch (*Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus* 20.1) calls this the “first sedition at Rome ... to end in bloodshed and the death of citizens” (τὴν πρώτην ἱστοροῦσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ στάσιν ... αἵματι καὶ φόνῳ πολιτῶν διακριθῆναι. Trans. Perrin).

their lives and deaths were closely bound to the Cornelia Scipiones.<sup>295</sup> Their depiction in Valerius Maximus and other sources is that of great, but ultimately wasted or misdirected potential – though Plutarch gives an especially positive portrayal.<sup>296</sup> Silius’ ‘Gracchus’ is likewise a mixed figure, one who exhibits skill and bravery in combat and a noble pedigree yet whose flaws ultimately lead to the wasteful deaths of many Roman soldiers. Gracchus is a wonderful example of Silius’ subtle and effective use of nomenclature. By associating T. Sempronius Longus with the Gracchi brothers whose deaths presaged a century of civil war, Silius both praises and criticizes the Roman general, just as the ancients did with the Gracchi. He also, as we have seen so many times before, places the events of the Second Punic War in the context of the later Roman civil wars. The Romans, as seen in the disturbances of the final century of the Roman republic and, more recently, the events of AD 68 and 69 in which Silius himself played a part, will always be their own worst enemy and the talents of individual men a danger to the Roman collective; ‘Gracchus’ is a wonderful example of this duality.

### 3.3.1: *Infelix animae*: Hannibal’s Speech before Trebia (*Pun.* 4. 498 – 511)

Silius’s description of Gracchus continues over the next few lines before being sharply cut off by Hannibal’s 14-line pre-battle speech. This short pre-battle speech separates the two

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<sup>295</sup> The brothers were the grandsons of Scipio Africanus through his daughter Cornelia Minor and their sister married Scipio Aemilianus; Publius Scipio Nasica Serapio, from another branch of the family, was the orchestrator of Tiberius’ death. Indeed, the Gracchi and the Scipiones are placed in direct comparison in the parade of Roman heroes in *Aen.* 6. 842 – 43: *quis Gracchi genus aut geminos, duo fulmina belli, / Scipiadas, cladem Libyae ...* The Cornelia Scipiones were also related to the Aemilii Pauli, the *gens* of the consul Paulus who dies at Cannae at the beginning of *Punica* 10.

<sup>296</sup> Valerius Maximus associates the brothers with sedition and conspiracy (1.1.1c: *Gracchanus tumultus*; 4.7.2: *conspiratio*; 6.3.1d: *statum civitatis conati erant convellere*; 6.2.3: *Gracchana seditio*; 9.4.3: *fuert ille seditiosus*) but also praises their potential, good fortune, and eloquence (6.3.1d: *summa nobilitas ac spes amplissima*; 8.10.1: *C. Gracchus, eloquentiae quam consilii felicioris adulescens, quoniam flagrantissimo ingenio ... perturbare impie maluit*).

short descriptions of Gracchus and once again exhibits the same dramatic irony that has by now become the defining characteristic of the Carthaginian general.

Nec Poeni positis trans amnem in gramine castris derant; namque animos stimulabant prospera rerum increpitansque super ductor: 'quis tertius urbi	500
iam superest consul? quaenam altera restat in armis Sicania? en omnes Latiae Daunique nepotum convenere manus. feriant nunc foedera mecum ductores Italum ac leges et pacta reposcant.	
at tu, donata tela inter Martia luce,	505
infelix animae, sic, sic vivasque tuoque des iterum hanc laudem nato, nec fine sub aevi oppetere in bello detur, cum fata vocabunt. pugnantem cecidisse meum est.' haec personat ardens.	
inde levi iaculo Massylumque impiger alis	510
castra sub ipsa datis irritat et elicit hostem.	

(*Pun.* 4. 498 – 511)

[The Carthaginians, after pitching their camp in the fields across the river, were not backward either. For they were encouraged by success and by their leader, who taunted the Romans thus: "Has Rome yet a third consul in reserve, or a second Sicily to fight their battles? No! all the fighting men of Latium and all the descendants of Daunus are here assembled. Now let the Roman leaders make a treaty with me; now let them insist upon their contracts and covenants! And you, whose life was spared in the battle, life that was no boon, so, so may you live on and again confer this glory on your son! When life ends and Fate summons you, may death in battle be denied you! To fall fighting belongs to Hannibal." Thus he cried in his fury. Then, impatient of delay, he sent light-armed Massylian squadrons to the verge of the Roman camp, to provoke the foe and draw him forth."

In this short speech, Hannibal furthers the use of cyclic language (*tertius, altera, iterum*) and taunts the Romans for their need for multiple leaders. He also specifically ridicules Scipio Maior, whose rescue by his son in the previous battle is painted as shameful and curses him to forever lack an honorable death in battle. In so doing, Hannibal unwittingly quotes from two pivotal scenes in Vergil's *Aeneid*, both of which sharply undercut his meaning. Hannibal also displays

his complete inability to predict the future. Laden with dramatic irony, Hannibal does not realize that there *will* be both a ‘third’ consul who does in fact arrive later in the war to save the Romans – that is Scipio Africanus – and that there is indeed ‘another Sicily,’ that is, the site of the Romans’ first major victory against the Carthaginians in book 14. The final boast that “to fall fighting belongs to Hannibal” further underscores the dramatic irony of this speech; Silius and his audience both know that Hannibal famously did *not* die in battle, in this war or any other, but instead died a self-inflicted death by poison after a long career in exile, while Scipio Maior did in fact achieve a noble death in battle (cf. *Pun.* 13. 686: *laude inclusimus aevum*) later in the war.<sup>297</sup> Overall, this boastful and overconfident speech furthers the characterization of Hannibal as a “dupe of destiny” in the tradition of Turnus, who, despite short term success, cannot see the doom that awaits him in his future. “The leader of a deceitful race,” as Vessey eloquently concludes (channeling the Roman perspective), “is himself utterly deceived.”<sup>298</sup>

### 3.3.2: Abandoned Loves: Anchises, Creusa, Dido, and Hannibal (*Aeneid* 2 and 4, *Heroides* 7)

The intertextual keystone of this speech is prominently located at its middle, lines 505 and 506 (*at tu, donata tela inter Martia luce / infelix animae, sic, sic vivasque...*). The repetition of *sic* is pointed and brings to mind, as Spaltenstein rightly observes, two similar uses in Vergil: Anchises’ speech at the end of *Aeneid* 2 and Dido’s speech at the end of *Aeneid* 4. These two scenes exhibit not only similar phrasing but also surprisingly similar contexts. In the first,

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<sup>297</sup> For Hannibal’s death, see Livy 39.51; for Scipio Maior’s see Livy 25.36, *Pun.* 13. 381 – 384 and 13. 650 – 695.

<sup>298</sup> Vessey 1982: 335.

Aeneas encounters his father Anchises at home during the sack of Troy and urges him to flee the city.

Atque ubi iam patriae perventum ad limina sedis  
 antiquasque domos, genitor, quem tollere in altos 635  
 optabam primum montis primumque petebam,  
 abnegat excisa vitam producere Troia  
 exsiliumque pati. ‘vos o, quibus integer aevi  
 sanguis’ ait ‘solidaeque suo stant robore vires,  
 vos agitate fugam ... 640  
 me si caelicolae voluissent ducere vitam,  
 has mihi servassent sedes. satis una superque  
 vidimus excidia et captae superavimus urbi.  
**sic o sic** positum adfati discedite corpus.  
 ipse manu mortem inveniam: miserebitur hostis 645  
 exuviasque petet; facilis iactura sepulcri.’

(*Aen.* 2. 634 – 649)

[And now, when I had reached the door of my father’s house, my ancient home, my sire, whom it was my first longing to bear high into the hills, and whom I first sought, refused, since Troy was laid low, to prolong his days or suffer exile. ‘You,’ he cried, ‘whose blood has the freshness of youth and whose strength stands sound in native vigor, you must turn to flight ... For me, had the lords of heaven willed that I should lengthen life’s thread, they would have spared this my home. Enough and more it is that I have seen one destruction, and have survived one capture of the city. To my body, thus lying, yea thus, bid farewell and depart! I shall find a warrior’s death; the foe will take pity and seek my spoils. Light is the loss of burial.]

Rather than face the perils and hardships of exile, Anchises here prefers a “warrior’s death”<sup>299</sup> and resolves to stay behind and die as the city falls. This is the same archaic warrior mentality praised in Homeric epic and by the Romans of the first half of the *Punica*, the kind of death that leads so many Roman generals to their doom, and the kind of death that Hannibal hopes to deny to Scipio Maior. Like the Romans of the Second Punic War, Vergil must, necessarily, reinterpret

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<sup>299</sup> “Anchises will arm, enter battle, and die,” Horsfall *ad loc.* explains.

this heroic archetype since his hero's entire story is predicated on the fact that he *fled* from Troy's fall; the act of flight must be rephrased as praiseworthy and heroic. For Hannibal, to die in battle is the ultimate heroic achievement but, with the conspicuous repetition of *sic*, the Carthaginian general instead recalls a seminal moment in the quintessential Roman hero's journey when rescue and survival meant more than glory in battle.

Let us also not forget the context of this speech. Scipio's rescue of his father occurred less than 100 lines ago at the climax of the recently concluded Ticinus battle; that unambiguous reference to Aeneas and Anchises would undoubtedly still be fresh in the audience's mind. Furthermore, that very rescue strongly aligned Anchises and Scipio Maior as the rescued fathers of the Aenean hero. So, with *sic, sic vivas*, Silius can easily continue this characterization – a connection he will further explore in books 13, in Scipio's encounter with his father in the underworld, and 16, with his father's funeral games.<sup>300</sup> “So, so may you live on” is meant as an insult to Scipio Maior, denying him the death in battle so fundamental to the archaic warrior's honor culture, but in so doing Hannibal has failed to realize that the game has changed, *pietas* is now the most important virtue, and he has unwittingly praised his Roman enemy by connecting him with Anchises, his heroic son, and the rescue that began Rome's long rise.

*Infelix animae* in the same line (*Pun.* 4. 506) also brings to mind the adjective most closely associated with Dido in the *Aeneid*.<sup>301</sup> As it turns out, the scene of Anchises' rescue also has parallels in the scene of Dido's death two books later, a coincidence that not only connects the two scenes in Vergil but also allows Silius to take full advantage of the implications of both

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<sup>300</sup> *Pun.* 13. 650 – 704 and 16. 277 – 591.

<sup>301</sup> *infelix Dido* (*Aen.* 1. 749), *infelix Dido* (*Aen.* 4. 68), *infelix ... exterrita Dido* (*Aen.* 4. 450), *at non infelix animi* *Phoenissa* (*Aen.* 4. 529), *infelix Dido* (*Aen.* 4. 596), *infelicis Elissae* (*Aen.* 5. 3), *infelix Dido* (*Aen.* 6. 456). Curiously, Silius mentions Dido by name ten times but never with the adjective *infelix*.

scenes in his Hannibal speech. Dido's speeches leading up to her suicide in *Aeneid* 4 both allude back to the fall of Troy and the death of Creusa in book 2 and become another accidental self-comparison for Hannibal before Trebia.

‘felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum  
numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae!’  
dixit, et os impressa toro ‘moriemur inultae,  
sed moriamur’ ait; ‘sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras.     660  
hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto  
Dardanus et nostrae secum ferat omina mortis.’  
(*Aen.* 4. 657 – 662)

[“Happy, too happy, had but the Dardan keels never touched our shores!” She spoke, and burying her face in the couch, “I shall die unavenged,” she cries, “but let me die! Thus, thus I go gladly into the dark! Let the cruel Dardan’s drink in this fire from the deep, and carry with him the omen of my death!”]

At the moment of her death, Dido uses the same repeated *sic* that both Hannibal and Anchises employ. *Moriemur inultae* also recalls the final words of Aeneas’ speech in response to Anchises in book 2 (*Aen.* 2. 670: *numquam omnes hodie moriemur inulti*) There are several other connections between the scenes in Anchises’ house at Troy and in Dido’s palace at Carthage, and a close examination of them will reveal that not only did Vergil mean for his audience to compare these scenes but also that Silius, always a keen reader of Vergil, brings these two passages together in Hannibal’s speech before Trebia.

Like Hannibal for Scipio Maior, Dido curses Aeneas with an ignoble and shameful death:

si tangere portus  
infandum caput ac terris adnare necesse est,  
et sic fata Iovis poscunt, hic terminus haeret:  
at bello audacis populi vexatus et armis,     615  
finibus extorris, complexu avulsus Iuli,  
auxilium imploret videatque indigna suorum  
funera; nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquae  
tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur,

sed cadat ante diem mediaque inhumatus harena.  
(*Aen.* 4. 612 – 620)

[If that accursed wretch must needs reach harbor and come to shore, if Jove's ordinances so demand and this is the outcome fixed: yet even so, harassed in war by the arms of a fearless nation, expelled from his territory and torn from Iulus' embrace, let him plead for aid and see his friends cruelly slaughtered! Nor yet, when he has submitted to the terms of an unjust peace, may he enjoy his kingship or the life he longs for, but perish before his time and lie unburied on a lonely strand!]

Dido's wish for Aeneas to sign harsh treaties is referenced by Hannibal before Trebia with *feriant nunc foedera mecum / ductores Italum ac leges ac pacta reposcant* (*Pun.* 4. 503 – 4).

Likewise, both Carthaginians wish for an inappropriate death for their enemy, Dido for an early death without burial and Hannibal for a shameful death outside of battle. The connection between the two is further strengthened by Dido's immediately following wish for an avenger to arise and hound the descendants of Aeneas (*Aen.* 4. 625 – 629), a wish of which Hannibal at Trebia is the living embodiment.

Yet even Dido seems to have a better grasp on reality than Hannibal in his speech before Trebia. She recognizes the divine mandate given to Aeneas by Jove (*sic fata Iovis poscunt*) and her wishes, for the most part, do actually come true: Aeneas does die only a few years into his kingship, he does not receive a *normal* burial (in a way – since he becomes a god), and a Carthaginian ancestor does arise to avenge her.<sup>302</sup> Hannibal's wishes, on the other hand, are uniformly unfulfilled: Scipio Maior does in fact die an honorable death in battle (and receives lavish funeral games), Hannibal himself not only loses this war but also pointedly does *not* die in

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<sup>302</sup> O'Hara 1990: 102 comments on reconciling Dido's curse and Jupiter's prophecy in Book 1, writing that "the apotheosis promised by Jupiter to Venus as a reward for Aeneas' toils, with no mention of a difficult death, would fit the slight mitigation of some aspects of Dido's curse in Books 7 – 12, and the careful wording of the curse. Dido asks that he *cadat*, "fall," instead of "die," and that he be *inhumatus*, "unburied," not that he be, for instance, "prey to birds and beasts."

battle, and, furthermore, the Carthaginian general, unlike even Dido, seems to have no understanding of the irresistible divine machinations at play here. Hannibal's inability to predict the future also mirrors the faux-prophet Bogus, whose misinterpretation of the death of Catus began the battle of Ticinus.<sup>303</sup> This is *Hannibal nescius*, a characterization that Silius will repeat at the end of the battle (cf. *Pun.* 4. 702: *nescius heu...*).

Silius' simultaneous engagement with Aeneas' departure from Troy in *Aeneid* 2 and his departure from Carthage in *Aeneid* 4 is an example of what Philip Hardie calls 'combinatorial imitation.'<sup>304</sup> That is to say, Silius has recognized a relationship between these two scenes in Virgil that was already present and purposeful in the *Aeneid*. Through combinatorial allusion, Hardie argues, "Virgil both indicates something about *his* reading of the *Iliad* and adds something to the complexity of his own poetry."<sup>305</sup> So too for Silius and Vergil: by combining two crucial moments of departure in the *Aeneid* (Aeneas from Troy in *Aen.* 2 and Aeneas from Dido/Carthage in *Aen.* 4) in the speech of Hannibal before Trebia, Silius both reveals something about *his* reading of Vergil, that he recognizes the contrast of these two moments already in Vergil, and lends a great deal of complexity to his characterization of Hannibal in the *Punica*. Silius taps into a problem already inherent in the Vergilian narrative, the fact that Aeneas has a tendency to abandon women 'for the greater good'; Creusa and Dido are not villains and committed no crime other than getting in Aeneas' way. Likewise, Hannibal does not understand his role as a pawn in Jupiter's plan to reinvigorate the Roman people. Through a combinatorial allusion, Silius paints Hannibal (or rather, has Hannibal unknowingly paint himself) as another

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<sup>303</sup> Continuing this trend, Flaminius' sacrilegious dismissal of omens precedes the battle of Trasimene in Book 5 (*Pun.* 5. 24 – 185).

<sup>304</sup> Hardie 1989: 3 – 20, esp. 3 – 4 (definition and examples) and 14 – 20 (on Silius' combinatorial depiction of Hannibal as Aeneas/Turnus).

<sup>305</sup> Hardie 1989: 3.

Creusa or Dido, a pawn in the gods' games to be abandoned (as he will be in *Punica* 17) when the Aeneadae no longer need him.

Silius is not content to construct Hannibal's speech merely as a combinatorial imitation of Aeneas/Creusa and Aeneas/Dido; it is also worth considering Dido's portrayal in Ovid *Heroides* 7, which seems to have been an influence on Silius as well. In that poem, Ovid gives Dido a curse that falls much more closely to Hannibal's 'curse of life' on Scipio: *vive precor! sic te melius quam funere perdam* (*Heroides* 7. 63).<sup>306</sup> As Knox notes, Ovid has reversed Dido's wish for Aeneas' death at sea at *Aen.* 4. 382 – 7 and has replaced it with a more sophisticated version.<sup>307</sup> *Vive precor! sic ...* now seems awfully close to Hannibal's *sic, sic vivas* and the *infelix animae* (*infelix animi* is used by Vergil of Dido at *Aen.* 2. 529) only strengthens the connection between Dido upon Aeneas' departure and Hannibal before the battle of Trebia. Rather than pick between the Vergilian and Ovidian scenes, Silius, an avid reader of Ovid as well as Vergil, has artfully combined the two; Vergil's *sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras* and Ovid's *vive precor! sic ...* become *sic, sic vivas* in the mouth of Hannibal. The phrase becomes deeply ironic for Hannibal, who, despite this learned allusion, knows not that his fate will mirror Dido's most closely. Like Ovid's Dido, Hannibal knows that a dishonorable life is a fate worse than death, and like Vergil's Dido Hannibal embraces a violent end. Hannibal curses his Roman enemy yet, despite calling Scipio *infelix animae*, does not realize that it is he who will most closely follow the Carthaginian queen's path. Thus Hannibal's speech before the battle of Trebia

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<sup>306</sup> Ovid uses the exact phrasing two other times, at *Heroides* 5. 27 (Oenone to a poplar tree) and, interestingly, *Fasti* 5.412 (Achilles to the dying Chiron). Even more interestingly, the phrase appears in the final passage of Statius' *Thebaid* (12. 816) as the poet speaks to his own work: *vive, precor, nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta.*

<sup>307</sup> Knox *ad loc.* (quoting Shuckburgh): "Ovid's Dido is no less eager for Aeneas' punishment than Vergil's, but Ovid represents her, with perhaps more of refinement though less of nature, desire that his punishment should not be death but the pangs that come from remorse and the evil reputation of being the cause of her death."

is, remarkably, both a combinatorial imitation (combining Aeneas leaving Troy in *Aen.* 2 and Aeneas leaving Carthage in *Aen.* 4) and a ‘double imitation’ (to use another of Hardie’s formulations), in which Silius alludes to Ovid’s *Heroides* 7, which itself was already in close contact with the Dido of *Aeneid* 4.<sup>308</sup>

Several other parallels line up Hannibal’s speech before Trebia with Ovid *Heroides* 7. The poem begins with *sic ubi fata vocant*, echoed by Silius (and placed instead at the end of Hannibal’s speech) with *cum fata vocabunt*; Hannibal mockingly refers to Rome’s non-existent third consul (*quis tertius urbi / iam superest consul*) coming from ‘another’ Sicily (*quaenam altera in armis / Sicania*), while Ovid’s Dido chafes at the thought of ‘another’ love and ‘another’ Dido awaiting Aeneas in Italy.<sup>309</sup> Once again, Dido’s predictions are quite correct (there will be another woman for Aeneas in Italy, but she will not love him as Dido did)<sup>310</sup>, while Hannibal’s could not be more incorrect (as discussed above, there will in fact be a *tertius consul* (Scipio), Sicily will return again as the site of an important Roman victory, Scipio Maior will in fact die in battle and Hannibal will not). Finally, further cementing the link between Dido’s death and Anchises’ rescue, Dido accuses Aeneas of abandoning her (*Heroides* 7. 7: *certus es ire tamen miseramque relinquere Dido*), using language that recalls Creusa’s speech to Aeneas in

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<sup>308</sup> Hardie on double imitation: “More immediately relevant is the practice of ‘double imitation’ where an author imitates two models, one of which is at the same time the model for the other. Among other things this practice may invite reflection on the way in which the later of the two texts imitated implicitly comments on the earlier” (1989: 4). Here Hardie is reporting an existing formulation found in McKeown 1987: 37ff.

<sup>309</sup> Ovid uses *alter* in this way often in the *Heroides*, but never with quite the same density. *Alter* appears five times in five lines: *quaerenda per orbem / altera, quasita est altera terra tibi. / ut terram invenias, quis eam tibi tradet habendam? / quis sua non notis arva tenenda dabit? scilicet alter amor tibi restat et altera Dido; / quamque iterum fallas altera danda fides* (*Heroides* 7. 13 – 18).

<sup>310</sup> Knox *ad Heroides* 7. 22 (*unde tibi, quae te sic amet, uxor erit?*): “The reader is, of course, aware that Dido’s suspicions will prove true: Aeneas’ marriage to Lavinia will be one of convenience.”

book two. Let us now take a brief look at that scene before taking a step back and analyzing these many threads.

After Anchises vows to die at home during the fall of Troy, Aeneas, much like Scipio in (over)reaction to his father's suicidal charge at Ticinus (see 2.3.2), decides to double down on his on-again, off-again death wish and accordingly gathers his armor and prepares to rush off and meet his end somewhere in the streets of Troy. Creusa stops him on the threshold and begs him to stay, using language that clearly anticipates that of Dido:

Hinc ferro accingor rursus clipeoque sinistram  
 insertabam aptans meque extra tecta ferebam.  
 ecce autem complexa pedes in limine coniunx  
 haerebat parvumque patri tendebat Iulum:  
 'si periturus abis, et nos rape in omnia tecum;                   675  
 sin aliquam expertus sumptis spem ponis in armis,  
 hanc primum tutare domum. cui parvus Iulus,  
 cui pater et coniunx quondam tua dicta relinquer?'  
 (*Aen.* 2. 671 – 678)

[Once more I strap on my sword, pass my left arm into the shield, as I fit it on, and was hurrying forth from the house, when lo! on the threshold my wife clung to me, clasping my feet and holding up little Iulus to his father. 'If you go to die, take us, too, with you for any fate. But if from past experience, you place some hope in the armor you have donned, guard first this house. To whom do you abandon little Iulus, your father, and me, once called your wife?']

Like Dido, Creusa begs Aeneas to stay or bring her and his family with him and like Dido she uses Iulus in her attempts to persuade him (Dido, desperation mounting, later conjures up an image of her own child with Aeneas). The use of *relinquere* in her final question recalls Dido's charge in *Heroides* 7, but the whole speech even more strongly resonates with Dido's language at *Aen.* 4. 323 – 30:

cui me moribundam deseris, hospes                   323



Dido,” she writes, “are parallel in several ways, a fact which suggests that Virgil shaped them deliberately and consistently.”<sup>311</sup> Both relationships end in the woman’s death, she observes, each time Aeneas is at least partially responsible, and each time Aeneas finds some way to attribute this responsibility to someone else even though each woman perceives herself as abandoned by Aeneas. Both women are wife-figures who must be cast off in order to make room for Aeneas’ divinely mandated marriage with Lavinia. The deaths of Anchises and Dido have also been connected. Genovese observes that eight of the *Aeneid*’s 12 books end with a death of some kind and especially notes the series which begins with the death of Creusa in book two (and, I would add, the near-death of Anchises) and is followed by Anchises’ death in book three, Dido’s in book four, Palinurus’ in book five, and Marcellus’ death-to-come in book six.<sup>312</sup> In this way, the three deaths at the end of books two, three, and four (Creusa, Anchises, and Dido) are linked. Anchises’ traditional aristocratic desire for a death in battle is subverted by Aeneas (with some help from Jupiter), while Vergil himself subverts the traditional Homeric ideal with the new virtue of *pietas*. In that same book, Creusa’s language of abandonment anticipates Dido’s death as another woman left behind by Aeneas on his journey to Rome –though Creusa may have been left behind “accidentally.”<sup>313</sup> Anchises’ death is finally brought about at the end of book three, a father figure who must give way so that Aeneas can become *pater Aeneas* just a few lines later. Finally, Dido’s death removes Aeneas’ pseudo-wife from contention with Lavinia and sets into motion the events of the Punic Wars.

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<sup>311</sup> Perkell 1981: 202 – 3.

<sup>312</sup> Genovese 1975: 22. “Each of these [deaths],” they continue, “provides a painful conclusion to a phase of Aeneas’ journey to Latium.”

<sup>313</sup> “In this critical moment Aeneas plans effectively for his father, son, and household gods, but not for his wife. May we infer that he is more concerned for them than for her?” (Perkell 1981: 206).

Let us now, finally, return to Hannibal before the battle of Trebia and piece together these many threads. With *sic, sic vivas*, Hannibal unwittingly sets off a chain of allusions to the *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides*. First, he mockingly invokes Anchises words just before his rescue in *Aeneid 2* (*Aen. 2. 643: sic o sic positum adfati discedite corpus*), twisting the meaning (or untwisting it, as the case may be) and portraying it as the shameful avoidance of an honorable death in battle. By extension, Hannibal criticizes Scipio's rescue of his father only 100 lines earlier, something which Scipio Maior, himself a Hannibalic figure, also wishes to reverse.<sup>314</sup> Hannibal fails to recognize that Aeneas' rescue of his father and Scipio's recreation of that act was not shameful but in fact showed the superiority of Roman *pietas* and *fides* over Hannibal's traditional heroic values and the Carthaginians' proverbial faithlessness.<sup>315</sup> Next, Hannibal's 'curse of life' upon Scipio Maior and the use of *infelix animae* also bring to mind Dido in *Aeneid 4*, whose death in that book is already linked to the events at the end of book 2 by Vergil himself. Both Creusa and Dido use their status as *coniunx*, their *parvus/parvulus* son, and the language of abandonment to convince Aeneas to stay, and both are subsequently abandoned to death by the Vergilian hero. Dido's curse in book 4 curses Aeneas with death before his time (*ante diem*) after a long and painful war and summons a Carthaginian avenger to hound his descendants, a curse which, for the most part, actually does come true. Finally, in Dido's curse in *Heroides 7* we find the closest parallel to Hannibal before Trebia, who similarly asks that Aeneas live in shame rather than die (*vive, precor*).

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<sup>314</sup> As we will see during his *mache parapotamios: redde o me, nate, periclis, / redde hosti!* (*Pun. 4. 673 – 74*).

<sup>315</sup> Silius will himself comment on the difference between Scipio and Hannibal before the battle of Cannae, with Scipio's *pietas* giving him the edge: *marte viri dextraque pares, sed cetera ductor / anteibat Latius, melior pietate fideque* (*Pun. 9. 436 – 37*).

By setting off a chain reaction of allusions in this way, Silius shows Hannibal's complete lack of understanding of his role in the poem. He *thinks* that Scipio is *infelix animae* and will suffer a dishonorable death, but the audience knows that it is Hannibal who is *infelix* like Dido and, like Dido, he will commit suicide after time in exile. Hannibal claims that Scipio Maior's rescue was shameful but misses the point of that rescue and fails to realize that it is this Aenean act that set Scipio Africanus on the path to defeat him. Like Creusa and especially like Dido, Hannibal is a victim of fate, whose only role, despite all his success, is as a stepping stone to be used by the and then abandoned by the *Aeneadae* on their path to glory.

As the *Punica* comes to an end, Hannibal is both abandoned and abandoner. He accuses the gods of deceiving him (*Pun.* 17. 558 – 59: “*vestra est haec altera, vestra / fraus,*” *inquit*) and his troops are described as “deserted” (*Pun.* 17. 581: *interea Cadmea manus, deserta pavensque*). Finally, Hannibal reverses his earlier wish for death in battle and, like Anchises – although for very different reasons – decides to live another day. “Enough, and more than enough for me, if Roman mothers and the people of Italy dread my coming while I live, and never know peace of mind” (*Pun.* 17. 613 – 615: *mihi satque superque, / ut me Dardaniae matres atque Itala tellus, / dum vivam, expectent nec pacem pectore norint*). His final words, as it turns out, are a close quote of Anchises near-final words from *Aeneid* 2 (*Aen.* 2. 642 – 43: *satis una superque / vidimus excidia et captae superavimus urbi*).

Hannibal's short speech before Trebia is a masterful example of Silian allusion. With *sic, sic vivas*, Silius creates meaningful contact with Creusa and Anchises at the end of *Aeneid* 2, Dido at the end of *Aeneid* 4, and Dido in *Heroides* 7, combining Anchises' would-be final words in *Aeneid* 2 (*sic o sic positum adfati discedite corpus*) and Dido's last breath in *Aeneid* 4 (*sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras*) with Ovid's Dido's curse of life from *Heroides* 7 (*vive, precor! sic te*

*melius quam funere perdam*). Silius also alludes intratextually back to Scipio Maior's rescue at the battle of Ticinus and far ahead to Hannibal's very last words in book 17. With the arrogant and bombastic speech before Trebia, Hannibal unwittingly associates himself with Aeneas' abandoned victims, blind to the fact that he is playing the same role. Like Dido he will be abandoned and forced to commit suicide, having been defeated by a new Aeneas and after a long exile, but, even worse than Dido, Hannibal's curses will have no physical manifestation in Roman history as Hannibal fades only into a memory.

### 3.4.1: The Land Battle Begins (*Pun.* 4. 512 – 569)

Hannibal ends his unwittingly self-defeating speech with the ominous (and inaccurate) *pugnantem cecidisse meum est*, before sending his light skirmishers to goad the Romans into abandoning their defensive positions.<sup>316</sup> In what quickly becomes a nightmarish recreation of the beginning of Ticinus, the Romans eagerly take the bait and charge out of their camp. Gracchus, tellingly, leads the sally (*prior volat*), seeking to outpace Catus in his foolish lust for glory. I approach this part of the battle with eight sections. In the first two, I continue my examination of the figure of Gracchus, who not only charges first into the fray but also receives a brief but loaded arming scene (*Pun.* 4. 512 – 519). The next section consists of a transitional simile, as is so common in Silius, and a short authorial interlude as the poet bemoans the many deaths to come (*Pun.* 4. 520 – 528). Four more sections (*Pun.* 4. 529 – 553) examine the dueling *aristeiai* of Gracchus and Hannibal and several brief necrologues. Finally, Silius ends this part of the battle with an extended necrologue, describing the death of Allius, whose pointedly Lucanian

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<sup>316</sup> A maneuver Livy (21.54.4) and Polybius (3.71.10) attribute to Hannibal's Numidian cavalry.

death allows Silius to transition to a scene of watery slaughter that recalls *Bellum Civile*'s Battle of Massilia.

### 3.4.2: *Gracchus prior volat* (*Pun.* 4. 512 – 519)

Hannibal's opening gambit works perfectly, and the Romans are immediately drawn from the safety of their camp into open battle. Gracchus advances in front, giving us our first look at a Roman leader who is not a Scipio.

Nec Latius vallo miles debere salute  
 fas putat aut clausas pulsari cuspide portas.  
 erumpunt, cunctisque prior volat aggere aperto  
 degener haud Gracchis consul, quatit aura comantes            515  
 cassidis Auruncae cristas, umeroque refulgent  
 sanguinei patrium saguli decus. agmina magno  
 respectans clamore vocat, quaque obvia densos  
 artat turba globos, rumpens iter aequore fertur  
 (*Pun.* 4. 512 – 519)

[The Roman soldiers were too ashamed to owe their safety to their stockade, or to let the spears strike against the closed gates of the camp. They sallied forth; and, when the rampart was leveled, the consul, worthy descendant of the Gracchi, rushed out before them all. The wind blew out the horse-hair plume of his Auruncan helmet, and the scarlet cloak that had graced his ancestors was conspicuous on his shoulder. Looking back on the ranks, he summoned them with a loud voice; and wherever a mass of foemen in close formation met him, he burst his way through and sped along the plain.]

*Nec Latius* puts this section in comparison with the *nec Poeni* at 4.498 that began the previous section; that section was almost completely dominated by Hannibal and his speech, while this section, much shorter, contains no equivalent speech as Gracchus is portrayed as an unthinking

man of action. As at Ticinus the Roman soldiers rush all too eagerly into the Carthaginians' able hands, except that now the flaw of an individual soldier (Catus) has been embraced by the entire Roman collective (*Latius miles*). Silius follows Livy's depiction of Sempronius (= Gracchus), who is described at Liv. 21.54.6 as "having fully made up his mind beforehand" and "eager for battle" (*postremo omnes copias ad destinatum iam ante consilio avidus certaminis eduxit*). As discussed above, Spaltenstein believes that Silius diverges from Livy's criticism of Sempronius and gives a positive portrayal of the Roman general marked by a name change to Gracchus. Despite Spaltenstein's protestations, I argue that Gracchus' alignment with Catus and Turnus at the beginning of the battle cannot be anything but critical and that the seemingly laudatory description of Gracchus that follows must be misleading.

The description of the closed doors of the camp being struck by a spear (*clausas pulsari cuspide portas*) quickly brings to mind several images already discussed at the opening of Ticinus, most prominently Vergil's allusion to Hannibal's failed attack on Rome and Silius' depiction of that same event in *Punica* 12 (see 1.2.2). As I discussed in chapter 1, it has already been noted that there is a relationship between Turnus in *Aeneid* 9 and stories about Hannibal in 211 BC. In that section I focused mainly on Vergil's description of Turnus prowling outside the walls of the Trojan camp and only briefly discussed Hannibal in *Punica* 12. Now, since the parallels to *Punica* 12 are even clearer, let us take a closer look at that scene.

nunc aditus lustrat, **clausas nunc cuspide pulsat**  
**infesta portas** fruiturque timore paventum,  
 nunc lentus celsis adstans in collibus intrat  
 urbem oculis discitque locos causasque locorum  
 (*Pun.* 12. 565 – 68)

[Now he examined the approaches, now he beat on the closed gates with angry spear and enjoyed the terror of the citizens. Or again, he

stood motionless on some eminence, bending his gaze upon the city, learning the name of each spot and the origin of its name.]

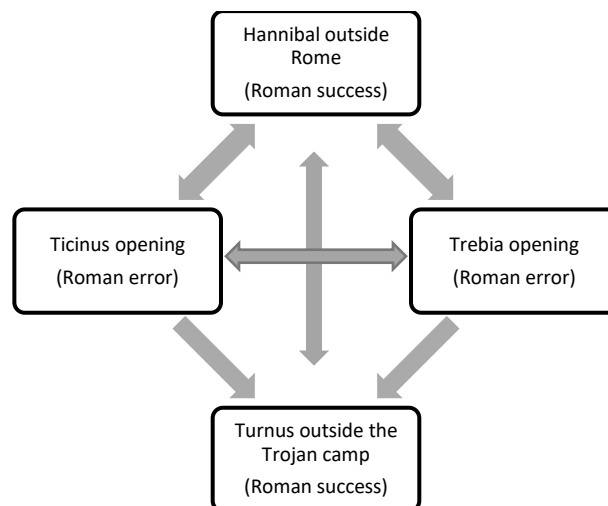
Hannibal performs a personal, visual siege of the city of Rome, lurking around its walls and gazing into the city's heart. The parallels to *Aen.* 9.47 – 57 are many (again, see 1.2.2 for a full discussion), but *clausas nunc cuspide pulsat / infesta portas* is strikingly close to the action that provokes the Romans at the beginning of Trebia in *Punica* 4.<sup>317</sup> Here, at the beginning of Trebia, we see yet another disastrous ‘what if’ scenario playing out before our eyes. In book 12, this spear striking has no effect and Hannibal is utterly and frustratingly impotent in his efforts to start a battle outside Rome. At Trebia, however, the mere thought (*putat*) of a spear striking the closed gates of the camp is enough to have the Romans burst out of their defensive position. This has two concurrent and contrasting effects: first, it alludes to a future when the Romans *have* actually learned from their mistakes (*Punica* 12) and so softens the blow of the current error; the Romans may repeat a mistake now, but they will not when times are most dire. Second, it allows Hannibal to display a significant tactical achievement but undercuts that achievement by alluding to the spectacular failure of that same tactic when he needed it most; Hannibal's success outside the Roman fort at Trebia is a tragic disaster, his success outside the walls of Rome would have been existential.

The beginning of the battle of Trebia is thus a combination of several inter- and intratextual parallels. Intratextually, Silius alludes back to the opening of the battle of Ticinus, when Catus so foolishly charged into Bogus' errant spear, a scene which in turn recalled Turnus' foiled attack on the Trojan camp in *Aeneid* 9. By repeating these openings, Silius even more

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<sup>317</sup> As a side note, the language is also curiously similar to *Met.* 2.766 – 67 (as Athena approaches the house of Envy): *neque enim succedere tectis / fas habet et postes extrema cuspide pulsat*. It is difficult to say whether this is intentional or coincidence, but the parallels are striking.

firmly binds Ticinus and Trebia together and emphasizes the Romans' inability to learn from their mistakes. The opening details of Trebia also look forward to Hannibal's foiled attack on Rome in *Punica* 12 with an unambiguous verbal allusion. With this circle of intertexts and intratexts, Silius simultaneously reminds his readers of the earlier battle, that battle's allusions to a scene in the *Aeneid*, that *Aeneid* scene's allusion to Hannibal's attack on Rome in 211 BC, and Silius' own poetic reenactment of that allusion in *Punica* 12. This is a truly remarkable nexus of allusion, a testament to the *cura* with which Silius so famously constructed his poem, and its web-like intricacy is perhaps best captured in a flow chart:



As visible in the above chart, Silius' allusions both to *Punica* 12 and *Aeneid* 9 are of Roman successes; as we saw in the previous chapters as well, Carthaginian success in book four of the *Punica* is always characterized by allusions that recall Turnus' failures in the *Aeneid* or anticipate Hannibal's after Cannae. This is the Silian allusive technique at its best: referring simultaneously to multiple scenes in Vergil and later in his own poem; standing as the 'middle'

epic, the *Punica* is both a sequel to the *Aeneid*, replaying important moments from the Roman mythic past, and a ‘prequel’ to moments later in the epic.<sup>318</sup>

### 3.4.3: Gracchus: Aeneas or Turnus? (*Pun.* 4. 515 – 519 and *Aen.* 12. 368 – 370)

A second allusion to Turnus, now as he appeared for the final time in *Aen.* 12, further strengthens the links between Trebia and the last battle of Vergil’s epic, setting up the ‘Simultanaristic’ of Scipio and Hannibal in contrast to Turnus and Aeneas. The parallelism is most clearly seen in the description of Gracchus as he charges into battle.

#### *Aeneid* 12. 368 – 370

sic Turno, **quacumque viam secat, agmina** cedunt  
conversaeque ruunt acies; **fert** impetus ipsum  
et **crisam** adverso curru **quatit aura volantem**.

So, wherever Turnus cleaves a path, the ranks give way and lines turn and run; his own speed bears him on, and the breeze, as his chariot meets it, tosses his flying plume.

#### *Pun.* 4. 515 – 519

**quatit aura comantes**  
cassidis Auruncae **cristas**, humeroque refulgent  
sanguinei patrium saguli decus. **agmina** magno  
respectans clamore vocat, quaqua obvia densos  
artat turba globos, **rumpens iter** aequore **fertur**

The wind blew out the horse-hair plume of his Auruncan helmet, and the scarlet cloak that had graced his ancestors was conspicuous on his shoulder. Looking back over the ranks, he summoned them with a loud voice; and wherever a mass of foemen in close formation met him, he burst his way through and sped along the plain.

In this comparison of Gracchus and Turnus as they charge into battle there are several very clear verbal parallels. Both heroes are shown with lofty plumes blowing in the wind – *quatit aura*

<sup>318</sup> The *Punica* can also be seen as the intermediate poem in a trilogy of Roman epic mytho-history beginning with the *Aeneid* and ending, in a sense, with Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*.

*volantem* and *quatit aura comantes* are nearly identical – Silius’ provides some *variatio* through an aural parallel – though, as he often does when engaging closely with Vergil, Silius has reversed the position of his quotation, placing it at the beginning rather than the end of the description. Likewise, both men cut a path (*viam secat* and *rumpens iter* – again Silius alludes but does not directly quote) through the battle line (*agmina*). Furthermore, Turnus’ entrance in *Aen.* 12 is preceded by a simile that compares him to a storm on the coast (*Aen.* 12. 365 – 66: *ac velut Edoni Boreae cum spiritus alto / insonat Aegaeo sequiturque ad litora fluctus ...*), while Gracchus’ is followed by a simile that compares him to a torrent rushing down a mountain (*Pun.* 4. 520 – 24: *ut torrens celsi praeceps e vertice Pindi / cum sonitu ruit ... spumea saxosis clamat convallibus unda*). This description of the destructive power of water anticipates Scipio’s upcoming river battle; the fact that this simile is describing Gracchus – not Scipio – is yet another example of the blurring of these two leaders.<sup>319</sup> In addition to reversing the position of these similes, as with the position of *quatit aura*, Silius has reversed the direction of the wind in his simile: in the *Punica* simile, the wind begins on land and rushes down the mountain to the sea, in the *Aeneid* the wind begins on the sea and rushes against the shore. In so doing, Silius has modified the similes in Vergil to match the progression of Trebia from an initial land battle to the subsequent water battle, confirming Niemann’s bipartite battle structure. Finally, this land-based simile introduces the land battle while a nautical simile (*Pun.* 4. 713 – 17: *ut pelagi ...*) marks the end of the river battle, showcasing Silius’ dedication to the structure of these battle scenes.

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<sup>319</sup> Chaudhuri is mistaken about the identity of the *magnus consul* in this simile: “... the river simile used of Scipio ...” (Chaudhuri 2014: 206). The *consul* must still be Gracchus, Scipio’s entrance is strongly marked by *ecce per adversum* at *Pun.* 4. 622 and Duff’s translation and Stocks 116 – 18 confirm this. The fact that Chaudhuri confuses the two leaders only furthers the point that the fluidity of the two *duces* is intentional.

The context of Gracchus' charge also mirrors that of Turnus' in *Aeneid* 12; both men attack in the conspicuous absence of the main protagonist (Aeneas/Scipio Maior), who is temporarily injured but will later rejoin the field. These verbal, structural, and contextual parallels cement this scene and what follows as a clear allusion to *Aeneid* 12, when Turnus rushes into battle in the absence of Aeneas, and the dueling *aristeiai* that come next. Some interesting problems arise, however, from the association of Gracchus with Turnus. First of all, it is Hannibal who most often, and most recently, is compared to Turnus, both at the beginning of Ticinus and here at Trebia; to align Gracchus so closely with Turnus now only seems to confuse this identification. However, as we have seen before, the Romans of the *Punica*, especially in its first half, are easily compared with the defending Italians of the *Aeneid*'s second half, who are led by Turnus and, necessarily, defeated by the invading Trojans. By that reasoning, Turnus is indeed a suitable archetype for Gracchus as he charges out of the Roman camp at Hannibal's goading. Silius has crafted a wonderful twist in this Vergilian allusion by having a 'Turnus' fall prey to the very strategy that Turnus himself unsuccessfully employed in the *Aeneid*. This also extends the theme of Romans fighting themselves, civil war imagery which Silius cultivates so strongly in this first half.

With Gracchus standing in for Turnus, Scipio Maior must also stand in for Aeneas, who in *Aen.* 12 was injured and returned to the fight later. With some clever parallelism, Silius has constructed a battle in which a Turnus and an Aeneas are on the same side. This also furthers the apposition hinted at by the two Roman generals' verbally similar introductions (Gracchus at *Pun.* 4. 493: *ecce aderat*, Scipio at *Pun.* 4. 622: *ecce per adversum*). Finally, casting Gracchus as a Turnus and Scipio Maior as an Aeneas diminishes Hannibal's importance; the Romans are more than capable of replaying Aeneas and Turnus' quasi-civil war all on their own.

Silius crafts a complex case of mixed identities at the opening of the battle of Trebia, but in so doing he is expanding on a theme already present in the *Aeneid* 12 archetype. After Aeneas has received divine medicine from Venus, the Vergilian hero displays a lust for battle that suddenly aligns him with his brash Rutulian counterpart:

ille avidus pugnae suras incluserat auro  
hinc atque hinc oditque moras hastamque coruscat.  
(*Aen.* 12. 430 – 31)

[Eager for the fray, Aeneas had sheathed up his legs in gold on this side and that and, scorning delay, is brandishing his spear.]

Aeneas, ever thoughtful and patient, faithful to the truce between the Italians and Trojans, is now painted with an altogether more Turnian coloring. This fits well with Vergil's long-established program of developing Aeneas as Achilles (i.e. the victor), and Turnus as Hector (i.e. the defeated), over the final four books of the *Aeneid*.<sup>320</sup> Van Nortwick in particular comments upon the mixed nature of Aeneas and Turnus, who, among multiple other Homeric archetypes, both claim Achilles as a model, and it is not made clear until the end of the epic which claim is legitimate.<sup>321</sup> By tapping in to this legacy of mixed identities, Silius takes the already complex Vergilian characterization of Aeneas and Turnus and pushes it even further. Gracchus at the Trebia charges forth, eager for battle like the Aeneas-Achilles of *Aen.* 12; however, the language used during this assault is instead a clear allusion to Turnus at the moment when his time as an

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<sup>320</sup> Perhaps 'Achillean' would be a better choice; Vergil never makes carbon copies. See MacKay 1957, Anderson 1957, van Nortwick 1980, and King 1982, to name just a few articles on Turnus, Aeneas, and Achilles. See also Tarrant 2012: 3-16 for an overview of *Aen.* 12's themes of pairing, the reversal of the Trojan War, and, in particular, the contrast of Turnus and Aeneas.

<sup>321</sup> van Nortwick well unpacks Turnus' multiplex identity: "While reflecting in some way the Homeric Achilles, he is also in the role of Hector to Aeneas' Achilles and Paris to Aeneas' Menelaus. At the same time, he is the ultimate exemplar of a noble but doomed kind of heroism also manifested in varying degrees and in various ways by Nisus and Euryalus, Pallas, Lausus, Camilla, and Aeneas at Troy" (van Nortwick 1980: 308).

Achilles is quickly passing. Hannibal, who competes with Gracchus during the upcoming ‘Simultaneistic’ now *also* becomes an Aeneas-Achilles in his opposition to the Turnian Gracchus. This signifies the failings of both generals; both are Turnus in their own way, Gracchus will lose the battle and Hannibal will lose the war.

To further complicate matters, Gracchus, in his guise as Aeneas-Achilles, would seem to be the most logical figure to perform the fundamentally Achillean *mache parapotamios* that consumes the second half of the battle. Instead, he is replaced by the sudden return of Scipio Maior – himself already an Aenean figure. Ultimately, none of these varied archetypes is complete, representing the Romans’ lack of true leadership during these opening battles of the war and the first half of the *Punica*; Gracchus, Scipio, and Hannibal all fail equally in their roles as Aeneas, the first two cannot defeat their Turnian adversary and Hannibal cannot replicate Aeneas’ conquest of the warlike Italians.

So much for the opening moves of Trebia. Like Ticinus the battle begins with a futile charge, though this time the Roman individual (Catus) has been replaced by the collective (*Latius miles*); the disease of self-defeat is spreading. Simultaneously, Gracchus recreates the behavior of Catus at the highest echelons of Roman power. Trebia also begins, like Ticinus, with concurrent allusions to both Turnus in the *Aeneid* 9 and, retroactively, to Hannibal in *Punica* 12. These allusions not only connect the battles of Ticinus and Trebia as one extended conflict, continuing where the *Aeneid* left off – with Aeneas’ legacy secured but Dido’s curse unresolved – , but they also further Silius’ goal of stressing the repetitive nature of the Romans’ mistakes in these first dramatic losses. Interestingly, both Hannibal and Gracchus are compared to Turnus, another example of how Silius uses allusions to the *Aeneid* to blur the lines between Carthaginian, Roman, Trojan, and Italian identities. Gracchus, like Turnus, is a detrimental

presence, though unintentionally, and Silius will develop the theme of the ‘internal enemy’ further with the introduction of Flaminius at the end of the battle (cf. his description of Flaminius as *urbi genitum ad fatalia damna* at *Pun.* 4. 708). Silius extends the role reversal that is already developed in *Aeneid* 12, using it to highlight the Romans’ lack of unified leadership.

#### 3.4.4: A Self-Conscious Interlude (*Pun.* 4. 525 – 528, *Aen.* 12. 500 – 4, and *Theb.* 12. 797 – 809)

After the introduction of Gracchus, Hannibal’s speech, and the Romans’ initial charge, Silius ends this opening section and transitions to the combat proper with an authorial interlude that not only furthers the battle’s connection with *Aeneid* 12 but also connects with the ending of his contemporary Statius’ *Thebaid*.

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.  
(*Pun.* 4. 525 – 528)

[Even if I could reproduce the glorious voice of Homer, and if Father Phoebus granted me to speak with a hundred tongues, I could not set forth all the victims slain by the arm of the great consul or by the furious rage of his Carthaginian opponent.]

The most recent authorial interlude occurred only about 120 lines ago (*Pun.* 4. 396 – 400), when Silius praised the deaths of his suddenly Statian set of brothers (see 2.2.1). Whereas that interlude positioned the narrative in the context of *Aeneid* 9 with an allusion to the deaths of

Nisus and Euryalus (*Aen.* 9. 446 – 49), this interjection places us once again on the battlefield of *Aeneid* 12, after Aeneas has rejoined the battlefield and competes with Turnus for kills.

Quis mihi nunc tot acerba deus, quis carmine caedes  
 diversas obitumque ducum, quos aequore toto  
 inque vicem nunc Turnus agit, nunc Troius heros,  
 expediat? tanton placuit concurrere motu,  
 Iuppiter, aeterna gentis in pace futuras?  
 (*Aen.* 12. 500 – 504)

[What god can now unfold for me so many horrors, who in song can tell such diverse deaths, and the fall of captains, whom now Turnus, now the Trojan hero, drives in turn all over the plain? Was it your will, Jupiter, that in so vast a shock nations should clash that hereafter would dwell in everlasting peace?]

The parallels are clear, though as usual Silius avoids direct quotation; *non, mihi* and *quis mihi* are quite close, both authors invoke a god (Phoebus or Jupiter), and both directly compare two heroes. The context is an especially close parallel: both interjections occur as two heroes engage in a double *aristeia*, and Silius has already firmly established this part of Trebia as taking place in the context of *Aeneid* 12. Furthermore, the final sentence of Vergil's passage works equally well for both Trojans/Italians and Romans/Carthaginians. Yet, there are several interesting differences. First of all, and most obviously, Vergil's interlude takes the form of a question while Silius' does not, though both portray the uncertainty of the author's knowledge or ability.<sup>322</sup> The intrusion of Homer is also an interesting addition in Silius and, along with Phoebus' rather more traditional appearance, marks that passage as potentially metapoetic: perhaps Silius is acknowledging the close presence of his literary hero and professing his inability to reach the same heights. The mention of Homer also, as Chaudhuri astutely notes, primes the audience for

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<sup>322</sup> Tarrant *ad loc.* comments that "the broken syntax of *quis mihi nunc tot acerba deus* may suggest inarticulacy, reflecting the difficulty of which the narrator speaks."

the upcoming Iliadic moment.<sup>323</sup> Both of Vergil’s heroes are directly named (Aeneas is elevated with *Troius heros*), while both of Silius’ heroes are named only obliquely, Gracchus is *magnus consul* – purposefully ambiguous –, while Hannibal is completely dehumanized as *Tyriae furor ... irae*.

One final observation may further support the notion that Silius is looking at this passage. In the final line of his interlude, Vergil comments that these two nations will in the future be in eternal peace (*aeterna ... in pace*), referring to the union of the Italians and Trojans that created the Roman people. A final statement of this type is missing from Silius’ interjection, though Vergil’s final two lines (*Aen.* 12. 503 – 4) would work equally well for the Carthaginians and Romans, playing into Silius’ already established theme of the Second Punic War as a civil war both within the Roman leadership and between Carthage (in Silius’ time a fully integrated and important Roman city) and Rome.<sup>324</sup> By including an authorial interlude at the exact same time as Vergil, but omitting the lines which would most apply to his context, Silius creates an allusion by omission. This kind of ‘fill in the blank’ allusion is not uncommon in antiquity, when the most important reference is not what is actually quoted but what immediately follows the quoted lines.<sup>325</sup> With a ‘sequential allusion,’ Silius asks his reader (surely as well read in Vergil as himself) to remember the following verses and supply them in this new context. If so, this is a

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<sup>323</sup> “It will soon become clear that this reference to Homer, immediately following the river simile used of Scipio [Chaudhuri means ‘Gracchus’; see n. 42 above], gestures towards Achilles’ theomachy against Scamander in *Iliad* 21, which prepares the way for Silius’ own experiment with the topos” (Chaudhuri 2014: 206).

<sup>324</sup> See in particular my comments in Ch. 1, pgs. 50 and 55.

<sup>325</sup> Seneca provides what is essentially a definition of this kind of allusion at *Apoc.* 5.4.2 – 5.5.5: *accessit itaque et quod facillimum fuit Graeculo, ait: τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν, πόθι τοι πόλις ἠδὲ τοκῆς; Claudius gaudet esse illic philologos homines, sperat futurum aliquem historiis suis locum. Itaque et ipse Homericō versu Caesarem se esse significans ait: Ἰλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος Κικόνεσσι πέλασσεν. **Erat autem sequens versus verior, aequē Homericus:** ἔνθα δ’ ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὤλεσα δ’ αὐτούς. I thank Sarah Stroup for the idea of “sequential allusion” and for bringing this passage of Seneca to my attention.*

remarkably subtle and learned allusion to his *Aeneid* source material that both rewards the reader for close reading and a knowledge of Vergil and furthers Silius' goal of highlighting the civil war tone of this conflict.

By beginning this interlude at this moment Silius creates a strong contextual parallel with Vergil's *Aeneid* 12, but with *non mihi* and *centenas ... voces* Silius also connects this passage with a highly traditional epic topos.<sup>326</sup> This kind of exclamation, in which the author bemoans the lack of ability to describe the situation, praying for (usually) 100 mouths or tongues, has a long tradition reaching back to Homer. Examples available to Silius include, in addition to the Vergilian parallel above, *Thebaid* 12. 797ff. (*non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet / voce deus ...*), *Met.* 8. 533ff. (*non, mihi si centum deus ora sonantia linguis ...*), *Georgics* 2. 43ff. (*non mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum*), *Enn. Ann.* 469-70 (=Vahlen 561-62) (*non si, lingua loqui saperet quibus, ora decem sint, / innumerum ferro cor sit pectusque revinctum*), and, the Homeric archetype, *Il.* 2. 488ff. (οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν...). Because of Silius' aversion to direct quotation and the long tradition of this type of passage, it is difficult to say which of these Silius has most firmly in mind – indeed Silius juggles multiple sources – but a closer look at his contemporary Statius' passage bears interesting fruit.

At the very end of the *Thebaid*, Statius breaks off from the narration of the aftermath of the war and ends his poem with a first-person coda addressed to the now personified *Thebaid* (*Theb.* 12. 810 – 19). Just before this final prayer for his poem's survival, Statius proclaims his inability to describe the countless funeral pyres:

non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet  
voce deus, tot busta simul vulgique ducumque,

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<sup>326</sup> For a detailed discussion of this topos, the problems inherent in its 'toposness,' and some solutions to those problems, see Hinds 1998: 34 – 47.



With *vive, precor*, Statius (from the Silian reader's perspective) is now quoting Hannibal's speech only a few lines earlier.<sup>327</sup> This quotation completes the remarkable circle of allusions that Silius has been constructing since Hannibal's dramatic (and dramatically ironic) speech. As discussed in relation to Hannibal's speech (see 3.2.4), Statius' coda also invokes the image of Vergil's Creusa following in the footsteps of Aeneas during the sack of Troy in *Aeneid* 2.<sup>328</sup> Through this allusion to Creusa in *Aen.* 2 we come also to Dido, whose death in many ways parallels Creusa's, as discussed above, and who, in the *Heroides*, curses Aeneas with that same phrase: *vive, precor*.

This brings us back to the unanswered question from just a moment ago: what exactly does Silius intend with this double allusion to *Aeneid* 12 and *Thebaid* 12? The answer lies, I think, in Silius' desire to contextualize this moment within the final battle of *Aeneid* 12, while also incorporating the ending of his contemporary poet's epic. Silius' sudden *aporia* at *Pun.* 4. 525 – 28, coming as it does in the context of a passage of allusion to *Aeneid* 12, surely looks back to the authorial outburst of *Aen.* 12. 500 – 504 which occurs at nearly the exact same place. This furthers Silius' goal of establishing an *Aeneid* 12 setting for this first half of Trebia, but it also lacks many of the verbal cues of Vergil's interlude; instead, Silius' takes the form of an

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<sup>327</sup> The direction and scope of the relationship between Statius and Silius is debated and not fully understood. See Ripoll 2015 for a useful overview. For the purposes of this dissertation, I follow the current opinion that the relationship was fluid, with both authors reading and responding to the other's books as they came into being.

<sup>328</sup> Nugent 1996: 70 – 71 argues that Statius' *vive precor* passage is "perhaps the most explicit intertextual reference in Latin epic, inviting us as readers to juxtapose at every moment this self-proclaimed epigonal text against the touchstone of the master, Vergil. But no, the specific text echoed here leads us to configure the relation between the two epics differently: not in fact as master and apprentice, but virtually as husband and wife ... This figure of Statius' *Thebaid* as the female trailing faithfully behind the footsteps of the predecessor, at once self-effacing and highly self-conscious, may serve as an apt representation, not only for Hypsipyle's ambivalent relation to her father, but also for the poet Statius' relation to his poetic father." See also Dominik 2003: 98 – 99, who also likens the image to the story of Eurydice in *Georg.* 4.453ff. and *Met.* 10.1-85. The comparison seems, to me at least, not entirely positive; Creusa was left behind and died at Troy, after all, and one wonders what that means for Statius' *Thebaid*.

*aporia*, an epic cliché with roots reaching back to Homer. Specifically, Silius' *aporia* during the battle of Trebia looks to Statius' very similar passage in the coda at the end of the *Thebaid*, when Statius rather strangely declares that now, after 12 full books of epic poetry, he no longer has the poetic capacity to describe the aftermath of the war. With *Thebaid* 12 in mind as well as *Aeneid* 12, Hannibal's allusive *vive precor* only a few lines earlier now further strengthens the links to Statius' epilogue and becomes a subtle allusion to the words Statius speaks to his poem at *Theb.* 12. 816.

Contextualizing Silius' *aporia* at *Pun.* 4. 525 – 28 within the framework of Statius' *Thebaid* 12 epilogue lends further credence to the metapoetic subtext of the passage. Like Statius, who is anxious about his poem's relationship to the *Aeneid*, Silius introduces a highly intertextual scene with an authorial aside that simultaneously engages with a similarly placed outburst in *Aeneid* 12, but rephrases it as an *aporia* that invokes – among many other passages – Statius' epilogue at *Theb.* 12. 797ff. and its self-reflexive comments on its legacy. Tapping into Statius' anxiety just as he becomes his most Vergilian and Homeric, and with his typical penchant for inversion, Silius rephrases Statius' epilogue at the beginning of his battle rather than at the end of the epic. Depending on the path of transmission (from Silius to Statius, Statius to Silius, or simultaneously), Silius may be 'correcting' Statius' interlude by placing it in a more traditional context (that is, where Vergil had it), or perhaps Statius is responding to Silius by actually ending his poem after his statement of inability. Likewise, Statius' *vive, precor* is referenced by Silius' Hannibal as he curses Scipio Maior, an inversion which takes Statius' hopeful prayer at the end of the *Thebaid* and places it into the mocking mouth of Rome's greatest enemy. In any case, Silius' allusive and metapoetic interlude during the battle of Trebia is another excellent example of the poet's ability to weave together different influences in a highly

learned and subtle way, rewarding the close reader with a plethora of interesting verbal, thematic, and contextual parallels that deepen the impact of the scene.

### 3.5.1: Hannibal and Gracchus: Competing *aristeiai* (*Pun.* 4. 529 – 553)

After his authorial *aporia*, in which Silius signaled his inability to fully describe the victims of Gracchus and Hannibal, the poet moves on immediately to what Niemann calls the ‘Simultanaristie,’ which occupies the first 25 lines of the combat proper. This section is, as Niemann comments, a compressed recreation of *Aen.* 12. 505 – 553, with many similarities and several differences. To begin, the *Aeneid* 12 double *aristeia* comes in two neat halves (*Aen.* 12. 505 – 520 and 12. 529 – 547) split by a simile (*Aen.* 12. 521 – 528) that describes Aeneas and Turnus together; Silius’ recreation is much shorter (25 lines compared to Vergil’s 49) and does not contain a similar simile. Silius seems to have skipped to the second half of Vergil’s scene and recreates the chiasmic structure therein; Vergil describes the kills of Aeneas and Turnus in the order Aeneas-Turnus-Turnus-Aeneas, while Silius has Hannibal-Gracchus-Gracchus-Hannibal. Once again Gracchus takes the position of Turnus, consistent with Silius’ description of him entering battle at *Pun.* 4. 512 – 24. Silius also places two victims from Vergil’s first half (Murranus and Cupencus) in his recreation, this time splitting the two victims between Hannibal and Gracchus (in Vergil both are killed by Aeneas).

The structure of Silius’ Simultanaristie employs *regressio*, as the victims Murranus, Phalantus, Cupencus, and Varenus, are first killed and then later given origin stories and can be split into two uneven halves. In the first half (*Pun.* 4. 529 – 533) Murranus and Phalantus are quickly slain and receive very brief descriptions; in the second half (*Pun.* 4. 534 – 548) Cupencus and Varenus are given more descriptive interactions and even brief necrologues. Silius

then transitions to the much more extended death of Allius with a brief yet vivid description of the mass melee that recalls Lucan's depictions of the tyranny of Sulla (*Pun.* 4. 549 – 553).

### 3.5.2: Murranus and Phalantus, Cupencus and Varenus (*Pun.* 4. 529 – 553)

Silius wastes no time – despite his protestations of inadequacy – listing the first two victims of Hannibal and Gracchus as they begin their dual, dueling *aristeiai*, and, as usual, their names are more than just filler.

Murranum ductor Libyae, ductorque Phalantum  
Ausonius, gnaros belli veteresque laborum,  
alter in alterius fuderunt comminus ore.  
(*Pun.* 4. 529 – 31)

[Murranus and Phalantus were hardy veterans both; but Hannibal slew the first in close combat and Gracchus the second, each general fighting in full view of his rival.]

*Ductor ... ductorque* and *alter in alterius ... comminus ore* highlight the rivalry and visual and physical proximity of the two leaders. The interweaving of these two generals, as Stocks comments, creates the appearance of two equal combatants yet the very fact that they appear simultaneously ensures that Gracchus cannot surpass Hannibal as Scipio Maior will later in his absence.<sup>329</sup> This is a bit of a blow to Hannibal's stature in his guise as Turnus. Unlike Aeneas' rival, Hannibal does not actually have a time to shine by himself; instead Silius skips right to the double *aristeiai*.

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<sup>329</sup> “Whilst they appear as equals, the presence of both on the battlefield, each in full sight of the other, ensures that Gracchus, unlike Scipio, cannot surpass or function as a replacement figure for the Carthaginian while Hannibal remains active on the battlefield” (Stocks 2014: 117).

The closeness of the two generals creates a sense of interchangeability that begins to clarify the problems of identity we have been experiencing with Gracchus and Hannibal. It is especially difficult to make a decision about either hero because, unlike in the *Aeneid*, this double *aristeia* does not ultimately lead to a duel between the two warriors. Instead, in this scene Gracchus and Hannibal are *both Aeneas and Turnus*, with both conceptions equally incomplete. A good example of this instability is the order of the killing and – as always – the names of the victims.

Murranus is listed as the first victim in the first word of this passage – a significant word choice, as Murranus also appears in the exact same position in Vergil.<sup>330</sup> Spaltenstein characteristically dismisses the idea that Silius has this Murranus in mind, but it seems almost inconceivable that Silius chose this name – the same name, at the same moment, in the same part of the same first line – coincidentally.<sup>331</sup> In fact, the especially conspiratorial reader will note that these two Murrani appear not just in a similar context but in the very same line (*Aen.* 12.529 and *Pun.* 4. 529), a coincidence that, thanks to the *Aeneid*'s remarkably well transmitted manuscript tradition, is perhaps not to be immediately dismissed. The strong similarities of these two men – *pace* Spaltenstein – and the coincidence of line number mark this as a potential stichometric allusion and, if correct, are a testament to Silius' remarkably close, line by line, engagement with Vergil.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> *Aen.* 12. 529: *Murranum hic ...*

<sup>331</sup> Spaltenstein *ad loc.*: “Le nom de Murranus est usuel et il est inutile de supposer ... que Sil. le reprend expressément de Verg.*Aen.*12.529 ...”

<sup>332</sup> Llewelyn Morgan provided the first systematic discussion of this concept via a passage in the *Georgics* (1999: 23-27 and 223-26). There the coincidence (between *Georg.* 4. 400 and *Od.* 4. 400) occurred on an even hundred, which Morgan takes to be a confirmation of the ancient's use of line markers every hundredth line; whether this makes or breaks Silius' allusion remains to be examined. See also Hinds 1998: 92 and n.80 (on the proximity of Statius' praise to Dymas and Hoplaus at *Theb.* 10.445-8 and

Further cementing the closeness of these two Murrani is the fact that only a few lines later Silius introduces a Cupencus, a figure also present in the Vergilian narrative.<sup>333</sup> This type of allusion recalls the words of Marcus Wilson which I quoted at the beginning of this dissertation (1.0.0), that Silius “prefers to signal the intertextual connection by alternative means, in particular by coincidence of situation and detail rather than wording and, occasionally, by more explicit hints.”<sup>334</sup> It is clear enough that Murranus (and Cupencus, later) is a reference to the parallel scene in *Aeneid* 12 but, as always, Silius is never content to simply reproduce the Vergilian source exactly. In the *Aeneid* passage Murranus and Cupencus are both killed by Aeneas; Silius divides the kills between Hannibal and Gracchus in his recreation, further blurring the lines between the two warriors.

Phalantus’ name is a bit tougher to crack and a great example of the pitfalls and potential prizes of a close analysis of Silius’ allusive technique. Phalant(h)us is found variously as a foundation figure for Brundisium and Tarentum (as Silius himself attributes to a Phalantus at *Pun.* 7.665 and 11.16), a victim of Hippomedon at *Theb.* 9.127, and, here in this passage, as a Greco-Phoenician warrior, like the triplet brothers from before, who hails from Lake Tritonis in Africa. His namesake role as a southern Italian foundation figure perhaps anticipates the large-scale revolt of those cities in book 11, a symbolism we will see again in the figure of Allius, while his status as a victim of Hippomedon in *Thebaid* 9 links him with the *mache parapotamios* just around the corner. Finally, the mention of Lake Tritonis brings to mind that lake’s appearance in the Argonautic myth, found in Apollonius at 4.1399ff. although, unfortunately for

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Vergil’s to Nisus and Euryalus at *Aen.* 9.446-9, also discussed above at 2.2.5), and Smith 1990 (on the coincidence of *Met.* 10.474-7 and *Aen.* 10.474-5).

<sup>333</sup> *Aen.* 12. 539 – 40: *nec di texere Cupencum / Aenea veniente sui ...*

<sup>334</sup> Wilson 2004: 226.

our purposes, the same scene does not appear in Valerius Flaccus' unfinished epic.<sup>335</sup> Several of these details are interesting, but it is difficult to tell which, if any, of these Silius had in mind in this passage. However, if we allow ourselves a bit of speculation, and keep in mind Silius' use of 'allusion by omission' or 'sequential allusion,' the results are quite intriguing.

### 3.5.3: Allusion by Omission: Finding Hyllus in *Thebaid* 8

I have already established, against Spaltenstein's wishes, that Silius contextualizes the competition of Gracchus and Hannibal at Trebia within the framework of Vergil's double *aristeia* of Aeneas and Turnus in *Aen.* 12. There, a warrior named Murranus is killed first, just as in Silius. The third warrior killed, Cupencus, also appears as the third victim in the *Punica* scene. So, it stands to reason that, perhaps, Silius replaced the name of the second victim, expecting the learned reader to understand what came next. In Vergil's analogous double *aristeia* in *Aen.* 12, the next warrior killed after Murranus is Hyllus, a name with Herculean undertones that is perhaps hinted at in Silius' use of Lake Tritonis in connection with *his* second victim, Phalantus.<sup>336</sup> While this certainly has the potential for an interesting intertext in Silius, we still lack a strong allusion to confirm we are on the right track. That allusion is spotted by Spaltenstein and leads us to a surprisingly complex – even for Silius' style – connection with Statius' *Thebaid*.

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<sup>335</sup> The story likely also appeared in Varro Atacinus' hopelessly fragmentary translation, which may also be a source (one fragment describes *feta feris Libye*).

<sup>336</sup> Hyllus, not to be confused with Hylas, was one of Hercules' sons. In Apollonius, the Argonauts have a near miss with Heracles at Lake Tritonis, where he is described as kicking a rock and creating a fresh water spring not long before the Argonauts arrived (4.1432 – 1460).

Just a few lines later, Cupencus is introduced and described hitting Gracchus' shield with his spear:

citat improbus hastam  
et **summae** figit tremebundam **marginē parmae**.  
(*Pun.* 4. 536 – 37)

[He boldly hurled his spear, and planted it quivering in the topmost rim of the consul's shield.]

This exact phrasing appears at *Thebaid* 8. 524:

et librans uni sibi missile telum  
derexit iactus **summae** qua **marginē parmae**  
ima sedet galea et iuguli vitalia lucent.  
(*Theb.* 8. 523 – 25)

[Poising a javelin that none but he could throw, [Tydeus] sets aim at the point where the lowest part of the helmet rests on the edge of the shield and the vital places of the throat show white.]

These lines occur during the battlefield showdown between Creon's son Haemon and Tydeus, making the context very similar to our Silian and Vergilian scenes. Furthermore, in this scene Haemon is assisted by Hercules and Tydeus by Athena, a fact that, as we widen our scope, provides several more parallels between this and Silius' scene.

About 20 lines before this, just as it appears that Haemon/Hercules and Tydeus/Athena will come to direct blows, Hercules interrupts the potential theomachy with a deferential speech to Athena.

'fida soror, quaenam hunc belli caligine nobis  
congressum fortuna tulit? num regia Iuno  
hoc molita nefas? citius me fulmina contra  
(infandum!) ruere et magno bellare parenti                      505  
aspiciat. genus huic – sed mitto agnoscere, quando  
tu diversa foves, **nec si ipsum comminus Hyllum**  
Tydeos hasta tui Stygioque ex orbe remissum

Amphitryona petat ...

(*Theb.* 8. 502 – 509)

[My loyal sister, what fortune has brought us to this meeting in the murk of war? Has queen Juno contrived this evil? Sooner would she see me rush against the thunderbolts (unspeakable!) and make war upon our great parent. His race – but I will not recognize it, since you favor the other side, nor would I if your Tydeus' spear sought Hyllus hand to hand or Amphitryon sent back from the world of Styx.]

Here is the missing link, so to speak, the Hyllus that is present in Vergil's narrative but replaced in Silius. The phrasing of Hercules' *nec si ipsum comminus Hyllus ...* supposes a hypothetical situation that is fulfilled by the death of Vergil's Hyllus in the analogous scene in *Aen.* 12, whose replacement with the Tritonian Phalantus first led us here to Statius. Speaking of Lake Tritonis, it is not long afterwards in this same scene in the *Thebaid* when Phalantus' homeland makes an appearance.

Just after Tydeus hurls his spear at the margin of Haemon's shield (continuing the first *Thebaid* passage quoted above), Athena redirects her warrior's spear into a harmless glancing blow:

nec frustrata manus, mortemque invenerat hasta;  
sed prohibet paulumque umeri libare sinistri  
praebuit et merito parcit **Tritonia** fratri.

(*Theb.* 8. 526 – 28)

[Nor did his hand fail him. The spear had found death, but Tritonia forbade and let it taste a little of the left shoulder, sparing her deserving brother (i.e. Hercules).]

We now have all the pieces needed to put together this intertextual puzzle. As we have seen before, Silius often uses one strong allusion (here *summae ... margine parmae*) to direct his

readers' attention to a certain passage and then uses 'weaker' allusions on the borders of the passage to strengthen the stronger ones at its core.<sup>337</sup>

In Statius' depiction of Haemon versus Tydeus we have a variety of compelling pieces of evidence to support the argument that Silius has this scene in mind in addition to Vergil's *Aen.* 12 competition between Turnus and Aeneas. *Summae ... margine parmae* appears at both *Pun.* 4. 537 and *Theb.* 8. 524, providing the 'keystone' allusion; a Hyllus is named in both Vergil and Statius, and conspicuously absent from Silius' close recreation, despite his reuse of Vergilian names like Murranus and Cupencus; contextually, the three dueling *aristeiai* are quite similar, though the presence of Athena and Hercules provides a direct divine dimension that is not present in Silius.<sup>338</sup>

Let us now take a moment to put this all together: why did Silius link his brief 'Simultaneität' of Gracchus and Hannibal at Trebia with that of Haemon and Tydeus in *Thebaid* 8? First of all, Silius is able to display the depths of his erudition by removing Hyllus from his scene and alluding to the Hyllus in Vergil and Statius; the particularly learned reader will be able to triangulate these allusions. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, by alluding to Statius Silius is able to continue his use of the *Thebaid* in deepening the meaning of his scenes. As we saw in the epitaph at the end of the triplet battle (see 2.2.5), Silius often uses a Statian intertext to add a twist to an already Vergilian scene. There, his allusion to Nisus and Euryalus became complicated by the inclusion of Statius' fratricidal brothers in the *Thebaid*; here, when Gracchus and Hannibal recreate Vergil's Turnus and Aeneas from *Aeneid* 12, Silius

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<sup>337</sup> This same "collective security" is used in my analysis of the Bogus/Catus scene; see 1.2.2, esp. pgs. 11 and 12.

<sup>338</sup> It does quite closely, however, recall the near-duel of Scipio and Hannibal at Cannae (*Pun.* 9. 411 – 485), with Scipio supported by Mars and Hannibal by Athena (there also called *Tritonia*).

subtly adds an allusion to Statius' *Thebaid* 8 conflict between Haemon and Tydeus. Rather than within the buildup to Aeneas' victory at the end of *Aeneid* 12, Silius instead reframes this scene in the context of the sacrilegious warfare at Thebes. Aeneas and Turnus, lurking behind Gracchus and Hannibal as they compete, now become Haemon and Tydeus, both doomed examples of the horror of the Theban civil war. Furthermore, the theomachic qualities of the *Thebaid* scene, with Athena helping Tydeus and Hercules Haemon, anticipate both the upcoming theomachy in the following scene of Trebia and the very similar aborted duel at Cannae between Hannibal and Scipio. This is a typically Silian allusion: it begins with a clear allusion to a Vergilian passage and then, with a short quotation, leads to a scene from Statius which lends even more complexity to the scene. The careful reader is rewarded for following these clues; a short scene soon leads to inter- and intratextual delights.

#### 3.5.4: A Lucanian Transition (*Pun.* 4. 449 – 553)

After the brief deaths of Murranus, Phalantus, Cupencus, and Varenus, Silius begins his transition from the *Simultaneae* to the *mache parapotamios*, which are separated from one another by the 16-line description of the death of Allius (*Pun.* 4. 554 – 69). Before Allius, however, Silius gives a short description of the general melee.

instat Hiber levis et levior discurrere Maurus.  
 hinc pila, hinc Libycae certant subtextere cornus      550  
 densa nube polum, quantumque interiacet aequi  
 ad ripas campi, tantum vibrantia condunt  
 tela, nec artatis locus est in morte cadendi.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 549 – 553)

[The Spaniards were nimble in their movements. Roman javelins and African spears vied in covering the sky with a thick cloud, and all the level

ground, as far as the river-banks, was hidden by the hurtling missiles; and in that close-packed throng the dead had no room to fall.]

Silius zooms out from the close-up, individual combat of the *Simultanaristie* to show the battlefield as a whole. So great is the charge of the Romans and Carthaginians (both represented quickly and depersonalized as *pila* and *Libycae cornus*) that their weapons cover the sky. The men are so densely packed that, Silius tells us, when they die they cannot fall. This image is strikingly Lucanian, as Spaltenstein rightly observes, appearing twice in Lucan's narrative. The first occurs during the long digression on Sulla's tyranny in *BC 2*:

densi vix agmina vulgi  
 inter et exangues immissa morte catervas  
 victores movere manus; vix caede peracta  
 procumbunt, dubiaque labant cervice; sed illos  
 magna permit strages peraguntque cadavera partem 205  
 caedis: viva graves elidunt corpora trunci.  
 intrepidus tanti sedit secures ab alto  
 spectator sceleris: miseri tot milia vulgi  
 non timuit iussisse mori. congesta recepit  
 omnia Tyrrhenus Sullana cadavera gurges. 210  
 in fluvium primi cecidere, in corpora summi.  
 (*BC 2. 201 – 211*)

[Hardly could the victors move their heads amid the packed crowd's ranks and squadrons pale at the launch of death: the slaughter over, hardly can the bodies tumble forward, but totter with rolling neck; the massive carnage crushes the survivors and corpses carry out some of the slaughter: living bodies are smothered by heavy headless trunks. Unperturbed, indifferent, from a lofty seat he watched the terrible crime, not dismayed that he had consigned to death so many thousands of the lowly masses. The Tyrrhenian flood received in a heap all the Sullan corpses. The first fell down into the river, the last on top of bodies.]

This vivid scene highlights the violence and mass bloodshed of Sulla's tyranny, as remembered by Lucan's anonymous narrator in book two of the *Bellum Civile*. Here we see the same theme that Silius employs at Trebia, that of the logistical problems caused by an over-abundance of corpses. Though there are few verbal parallels (those will come later), the thematic links are

clear enough. The presence of a river further strengthens the connection between these two scenes. Lucan's description of the pollution and flooding of the Tiber, which continues beyond the lines quoted above, is recalled by (or, in the language of Silian time dilation, looks back towards) Silius' description of the Romans drowning in the Trebia – a scene that is just around the corner in Silius' epic. Once again, this Lucanian allusion fixes the battle of Trebia – and the whole of the Second Punic War – in a civil war context, with both sides equally guilty.

Two more passages in this same area further connect Sulla's tyranny with the slaughter at Trebia, one at the beginning of Lucan's Sullan digression (*BC* 2.4 – 46) and another at the end (*BC* 2. 223 – 4) The first is found at the beginning of *BC* 2 as the Roman panic grows:

o miserae sortis quod non in Punica nati  
tempora Cannarum fuimus Trebiaequae iuventus.  
(*BC* 2. 45 – 46)

[O how unfortunate that we were not born into the time of the Punic war,  
to fight at Cannae and at Trebia!]

So Lucan begins his section on civil war remembrance with a reference to the Second Punic War – and specifically to the battles of Cannae and Trebia – and Silius describes the slaughter of Trebia with a reference to Lucan's civil war. The inclusion of Trebia over Trasimene is an interesting choice which can possibly be attributed to metrical needs but may also, for Silius, set up a purposeful connection. This is yet another example of Silius' compression of history, as the battle of Trebia is compared to the slaughters during the Roman civil wars. It also continues Silius' playful implementation of time in the *Punica*; as a Flavian author, Silius can look back in historical time to Lucan's work and still further back to the Roman civil wars of the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC setting of Silius' epic looks to the civil wars in the future. In

this way Silius can simultaneously remember and predict the great civil wars at the end of the Roman republic.

Another moment of *Bellum Civile-Punica* interaction occurs at the end of the Sullan digression, furthering Silius' use of compressive history – predictive remembrance, it might be called here – with a classic Lucanian *sententia* that works equally well within Silius' program:

haec rursus patienda manent, hoc ordine belli  
ibitur, hic stabit civilibus exitus armis.  
(*BC* 2. 223 – 24)

[These sufferings await, again to be endured, this will be the sequence of the warfare, this will be the outcome fixed for civil strife.]

Like Silius, Lucan imagines the horrors of Sulla's tyranny as premonitions of even worse crimes to come; Lucan imagines ever worsening civil bloodshed, Silius looks ahead to the even more disastrous battles to come. Silius' use of this passage from *BC* 2 does not end with his brief battle description at *Punica* 4. 549 – 53; we will return to this section shortly as we examine the scene of Romans drowning in the Trebia. For now, there is one more passage of Lucan deserving of our attention, one with much clearer parallels in Silius' text.

At the end of book 4 of the *Bellum Civile*, Lucan describes the defeat of Caesar's legate Curio at the hands of Juba in North Africa and his subsequent suicide. The slaughter inflicted upon Curio's troops as they are surrounded is described with typical Lucanian verve:

**non arma movendi**  
**iam locus est pressis**, stipataque membra teruntur;  
frangitur armatum colliso pectore pectus.  
non tam laeta tulit victor spectacula Maurus  
quam Fortuna dabat; fluvios non ille cruoris       785  
membrorumque videt lapsum et ferientia terram  
corpora: compressum turba stetit omne cadaver.  
(*BC* 4. 781 – 787)

[The crowded men now have no space for wielding weapons and their compressed limbs are ground together: armed breast is struck on breast and smashed. The victorious Moors did not enjoy to the full the sight which Fortune gave: they do not see the streams of gore, collapsing limbs, and bodies hitting the earth: every corpse stood erect, crushed in a mass.]

As earlier in book 2, and as with the Romans at Silius' Trebia, the soldiers are so totally encircled, so tightly packed, and so utterly defeated that the bodies have no room to fall; the mass of corpses simply stands there stationary, teetering in a bloody balance. As in Silius, who describes the soldiers on both sides only as weapons (*Pun.* 4. 550: *hinc pila, hinc Libycae certant subtextere cornus*), the soldiers here have become completely depersonalized, as Asso notes.<sup>339</sup>

*Non arma movendi / iam locus est pressis* in Lucan becomes *nec artatis locus est in morte cadendi* in Silius, a clear parallel that strongly situates Silius' scene in Lucan's framework.

The two scenes are also connected thematically and contextually. Curio's defeat was an ambush as well (as Lucan describes at *BC* 4. 715 – 748, esp. 4. 722 – 23: *ut sibi commissi simulator Sabbura belli; / ipse [Juba] cava regni vires in valle retentat*) and defeat by an African general. In fact, Lucan does the contextualizing for us, invoking the Second Punic War and Hannibal by name in the very next lines.

Excitet invisae dirae Carthaginis umbras  
inferiis Fortuna novis, ferat ista cruentus  
Hannibal et Poeni tam dira piacula manes.  
(*BC* 4. 788 – 90)

[Let Fortune call up grim Carthage's hated ghosts with these new offerings, let blood-stained Hannibal and the Punic shades accept this grim expiation.]

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<sup>339</sup> Asso 2010 *ad loc.*: "The soldiers are no longer identifiable as a group of individuals. They are just *stipata membra*, for the synecdoche conveys the sense of frustration proper to an army caught in dire straits and prevented from reacting by lack of room." Asso also notes the potential Ennian influence (*Enn. Ann.* 584 (=Vahlen 572): *pes premitur pede et armis arma teruntur*).

Lucan recognizes the intense irony of Curio's defeat by Juba in Africa during a Roman civil war, not far from the site of Scipio's final victory over Hannibal – as the *rudis incola* explains to Curio at the beginning of the African phase of book 4.

sed maiora dedit cognomina collibus istis  
 Poenum qui Latiis revocavit ab arcibus hostem,  
 Scipio; nam sedes Libyca tellure potito  
 haec fuit. en, veteris cernis vestigia valli.  
 Romana hos primum tenuit Victoria campos.  
 (BC 4. 656 – 660)

[But a greater name was given these hills by Scipio, who recalled the Carthaginian enemy from the citadels of Latium; for this was his position when he reached the Libyan land. Look, you can see traces of the ancient rampart. These are the fields first held by Roman victory.]

By linking the defeat at Trebia with the defeat suffered by Curio in Africa at the end of *BC 4* Silius achieves several goals. First, he furthers his overarching plan of depicting the Second Punic War as a civil war in which the Romans' true enemy is internal division. Second, he once again uses compressive history to predict and remember; the Hannibalic war historically inaugurated the final, tumultuous period of the Roman republic and, for Silius as a Flavian Roman, the poem is used to commemorate the achievements of the pre-civil-war Roman republic. Third, and finally, is the use of retroactive intertextuality to allude to a moment in Lucan that used the Second Punic War as an intertext; in the slaughter of the Romans at the Trebia, Silius alludes to Curio's defeat in Lucan which itself was already situated in the context of the Second Punic War (*BC 4. 788 – 90*, an evocation that works in parallel to the Silian evocation of *BC 2. 45 – 6* treated above.)

The Simultaneities of Gracchus and Hannibal, taking up only 25 lines, contains a plethora of interesting details. Contextual, thematic, and verbal parallels place this scene in close contact with Vergil's double *aristeiai* of Turnus and Aeneas at the end of *Aeneid 12*. By this

analogy we may see Turnus lurking behind Hannibal and Aeneas behind Gracchus. However, since Gracchus has already been likened to Turnus in the preceding scene, the comparison soon becomes problematized. The models for these two warriors become ever more complicated through a complex allusion to Statius' *Thebaid*. By tracing the name 'Hyllus,' present in Vergil's analogous scene but missing in Silius', we come to book 8 of the *Thebaid*, the very similar near-duel of Haemon and Tydeus. Now, in addition to Turnus and Aeneas, Haemon and Tydeus become even more morally problematic models for Gracchus and Hannibal as they compete.

Additionally, Lucan is present as well through two allusions at the end of the scene. With these, Silius connects this defeat at Trebia with the Roman civil wars between Marius and Sulla (*BC 2*) and Caesar and Pompey (*BC 4*). The reference to the Sullan digression in *BC 2* taps in to that passage's own prediction of future disasters to come, just as Silius frames Ticinus and Trebia as stepping stones on the way to Cannae (and Cannae in turn on the way to the civil wars), while the connection to Curio's defeat at the end of *BC 4* self-consciously recognizes the Punic context already present in Lucan's narrative. Finally, since Lucan frames the defeat at the end of *BC 4* as recompense for Scipio's defeat of Hannibal in Africa during the war with Carthage, Silius can reverse Lucan's reversal and anticipate the victory at Zama which compensates these early defeats in *Punica 17*. As we have seen so many times before, Silius is a very careful composer. His use – and sometimes his non-use – of names and verbal parallels is rarely coincidental or meaningless; rather, these allusions often reveal the poet's complex engagement with his epic predecessors, using similar scenes in Vergil, Lucan, and Statius to lend complexity to even seemingly simple passages in his poem. It is useful, I think, to quote once again the learned words of Joy Littlewood: "It is clear from his literary allusions that Silius had read thoughtfully, remembered detail, and relished the intellectual challenge of making literary

associations and pursuing their sometimes unexpected ramifications” (Littlewood 2001: xx). The reader of Silius must be just as willing to enjoy this intellectual challenge, here, in the Simultanaristie of Gracchus and Hannibal, and everywhere in the *Punica*.

### 3.6.1: The Death of Allius (*Pun.* 4. 554 – 569)

Before leaving behind the mass melee and continuing on to Scipio’s battle with the river, Silius devotes 16 lines to a single death, that of the Roman soldier Allius, who provides Trebia’s only full-sized necrologue. The size of this necrologue, some sixteen lines, makes it clear that Silius considered it an important moment in the battle. As we will see, further allusions to Lucan and connections to Ticinus await.

Allius Argyripa Daunique profectus ab arvis  
 venator rudibus iaculis et Iapyge campum                    555  
 persultabat equo mediosque invectus in hostes  
 Apula non vana torquebat spicula dextra.  
 huic horret thorax Samnitis pellibus ursae,  
 et galea annosi vallatur dentibus apri.  
 verum ubi turbantem, solo ceu lustra pererret                    560  
 in nemore aut agitet Gargano terga ferarum,  
 hinc Mago, hinc saevus pariter videre Maharbal,  
 ut subigente fame diversis rupibus ursi  
 invadunt trepidum gemina inter proelia taurum  
 nec partem praedae patitur furor, haud secus acer                    565  
 hinc atque hinc iaculo devolvitur Allius acto.  
 it stridens per utrumque latus Maurusia taxus;  
 obvia tum medio sonuerunt spicula corde,  
 incertumque fuit, letum cui cederet hastae.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 554 – 569)

[The hunter Allius had come from Argyripa in the land of Daunus, and used to ride over the Iapygian plain; his horse was of Apulian breed and his weapons rude; yet he charged the center of the enemy and threw his native darts with no erring aim. His breastplate was the bristly hide of a Samnite bear, and his helmet was protected by tusks taken from an aged wild boar. He fought as if he were straying through the coverts in some lonely wood, or pursuing flying beasts on Mount Garganus; but when

Mago and fierce Maharbal, each from his own place, sighted him at the same moment, then, as two bears, driven by hunger, come down from opposite cliffs, to fall upon a bull affrighted by his two antagonists, and their rage will not suffer them to divide the spoil – even so brave Allius was overthrown by the javelins that came from both his foes. The Moorish yew-wood passed hissing through both his sides; the points met and clashed in the center of his heart; and it was doubtful which of the two spears could claim his death.]

The allusion to the death of Catus in *BC* 3 is clear (as we will shortly see), and, rather than simply adding some nice variation to the scene (as Spaltenstein concludes), it becomes all the more significant given the importance of Catus as he appeared at the opening of the Ticinus. But, before diving into Allius' relationship with Lucan's (and Silius') Catus, let us first take a look at his geographical origins and physical description.

Allius has strong roots in the region of Southern Italy; he is from Argyripa (Arpi), the land of Daunus, rides a Iapygian (i.e. Apulian) horse, and fires Apulian missiles. *Iapyge*, describing the horse here but temptingly close to *campum*, is especially important here, placing Allius' origins not only in Southern Italy but specifically near the site of the battle of Cannae. Silius is the only Latin author to use the phrase *Iapyx campus* and uses it almost exclusively of the battle of Cannae.<sup>340</sup> Allius' connection to Cannae is further cemented by the brief simile that compares his fighting style to a hunter pursuing beasts on the slopes of Mount Garganus. Garganus, as I discussed in chapter one, is a meaningful name for Silius, who uses it as the name

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<sup>340</sup> *Pun.* 1. 50 – 51 [Juno to Hannibal]: *dum Cannas tumulum Hesperiae campumque cruore / Ausonio mersum sublimis Iapyga cernam*; *Pun.* 3. 707 [Oracle]: *invade Aetoli ductoris Iapyga campum*; *Pun.* 8. 37 – 38 [Anna to Hannibal]: *tendat iamdudum in Iapyga campum / huc Trebiae rursum et Trasimenni fata sequentur*; *Pun.* 11. 1 – 3: *nunc age, quos clades insignis Iapyge campo / veterit ad Libyam populus Sarranaque castra, / expediam.*

of Scipio Maior's horse at Ticinus and, tellingly, uses *Gargani campum* as another descriptor of Cannae at *Pun.* 17. 600.<sup>341</sup>

Allius appears as a rustic warrior, with armor of the hide of a Samnite bear, a helmet with the tusks of a boar, and *rudibus iaculis*. This appearance perhaps recalls the Saguntine warrior-priest Theron from *Punica* 2, although there his primitive arms are meant to evoke his Herculean patron.<sup>342</sup> Theron's battle with the very Camillan Asbyrte may be relevant, however, since Allius' description matches closely with a victim of Vergil's Amazon warrior, Ornytus. Spaltenstein notes the likeness (just having remarked that Allius' depiction is 'plus ou moins conventionnelle') with the key allusion at *Aen.* 11. 678: *equo venator Iapyge fertur*. Spaltenstein calls the detail of the Samnite tusks "pure decoration"; I could hardly disagree more. The Samnites were, like the Capuans and Apulians, participants in the revolt against Roman rule after Cannae and are thus the perfect choice for Allius' armor.<sup>343</sup>

It seems clear that Silius wants to associate Allius not just with Southern Italy but especially and specifically with the battle of Cannae. Southern Italy, and Argyripa/Arpi in particular, remains an important area as well because of the widespread revolt of the towns in the area after Cannae, most famously Capua, but Arpi was involved as well.<sup>344</sup> Allius, as a Roman soldier killed by Mago and Maharbal, represents, especially with his connection to Cannae, the loss of southern Italy to the Carthaginians after that battle. Allius is more than just "un nom fréquent." His detailed necrologue places in the chaos of Trebia a symbolic representation of the

<sup>341</sup> See 1.5.2 and esp. 1.5.3 for more on Scipio's horse, Garganus, and Cannae.

<sup>342</sup> See Bernstein 2017 *intro.* and *ad* 2. 148 – 91.

<sup>343</sup> *Pun.* 11. 7 – 8: *saevior ante alios iras servasse repostas / atque odium renovare ferox in tempore Samnis.*

<sup>344</sup> At the beginning of Book 11, when Silius lists the towns and peoples who revolt, he includes *fallax Apulus*, naming, perhaps, Allius' people. The exact detail of Arpi's participation in this revolt is given in Polybius 3.118.3: Ἀργυριππανοὶ δὲ καὶ Καπυανῶν τινες ἐκάλουν τὸν Ἀννίβαν.

fate of Rome's southern Italian allies after Cannae. The battles of the first half of the poem are thoroughly intertwined with the events of the second half, giving brief glimpses of the *Punica* in microcosm. Furthermore, Allius' very Lucanian death, to which I now turn, aligns nicely with the 'enemy within' theme that pervades not only the first half of the *Punica* but also especially the narrative at Capua in book 11.

I have already discussed the significance of the death of Catus in Lucan and Silius at 1.2.5, but it will be useful to reread the Lucan passage in the context of Allius' rather specific death at *Pun.* 4. 565 – 9 (quoted at the start of the section).

cuius dum pugnat ab alta  
 puppe Catus Graiumque audax aplustre retentat,  
 terga simul pariter missis et pectora telis  
 transigitur: medio concurrit corpore ferrum,  
 et stetit incertus, flueret quo vulnere, sanguis,  
 donec utrasque simul largus cruor expulit hastas      590  
 divisitque animam sparsitque in vulnera letum.  
 (BC 3. 585 – 591)

[Catus, while fighting on the raised deck and boldly grasping the stern-ornament of a foe, was pierced in the back and breast at the same moment by weapons launched together; the weapons met in his body, and the blood stayed, uncertain through which wound to flow; at last the torrent from his veins drove out both javelins at once, parting his life in two and distributing his death between the wounds.]

The contextual parallels here are quite clear, and there are several verbal parallels that cement the two passages' connection: the spears meet in the middle (*medio corpore* and *medio corde* share a phonetic similarity as well) and both deaths are described as *incertus* (*stetit incertus* and *incertumque fuit*). The self-destructive tone of Catus' death is an important aspect of Lucan's poetics of civil war, and Silius makes use of this both for his Catus at Ticinus, who ran futilely into Bogus' spear, and for Allius at Trebia. In some ways, Allius is an even more potent symbol of civil war since his death represents the revolt of the Italian allies in book 11 – a real and true

civil war that splits apart Italy. Just as with Catus at Ticinus, this allusion to Catus in Lucan also looks ahead to the naval battle at Syracuse that occurs in *Punica* 14; this time the anticipation of watery battle will be more immediately fulfilled with Scipio's *mache parapotamios* just around the corner. Finally, the fact that Allius' death is characterized as *incertus* may detract from the glory of his death; neither Mago nor Maharbal can claim full credit for this victory. As we saw in Silius' depiction of the battle of Trebia, Carthaginian success is almost always undercut in some way; the death of Allius is no different.

With Allius' death we leave behind the first of the two major sections of the battle of Trebia; the land battle now gives way to the river battle. This first section was marked by its close engagement with the same themes seen at Ticinus: *Aeneid* 9 and 12 continued to be used by Silius to reflect on the Romans' mistakes and the confusion of identity between Turnus, Aeneas, Gracchus, and Hannibal; Hannibal reveals his ignorance in his opening speech's ironic invocation of Dido, Creusa, and Anchises; Silius makes clear the cyclical, repetitive nature of the two battles. As we advance towards the second half of the battle, the tone begins to intensify just as the waters of the Trebia begin to rise; Silius moves to an altogether higher register, invoking Homer and providing an epic theomachy that rivals and even seeks surpasses his Iliadic archetype. Then, just as the narrative threatens to burst at its seams, the elemental chaos at the Trebia is quickly and violently corrected by divine intervention.

## Chapter 4:

# Down in the Flood: The Battle of Trebia, Part II

(*Pun.* 4. 570 – 721)

*“Sili edendi consilium cepi non admiratione quidem  
poetae mediocris instinctus ...”*

*“I decided to edit Silius certainly not out of  
admiration for the mediocre poet...”*

Joseph Delz, 1987.<sup>345</sup>

### 4.1.1: Phase Two: The River Battle (*Pun.* 4. 570 – 621)

With the death of Allius and the symbolic resistance to the unstoppable Punic onslaught shattered, Silius transitions into the second half of the battle. As with Ticinus, Silius has given the battle of Trebia two neat halves and, while the first half gave roughly equal space to both sides (Hannibal’s speech, a dual *aristeia*, and the necrologue for Allius), this second half is all Roman. The general progression of this second half is from group, to individual, to divine, with the first major section describing the chaotic group death of anonymous Romans in the Trebia river, followed by the sudden return of the wounded Scipio Maior, who challenges the river itself

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<sup>345</sup> The opening line of the preface to Delz’s 1987 Teubner, the most recent critical edition of the *Punica*.

to battle, and, finally, even that heroic mortal fades into the background as Vulcan intervenes to scorch the river god into submission.

The almost complete absence of Hannibal and the Carthaginians mirrors the opening of Ticinus, when Silius described that there was no room on the battlefield for the Carthaginians (*Pun.* 4. 189 – 90: *nec locus est Tyriis belli pugnaeve, sed omnem / Celticus implevit campum furor*). This follows the cyclical composition that we discussed in the transition from Ticinus to Trebia at the beginning of chapter three; now, at the end of the battle narrative of *Punica* 4, as at the beginning, the Carthaginians are pushed to the background. Here, however, there are no Celts to fight in the Carthaginians' place; the Romans will struggle alone against the power of nature.

The following chapter deals with only one large part of Niemann's structural breakdown of the battle of Trebia (described at 3.1.2 above), and so requires some further categorization. I have broken 'phase two' (the river battle) down into several subsections. The first examines the descriptions of the Roman soldiers struggling in the river (4.2). This general drowning scene (*Pun.* 4. 573 – 597) emphasizes the manifold suffering and desperation of the troops, supplying the title of this dissertation: *mille simul leti facies*. Also included in this group scene is a look at the Elephantomachy (*Pun.* 4. 598 – 621) between a certain Fibrenus and a Carthaginian elephant. This small but ultimately futile Roman victory alludes to, or is perhaps an influence on, Hippomedon's analogous river battle and death in *Thebaid* 9. The death of the elephant ushers in the beginning of Scipio's river battle, which occupies the second subsection of phase two (4.3). Scipio's river battle is compared to that of Achilles in *Iliad* 21 and of Hippomedon in *Thebaid* 9 and Silius' characteristic blending of multiple sources creates an ambiguous hero. A third subsection discusses the intervention of Venus and Vulcan, just as the river god seems poised to overwhelm Scipio and the Second Punic War threatens to explode into



overthrew them. One after another they struggled up the slippery sides, each trying to outstrip the rest along the pathless bank, and battling with the crumbling turf; but they slipped and fell, buried under the rubbish that fell with them. One of them, a speedy swimmer, struggled for a safe handhold and forced his way upward, to grasp the turf at the top; but, just as he emerged from the water, a spear was hurled and pinned him to the bank to which he was clinging. Another, having no weapon left, clasped a foe in his arms and held him fast as he tried to swim, till they were drowned together. Death showed itself in a thousand shapes.]

With *tum Trebia*, Silius begins one of the most vivid scenes in the epic battle tradition, as the Romans climb over each other in desperation and die in anonymous, claustrophobic chaos. *Nova proelia* in 573 signals the change from the typical epic depiction of melee combat to a ‘new,’ or perhaps ‘strange’ kind of battle. The presence of Juno (*precibus Iunonis*) is the first appearance of a divinity in this battle, hinting towards the theomachic combat at its climax.<sup>346</sup> At this point, the Carthaginians cease to be the major antagonists for the Romans and nature itself rises up against them; their feet stick in the mud as they struggle and the men fall upon each other in drowning.<sup>347</sup> The hindrance caused by the sheer number of bodies reminds us of the already Lucanian mass of corpses at *Pun.* 4. 550 – 553. Lines 581 – 84 are particularly vivid, and the elisions in line 581 (*iamque alius super atque alius*) give a visual and aural depiction of the piling up of Roman bodies. This first section is marked by the mass slaughter and the anonymity of the victims; no names are given, the Romans are instead described only as *corpora* and named only with *alius*, *ille*, or *hic*. The distinction between friend and enemy begins to break down, as Romans and Carthaginians drown together as a group (*permixta morte*).

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<sup>346</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 207 remarks that “We never, in fact, see Juno make this request, and so we have only a minimal sense of the river’s motivation for the attack.” Feeney comments: “Here she flits in for a moment in the genitive, non-existent as a character” (1991: 309).

<sup>347</sup> Santini 1991: 82 comments on the traditional topos of man vs. nature that is present here and in the elephant scene. Scipio’s later threat to engineer the Trebia out of existence gives a modern twist to this theme.

#### 4.2.2: Variations on a Theme: Livy, Lucan, Statius, and Silius

Silius caps this scene with a concise half-line that momentarily recalls the *aporia* that began the battle: *mille simul leti facies*. Similar phrasing can be found in scenes from Lucan and Statius which begin to reveal the complexity of this scene, twice in Lucan and once in Statius, both in very similar contexts.<sup>348</sup> At *Bellum Civile* 3. 633 – 34, during the naval battle of Massilia, Lucan describes the variety of fates Roman and Massilian soldiers met: *multaque ponto / praebuit ille dies varii miracula fati* (“And on that day many amazing sights of varied death were presented to the sea.”) Not long afterwards, at *BC* 3. 689 – 90, Lucan rephrases this same idea, this time coming even closer to Silius’ *mille modos inter leti mors una timori est / qua coepere mori* (“Among a thousand ways of death the only one men fear is the way they have begun to die.”) *Mille modos inter leti* is a close verbal parallel, but the contextual parallels – the watery environment, the close presence of Catus, the civil war undertones – create an even stronger connection. Furthermore, Lucan’s depiction of the naval battle of Massilia as a godless *mache parapotamios* makes Massilia an even stronger influence for Silius.<sup>349</sup> By linking the disaster at the Trebia once more with Lucan’s Massilia, Silius continues his goal of framing these opening battles in a civil war context, a context which allusions to the *Thebaid* can only strengthen.

Statius presents the same idea during his description of Hippomedon’s battle at the river in *Thebaid* 9 – another close contextual parallel. At *Theb.* 9. 280, he writes *mille modis leti miseros mors una fatigat* (“One death harasses the wretches in a thousand different guises.”) The

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<sup>348</sup> Vergil’s sack of Troy may also be present, with *plurima mortis imago* at *Aen.* 2. 369.

<sup>349</sup> “Moreover, the scene [the battle of Massilia in *BC* 3] is firmly rooted in the epic tradition of battle scenes. For instance, it may be considered as a modernized counterpart of the *mache parapotamios*...” (Hunink 1992: 200).

closeness of Silius' and Statius' river scenes to Lucan's Massilia has not gone unnoticed, although as usual there is always at least some debate about primacy.<sup>350</sup> An inclination for compression can be seen as we compare these verses from Lucan, to Statius, to Silius. Lucan's love of hyperbole makes use of two nearby variations of the same thought, neither of which can be contained in a single verse; Statius condenses Lucan's thoughts into a single, alliterative *sententia*; finally, Silius trumps both his contemporary and his Neronian predecessor by condensing the idea further into a half line – a good example of Silius' underappreciated brevity.<sup>351</sup> The relationship between Silius and Statius at this point is immensely complex, and will be further examined below at 3.4.5 and 3.4.6.

Three major intertexts can be identified: the watery destruction and anonymity of the men dying recall the slaughter at the battle of Massilia in *BC* 3; the river combat and the build up to a *mache parapotamios* bring to mind Hippomedon's battle with the river Ismenus in *Thebaid* 9, a passage which will be in constant contact with the Silian scene as we continue; finally, the riverine context, the totality of the defeat and the presence of an invader on Italian soil with aims at Rome herself conjure up images of another (in)famous river battle already evoked in connection with Ticinus, namely Allia, as Silius once again compresses history, myth, and epic into this intense battle scene.<sup>352</sup> The deaths of the Romans in the river Allia are described by Livy at 5.38.8:

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<sup>350</sup> Dewar 1991 *ad loc.* notes Statius allusion to Lucan: "Rather less striking," he adds, "is Silius' imitation of the same line." He also comments (at *xxxi*), citing Wistrand 1956, that "Statius probably included a river-battle in his poem in order to compete with Silius Italicus ... In particular the catalogue of horrifying deaths in the river at 9.266 – 83 seems designed to surpass the terrors of *Punica* 4. 585 – 97."

<sup>351</sup> To speculate a bit, the progressive compression of this thought from Lucan, to Statius, to Silius perhaps indicates that Silius wrote this scene after Statius had completed *Thebaid* 9. Dewar 1991 *ad Theb.* 9. 280 is less impressed by Silius' version: "Rather less striking is Silius' imitation of the same line."

<sup>352</sup> Santini 1991: 73 also compares the slaughter at Trasimene in *Pun.* 5 to the battle of the river Allia.

Circa ripam Tiberis, quo armis abiectis totum sinistrum cornu defugit,  
 magna strages facta est, multosque imperitos nandi aut invalidos, graves  
 lorice aliisque tegminibus hausere gurgites.

[On the bank of the Tiber, where the whole left wing had fled, after  
 throwing away their arms, there was a great slaughter, and many who  
 could not swim, or lacked the strength, weighed down by their corslets and  
 other armor, sank beneath the water.]

There is no smoking gun here – no *mille ... leti* parallel – but overall the scene aligns nicely with the descriptions in Lucan, Statius, and Silius, albeit toned down in comparison to those rather inflated epic moments. As at Trebia, Livy's Romans flee into the river (*defugit*) and experience a mass slaughter (*magna strages*), with many struggling to swim in their armor and drowning in the river. Although Livy describes soldiers fleeing and drowning in water other times (most notably at Trasimene, a description Silius takes full advantage of)<sup>353</sup>, there is reason to think the poet did have Allia in mind. We have seen Allia and the sack of Rome that historically followed employed several times in *Punica* 4, first at Ticinus in the Gallic chieftain Crixus' claim of descent from Brennus, then in the symbolic decapitation of Quirinius in that same battle, and now in the watery chaos of Trebia. Furthermore, the connection to Allia reframes this defeat in the context of that disastrous *dies ater*; the river Trebia in northern Italy now suddenly becomes the Tiber not far from Rome, and possibility of another sack of the City becomes frighteningly immediate.<sup>354</sup>

With verbal and contextual parallels, Silius at the opening of the river battle alerts his readers to the presence both of the epic worlds of Lucan and Statius and the foundational history of Livy. Silius' and Statius' shared source, Lucan's godless theomachy, is the foundation of the

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<sup>353</sup> cf. Livy 22.6.5ff. and *Pun.* 5. 615 – 631.

<sup>354</sup> A body-filled Tiber was also recently used as an allusion by Silius in his use of Lucan's Sullan digression (*BC* 2. 201 – 11; see 3.5.4 above).

upcoming scenes, as Silius and his Flavian contemporary engage in a competition to emulate Achilles' river battle at in *Iliad* 21, but Livy allows Silius to engage with a tradition of river battles and city sacking that exists alongside the epic depictions. In so doing, Silius includes a greatest hits of sorts of river battles: the river battles of the Homeric and mythological tradition, in *Iliad* 21 and *Thebaid* 9, the clogged civil war waterways of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, and the historiographical tradition of Livy and the battle of Allia. Before Silius' *mache parapotamios* can officially begin, however, Silius transitions, as he so often does, by means of a vivid death scene.

#### 4.2.3: *Accumulat clades*: Elephantomachy (*Pun.* 4. 598 – 621)

After the description of group deaths in the river, including the brief deaths of two named characters, Ligus and Hirpinus, Silius focus his attention on a certain Fibrenus, whose battle with a Carthaginian elephant occupies the 24 lines before Scipio Maior makes his dramatic entrance.

Accumulat clades subito conspecta per undas  
vis elephantorum turrato concita dorso.  
namque vadis rapitur praeceps ceu proruta cautes 600  
avulsi montis Trebiamque insueta timentem  
prae se pectore agit spumantique incubat alveo.  
explorant adversa viros, perque aspera duro  
nititur ad laudem virtus interrta clivo.  
namque inhonoratam Fibrenus perdere mortem 605  
et famae nudam impatiens ‘spectabimur’ inquit  
‘nec, Fortuna, meum condes sub gurgite letum.  
experiar, sitne in terris, domitare quod ensis  
non queat Ausonius Tyrrenave permeet hasta.’  
tum iacit adsurgens dextroque in lumine sistit 610  
spicula saeva ferae telumque in vulnere linquit.  
stridore horrisono penetrantem cuspidis ictum  
belua prosequitur laceramque crurore profuso  
attollit frontem ac lapso dat terga magistro.  
tum vero invadunt iaculis crebraque sagitta 615  
ausi iam sperare necem, immensosque per armos  
et laterum extensus venit atra cuspide vulnus.

stat multa in tergo et nigranti lancea dorso,  
 ac silvam ingentem concusso corpore vibrat,  
 donec consumptis longo certamine telis 620  
 concidit et clausit magna vada pressa ruina.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 598 – 621)

[The crowning disaster came suddenly in sight, when a troop of elephants, with towers upon their backs, were driven into the water. For they rushed headlong through the water, like a cliff falling down from a shattered mountain. They drove the Trebia, dreading dangers unknown till now, before them with their forequarters, and lay down above the foaming channel. Manhood is tested by trial, and valor climbs unterrified the rocky path and difficult ascent that leads to glory. So Fibrenus disdained to die to no purpose, unhonored and unsung. “The eyes of men shall behold me,” he cried, “and Fortune shall not hide my death beneath the flood. I shall find out whether there is aught on earth which an Ausonian sword cannot master or a Tyrrhenian spear cannot pierce.” Rising to his full height he threw his cruel shaft and planted it in the right eye of one great beast; and the weapon remained in the wound. When the point of the spear went in, the monster met it with a hideous trumpeting; then it raised its wounded and bleeding head, threw its rider, and turned in flight. But now the Romans, daring at last to hope that they might kill it, assailed it with darts and showers of arrows. Soon the vast expanse of its shoulders and sides were covered with wounds from the cruel steel; many a lance stuck in its dusky back and rump; and, when it shook itself, the huge forest of missiles waved. At last, when the long contest had used up all their weapons, it fell and the huge carcass blocked the stream beneath it.]

This encounter reverses some of Silius’ usual habits; as one of many transitional passages, the story of Fibrenus and the elephant is not in fact a true necrologue; though it begins with *accumulat clades* and introduces a named Roman soldier, it does not end with Fibrenus’ death. Instead, it ends with the small victory of the anonymous Roman crowd over a single monstrous opponent. The symbolic importance of this fleeting victory cannot go unnoticed.

*Accumulat clades* is also another signal of the escalating intensity of this battle as it nears its end.<sup>355</sup> The elephants crash into the river like a cliff falling from a mountain (*ceu proruta*

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<sup>355</sup> Livy includes elephants in his depiction of Trebia, though at the opening rather than the end of the battle (Livy 21.55.7: *ad hoc elephantum* ...), Silius may have rearranged events for dramatic purposes.

*cautes / avulsi montis*), hearkening back to the death of Crixus at *Pun.* 4. 293ff., who likewise fell in ruin upon the ground like a mountain into the sea (*Pun.* 4. 298 – 99: *divisaque caerula pulsu / illisum accipiunt irata sub aequora montem*). Fibrenus joins the fight, not backing down from the elephants' terrifying charge, and, like Scipio in the following scene, stands as one man against the full might of nature. Theomachic tendencies begin to creep into his description: his *virtus* is *interrita*, he refuses to experience an *inhonoratam mortem*, and is *impatiens famae*. The piling up of *in-* prefixed words (*insueta* in line 601 may be added to this list) creates the sense of impossibility and unnaturalness that is fundamental to any theomachy and Fibrenus' defiant speech sets this minor hero up for a death that, surprisingly, never occurs.<sup>356</sup> His spear strikes the elephant in its right eye (another eye wound to accompany Cupencus' at *Pun.* 4. 541) and creates a reversal in fortune: the elephant now flees (*dat terga*) and a shower of arrows from the Roman collective brings the beast down. The elephant falls into the stream in a *magna ruina*, another echo of Crixus' death (*Pun.* 4. 293: *procumbit lata porrectus in arva ruina*).

#### 4.2.4: The Death of Hippomedon (*Theb.* 9. 522 – 39)

The comparison to Crixus brings to mind that monstrous adversary defeated by Scipio at Ticinus, but Crixus is not the only theomachic warrior lurking behind this scene. Hippomedon, another warrior brought down in the midst of a river battle brings us to Statius' *Thebaid* 9 and the river battle therein, an extended intertext which dominates the final part of Trebia narrative.

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<sup>356</sup> Tipping comments on the metapoetry of Fibrenus' speech: "Silius introduces to the narrative Fibrenus, who, we learn, cannot endure a death without honor and renown and upon whom Silius bestows just the fame that he desires" (Tipping 2010: 31).

Silius, with his love of inversion, begins his *mache parapotamios* with an allusion to Hippomedon's death at the end of Statius'.<sup>357</sup>

As Hippomedon finally falters and is saved from death in the river Ismenus at Juno's request, he nonetheless is killed by a shower of arrows as he collapses on the shoreline.

quid ripas tenuisse iuvat? premit undique nimbo  
telorum Phoenissa cohors, nec tegmina membris  
ulla, omnisque patet leto; tunc vulnera manant ...  
(*Theb.* 9. 526 – 28)

[What use to gain the bank? The Phoenician host presses him from all sides with a shower of weapons. Nothing protects his limbs, he is all open to death. Then his wounds flow...]

Like the Carthaginian elephant, Hippomedon is only finally defeated by a swarm of missiles as he flees the river. The allusion is purely thematic, nothing verbal allows us to connect Hippomedon's death with the elephant, but parallels in the simile following his death do much to strengthen this argument.

procumbit, Getico qualis procumbit in Haemo  
seu Boreae furiis putri seu robore quercus  
caelo mixta comas, ingentemque aëra laxat:  
illam nutantem nemus et mons ipse tremescit  
qua tellure cadat, quas obruat ordine silvas.  
(*Theb.* 9. 532 – 36)

[He falls forward, as an oak falls on Getic Haemus by the fury of Boreas or its own rotting wood, an oak that mingled its foliage with the sky, and leaves a vast void of air; the forest and the mountain itself tremble as it nods – on what earth will it fall, what woods will it overwhelm in sequence?]

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<sup>357</sup> As always, the chronology of Statius' and Silius' work is impossible to certify; I follow Chaudhuri's assumption that Statius' river battle, coming near the end of his epic, and Silius', coming near the beginning, may have been written around the same time.

The simile has clear implications for Hippomedon's just failed theomachy (*caelo mixta comas*), but most importantly for our purposes it helps make sense of Silius' use of *silvam ingentem* to describe the forest of missiles pinned to the elephant's back at *Pun.* 4. 619. Statius and Silius use careful selection when alluding to the other's poetry: Statius uses *nemus*, rather than *silva* in Silius, the mountain trembles (*tremescit*) whereas the elephant quivers (*vibrat*), and *ingentem* is used instead to describe the *aëra* that precedes the fall rather than the forest itself. Spaltenstein lists examples of this kind of metaphor in the *Aeneid*, Lucan, and Statius (most importantly, Statius uses *nemus* at *Theb.* 8.705 to this same effect) but does not make the connection here.

As always, the issue of primacy makes it impossible to say with certainty which author wrote their scene first; either Statius, reacting to *silvam ingentem* in the *Punica*, expanded upon Silius' metaphor in his description of Hippomedon's death, or Silius, having read Statius' simile in *Thebaid* 9, included it as a subtle nod to his contemporary's poem. Dewar, citing Wistrand's 1956 argument, comments that "Statius probably included a river-battle in his poem in order to compete with Silius Italicus, who, using the same Homeric model, matched Scipio in conflict with the Trebia".<sup>358</sup> As I have stated before, I prefer the middle ground in this debate, with the assumption that Silius and Statius both read and experienced early drafts, editions, and recitations of the other's poem as they were in progress. In any case, the comparison of Hippomedon's death to a tree falling in the forest has several strong thematic and verbal parallels which cement the connection between Silius' elephant and Statius' Hippomedon.

This last point brings us back to Silius' use of nomenclature. As we have seen so many times before, Silius selects the names of his minor heroes with great intention and virtually

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<sup>358</sup> (Dewar 1991: xxxi). Cf. also Chaudhuri 2014: 211, who writes that "...one may suspect, if Statius and Silius composed their epics in book order, that here, relatively late in the *Thebaid*, Statius was also responding to the equivalent scene from relatively early in the *Punica*."

always has a reason for his choice. Fibrenus is no different. As Spaltenstein comments, the Fibrenus is a river in Italy, near Arpinum, as Silius mentions in his catalogue of troops in the lead up to Cannae in Book 8 (*Pun.* 8. 399 – 401: *qui Fibreno miscentem flumina Lirim / sulphureum...accolit, Arpinas*). Spaltenstein comments that Silius is the only one to derive a name from this river and concludes that Silius would have been more explicit if he wanted to underline the fluvial origins of Fibrenus.<sup>359</sup> Contrary to Spaltenstein's conclusion, it seems to me that there is more than enough evidence for the subtle presence of Fibrenus' riverine origins, if Statius' river battle is used as an analogue.

I have already described how the elephant's death matches that of Hippomedon in the *Thebaid*, who was defeated by the river but killed by a hail of arrows on the riverbank. The elephant's death is precisely the same: it is driven off but not killed (*Pun.* 4. 614: *lapso dat terga magistro*) by a riverine figure (Fibrenus) and then finished off by a shower of missiles (*Pun.* 4. 614: *invadunt iaculis crebraque sagitta*). Additionally, Fibrenus performs the traditional act of the provoked river god, rising (*Pun.* 4. 610: *adsurgens*) from the waters as he attacks the elephant, just like the Trebia (*Pun.* 4. 649: *consurgens*) and Ismenus (*Theb.* 9. 413: *surgit*). In this way, Fibrenus' battle with the elephant becomes a *mache parapotamios* in miniature, with Hippomedon's death in *Thebaid* 9 as a close analogue. Fibrenus, acting like a river god and with a river's name, surges out of the water to attack and drive the elephant back; the elephant, like Hippomedon, flees the river and is killed instead by a flurry of missiles; finally, the pincushion effect of the arrows is both times compared to a forest. By constructing the elephant episode in this way, Silius both cleverly alludes to his contemporary's poem and, since Statius' version ends

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<sup>359</sup> Spaltenstein *ad loc.*: "Comme cela se produit souvent, on ne verra pas un trait ingénieux dans cette noyade de Fibrenus; d'ailleurs, Sil. est en général plus explicite et aurait souligné l'origine fluviale, si l'on peut dire, de ce nom s'il avait voulu en tirer un trait ingénieux."

with the death of the theomach and omits the Homeric scorching of the river, gives an alternate version of the *mache parapotamios* he himself is about to recreate with Scipio.

#### 4.3.1: *Ecce per adversum*: Scipio versus the River (*Pun.* 4. 622 – 666)

With the elephant having been vanquished and the audience fully primed for the *mache parapotamios*, Silius finally reintroduces Scipio's father. After a brief *aristeia* (*Pun.* 4. 622 – 37), the god of the Trebia rises up against him in theomachic combat that escalates until Vulcan's fiery intervention puts an end to the battle. This final scene, at the climax of Book 4, the end of the first set of battles, with its debt to *Iliad* 21 and fascinating engagement with *Thebaid* 9, has already attracted a good deal of scholarship. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the scene of Scipio's theomachy is the most well-examined part of Book 4, exceeding even the rescue scene at the end of Ticinus. Because this final scene is especially complex it seems deserving of its own new section, despite it technically falling under what Niemann calls phase two of the battle.<sup>360</sup>

With that in mind, I have divided my examination of Scipio's theomachy in *Punica* 4 into three parts: Scipio's brief *aristeia* as he reenters the battle (*Pun.* 4. 622 – 37), which includes his encounter with the ominously named Thapsus, a large middle section which includes Scipio's threats against the river and the Trebia's response (*Pun.* 4. 638 – 666), and Vulcan's fiery intervention (*Pun.* 4. 667 – 699). In each part I have three major goals. The first is to briefly summarize each section, quoting the Latin where necessary but avoiding overly long excerpts, and to supply the relevant Homeric context as given (mainly) by Juhnke and Spaltenstein. The

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<sup>360</sup> Niemann 1975: 89 – 105; see also 3.1.2 above.

second is to examine the scholarship that exists today, since, unlike previous sections of *Punica* 4, there is a comparatively large body of work on Scipio's theomachy. In general, the reception of this scene has been more or less negative, with several authors concluding that Silius' version of the *mache parapotamios* is purely imitative and far inferior to Statius'. This mentality is slowly fading away these days, and in that spirit the third and final goal is to rehabilitate what is the only surviving example of theomachy in historical epic. As has been my goal throughout this dissertation, I aim to offer a sympathetic and patient reading of this scene, examining Silius' use of inversion, anticipation, meaningful nomenclature, and retroactive intertextuality. The result is, I argue, an impressive finale that is both highly traditional and subtly innovative; Silius cements his wonderful ability to engage with a variety of traditional and contemporary sources, while simultaneously developing his own unique voice.

#### 4.3.2: Meaningful Deaths in Scipio's Brief *aristeai* (*Pun.* 4. 622 – 37)

As Scipio leaps once more upon the scene (*Pun.* 4. 622: *ecce per adversum*), he makes quick work of four victims – a bit of a warm up, so to speak, before the main event. *Ecce* calls the reader's attention to the appearance of a new hero, Scipio, and recalls Gracchus' entrance back in line 493 (*ecce aderat*). In comparison, Scipio will be a much more effective warrior – though he will be defeated nonetheless. *Per adversum* is an interesting phrase; Duff translates it as “on the opposite bank,” but Spaltenstein *ad loc.* disagrees, arguing instead that it describes Scipio pushing against the direction of the Roman retreat and, on another level, the flow of the

river – a much more appealing interpretation.<sup>361</sup> On a more abstract level, this opening phrase is a fulfillment of the moral *sententia* given at *Pun.* 4. 603 – 4 (*explorant adversa viros, perque aspera duro / nititur ad laudem virtus interrita clivo*); Scipio fights through adversity, his wound (*Pun.* 4. 622 – 23: *tardata morantur / vulnere membra*), the men in his way, the river, and, soon, nature itself.

Four men fall in this swift and impressive scene, each an intriguing and meaningful encounter. Mazaeus and Gestar are dispatched first and in the same line, with javelin and sword respectively (*Pun.* 4. 627: *Mazaeus iaculo, Gestar prosternitur ense*). Mazaeus, Spaltenstein tells us, is the name of a Persian officer at 4.9.7 of Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Historiae Alexandri Magni* and perhaps only a coincidence or the result of Silius' search for an exotic name. However, a look at the passage cited reveals that Curtius Rufus' Mazaeus was dispatched to prevent Alexander's troops from *crossing a river* – a remarkable parallel that both denigrates the Carthaginians as decadent Persians (in accordance with traditional Roman prejudice) and raises Scipio to the level of Alexander.<sup>362</sup> Scipio's son will meet the shade of Alexander in the underworld in *Punica* 13, and many of these traits are transferred from father to son.<sup>363</sup> Inverting the situation in Curtius Rufus, Silius has his Mazaeus become the transgressive river crosser and Scipio, the Alexander figure, attempt to stop him.

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<sup>361</sup> “Sil. ne dit pas que Scipion vient de l'autre rive; Scipion était avec les troupes romaines, chez Sil. tout au moins, et se trouve donc du même cote du fleuve. ‘Per adversum’ marque qu’il avance contre les troupes en déroute, ou plutôt contre le cours du fleuve.”

<sup>362</sup> Curt. 4.9.7: *Tigri deinde superato, cum audisset haud procul abesse hostem, Satropaten, equitem praefectum, cum mille delectis praemisit, Mazaeo praetori sex milia data, quibus hostem transit amnis arceret* (“Then, after crossing the Tigris, when he heard that the enemy was not far off, he sent ahead Satropates, commander of the cavalry, with 1000 elite horsemen. To Mazaeus, satrap of Babylon, 6000 were given, with which to keep the enemy from crossing the river.” Trans. Rolfe.)

<sup>363</sup> For comparisons between Alexander and Scipio (Africanus), see Cresci-Marrone 1983-1984, Rocca-Serra 1990, Ripoll 1998b, and Marks 2005: 142 – 147. For more on Alexander's portrayal in Curtius Rufus and the Flavian era, see Barzano 1984.

The name Gestar appears two other times in the *Punica* and, according to Spaltenstein, nowhere else. His first appearance is at *Pun.* 2. 327ff., as the *impatiens* and *asper* supporter of Hannibal in the Carthaginian ruling council. His final appearance is at *Pun.* 12. 262ff, as the brave soldier who throws his body in front of a javelin to protect Hannibal from Marcellus. The Latin of the latter is quite revealing:

et ardens [Marcellus]  
 terrificis saevam fundit stridoribus hastam.                    260  
 nec forsani voti vanus foret, obvia ni vis  
 Gestaris opposita tenuisset corpore telum.  
 qui dum vicinis ductorem protegit armis,  
 transabiit non hunc sitiens gravis hasta cruorum  
 ingentesque minas mutata morte peregit.                    265  
 (*Pun.* 12. 259 – 265)

[Eagerly [Marcellus] hurled his deadly spear, and it sped with a dreadful whizzing noise. And perhaps he would have gained his end, had not brave Gestar met the weapon and stopped it by throwing his body in the way. He stood beside his general and sheltered him; and the heavy spear, which thirsted for another's blood, pierced him through and wreaked its mighty wrath upon the wrong victim.]

The background here is the defense of Nola, the site of the Romans' first meaningful victory over the Carthaginians, and the parallels to the first death at Ticinus are unmissable.<sup>364</sup> Like Catus, Gestar runs in front (cf. *Pun.* 4. 139: *obvia ... Catus ora tulisset*) of a spear destined for another target (cf. *Pun.* 4. 137: *ictum perdidit spatio*). With the poetics of contingency Silius can hint at another possible outcome: that with this spear cast the war could have ended. This fits well with Marcellus' depiction as the hero that *could have been*, were it not for his untimely death; Hannibal *could have* died at Marcellus' hands at Nola, just as Marcellus *could have* been

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<sup>364</sup> Silius makes the implications of this victory very clear just a few lines later: *ille dies primus docuit, quod credere sisti / posse ducem Libyae* (*Pun.* 12. 273 – 74).

the savior of Rome.<sup>365</sup> At Ticinus, Catus begins the battle with a tragic and self-inflicted death, while at Nola the act is repeated this time by a Carthaginian, signaling the change of identity of the Carthaginians and Romans. It is the Carthaginians who now, in the second half of the epic, experience this kind of tragic and self-inflicted death.<sup>366</sup>

It is now clear that Silius uses the name Gestar as a stand in for Hannibal. In *Punica 2*, Gestar is Hannibal's representative at Carthage when he responds to Hanno's strongly anti-Barcid stance. His demeanor even mirrors Hannibal's well-known impetuosity: he is described as *impatiens* and *asper*, he "had long been nursing bitter wrath" (*coquebat / iam dudum immites iras*) and had tried twice to interrupt Hanno's speech with a disturbance. Gestar in *Punica 12* is even more literally a Hannibalic surrogate, sacrificially offering his body in the Carthaginian general's place and dying in his stead. At Trebia, Gestar's quick death at Scipio Maior's hands gives the audience a brief, hypothetical look at Hannibal's death. Like Marcellus, Scipio Maior is a stand in for Scipio Africanus and his encounter with Hannibal/Gestar provides a glimpse – as we also saw with Crixus – of the duel between Hannibal and Africanus that never occurs and anticipates the encounter between the two that ends the epic at Zama in Book 17.

The third death, that of one Thelgon, contains a Statian resonance once again situated in the river battle of *Thebaid 9*. Snatching up a javelin from the river as he moves (*Pun. 4. 629: huic torquet rapido correptum e gurgite pilum*), Scipio strikes and kills the Cyrenian warrior Thelgon. With tragic coloring, Silius describes the body's journey along the Trebia and the Po to the sea,

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<sup>365</sup> Marcellus evokes the same dualism seen in many of the *Punica*'s major characters. Stocks 2014: 150ff. argues that in *Punica 14* Marcellus stands in for *both* Scipio and Hannibal and, in so doing, "redefines the *Punica*'s *Romanitas* by means of a Hannibalic course of action."

<sup>366</sup> As Marks describes in his discussion of Lucanian allusions in the *Punica*: "in Books 1 – 10, where the Carthaginians mostly have the upper hand, allusions to Lucan regularly identify the Romans and their allies with those who suffer, are defeated, or are kill in civil war, whereas in Books 11 – 17, where the Romans mostly have the upper hand, it is the Carthaginians who are so identified" (Marks 2010: 129).

anticipating the course Scipio threatens to erase through hydroengineering in the following scene.<sup>367</sup> As Spaltenstein observes, the name ‘Thelgon’ does not seem to appear elsewhere, but the situation of his death recalls similar language in a passage of *Thebaid* 9 which will have implications for both Thelgon’s death and Thapsus who follows.

sic premit **adversos** et acerbat **vulnera** dictis:  
ac nunc **ense** furit, nunc **tela** natantia captans  
ingerit

(*Thebaid* 9. 302 – 304)

[Thus he [Hippomedon] presses upon his foes, embittering wounds with words. Now he rages with his sword, now catches floating javelins and hurls them.]

Hippomedon and the river battle of *Thebaid* 9 continue to form an extended intertext for Silius’ *mache parapotamios*, as we have already seen above in 3.5.2 and 3.5.3. Several verbal parallels align this scene with Scipio’s reintroduction in *Punica* 4. 622ff.; *adversos* recalls Silius’ *per adversum* (*premit adversos* is not far aurally from *per adversum*) and *vulnera* in the second half of the line aligns with *vulnere* in *Pun.* 4. 623. The use of *adversus*, along with *arduus*, has connotations of the sublime (cf. also *Pun.* 4. 651: *arduus adversa*, *Theb.* 9. 91: *arduus Hippomedon* and *Theb.* 9. 418 – 19: *stetit arduus alto*).<sup>368</sup> Both Scipio and Hippomedon make effective use of a sword and spear in the same verse (cf. *Pun.* 4. 627: *Mazaeus iaculo, Gestar prosternitur ense* and *Theb.* 9. 303: *ac nunc ense furit, nunc tela natantia captans*), though the order of the weapons is reversed in Statius; both authors describe their potamomachic warrior as snatching up a spear from the flood. The death of Thelgon in Scipio’s *aristeia* furthers Silius’ longstanding goal of aligning his river battle with that of *Thebaid* 9. An additional piece of

<sup>367</sup> cf. *Pun.* 4. 644 – 47: *lacerum per Gallica rivis / dispergam rura atque amnis tibi nomina demam; / quoque aperis te fonte, premam; nec tangere ripas illabique Pado dabitur*. See also 3.5.3 below.

<sup>368</sup> The topic of the sublime in Flavian poetry is well studied. See Schrijvers 2006 (on Silius), Hardie 2013 (on Flavian epic in general), and Leigh 2006 (on Statius).

evidence from Statius' example will both strengthen this link and provide another connection to the following death in Silius' account.

The fourth and final of Scipio's meaningfully named victims is a certain 'Thapsus,' whose name cannot but bring to mind the battle of the same name in 46 BC, with all its civil war associations. The battle, between the forces of Metellus Scipio, a distant relative of our *Punica* pair,<sup>369</sup> and Caesar, resulted in a decisive Caesarian victory and, ultimately, the suicides of Scipio and Cato. Despite the brevity of the allusion, Silius' audience could not have missed the significance of a Scipio achieving victory over a Thapsus. By placing a Thapsus in the midst of Scipio's *aristeia*, Silius' Scipio can symbolically 'win' the battle of Thapsus on the fields of Trebia. This is a retroactive victory, since Silius looks back on Thapsus from the Flavian times, but also a prediction of the battle to come, since the *Punica* is set more than 150 years earlier; it is both the compression of history, with aptly named warriors and civil war battles incarnate, and the poetics of contingency, as the readers are given just a brief glimpse of a Scipio victorious over Thapsus. Silius consistently links his Punic war battles with those of Caesar's civil war, most recently in our discussion of *BC* 4 at 3.5.4 above, and this is not the first time Thapsus has appeared in this way. At *Punica* 3. 261 during the catalogue of Hannibal's troops, Silius directly connects Zama and Thapsus: *et Zama et uberior Rutulo nunc sanguine Thapsus*. As Ripoll notes, there is a link between the two battles as the sites of the beginning and the end of Roman fortunes.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Metellus Scipio was the 5x great-grandson of P. Cornelius Scipio's (Cos. 218 BC, our 'Scipio Maior') brother, Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus (Cos. 222), whose deaths in Spain are both described at *Pun.* 13. 381 – 84).

<sup>370</sup> Ripoll 2000: n. 1: "Silius suggère ainsi un lien entre les deux conflits, qui associe l'Afrique à la notion d'adversité."

An additional detail cements the idea that Silius meant to invoke the civil war battle with ‘Thapsus’ in Scipio’s short *aristeia*. Just a few lines later in the same passage of *Thebaid* 9 which we just discussed above, Hippomedon, like Scipio in *Punica* 4, slays several warriors in quick succession, including a certain ‘Pharsalus.’

te quoque sublimi tranantem flumina curru,  
dum socios, Pharsale, petis, resupinat ademptis  
Dorica cuspis equis; illos violentia saevi  
gurgitis infelixque iugi concordia mergit.  
(*Theb.* 9. 311 – 14)

[You too, Pharsalus, as you cross the river in your lofty chariot to join your fellows, a Dorian spear lays on your back and steals your horses. Then the violence of the cruel flood drowns and the unlucky concord of the yoke.]

Pharsalus, riding high in his chariot (*sublimi* is a clear marker of the poetics of the sublime), is laid low by Hippomedon’s spear. The name Pharsalus, another pivotal civil war battle, stands out prominently and, with the strong contextual analogue of the river battle, links directly to Silius’ Thapsus.<sup>371</sup> There are additional parallels as well: Thapsus’ death scene begins with the words *tu quoque* (*Pun.* 4. 635), providing the strongest possible link between the two scenes. The civil war context of Statius’ Pharsalus is further confirmed by the use of *infelix concordia*, a rather Lucanian paradox.<sup>372</sup>

Each of Scipio’s victims in his short *aristeia* at Trebia have meaningful and symbolic names. Mazaeus recalls the name of a Persian leader charged with defending a river from Alexander, a figure to whom Scipio Africanus is compared and whom he meets in the

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<sup>371</sup> Interestingly, Dewar does not comment on the significance of this name.

<sup>372</sup> Although Lucan does not use this precise phrase anywhere in *Bellum Civile*, there are some close examples in his poem; cf. *BC* 1. 87: *o male concordēs*, *BC* 1. 98: *temporis angusti mansit concordia discors*, *BC*

underworld. Silius inverts the situation in Curtius Rufus, placing his Alexandrian Scipio in defense of the river Trebia. Gestar appears two additional times in the *Punica*, each time as a stand in for Hannibal, and his cameo in *Punica* 4 allows Scipio to, once again, participate in a duel with a Hannibalic surrogate. The details of Thelgon's death lead us, once again, to Hippomedon's river battle in *Thebaid* 9. With Thapsus and Pharsalus, Silius and Statius both include manifestations of the Roman civil war in their river battle scenes. Not only does this further the civil war links that are already present in the *Thebaid* and *Punica*, it also contributes to Silius' compression of history and poetics of contingency. By defeating Thapsus in his *aristeia*, Scipio is given a symbolic victory in the 'civil war' that is the first half of the *Punica* before the Romans' loss at Trebia. It also sets up a clash in the following scene, as Scipio, just victorious over the Caesarian forces symbolized by Thapsus, now becomes his most transgressively Caesarian. Each of these deaths is a showcase of Silian *cura* and creativity, with each contributing to Silius' poetic program, either through compressive history, civil war poetics, retroactive allusions, intertexts with Lucan and Statius, or intratexts with moments in his own poem. As we move into the *mache parapotamios* proper, the density of Silius' style will increase even further as the poet brings together Homer, Vergil, Lucan, Statius and more into an all-encompassing theomachy.

#### 4.3.3: *Adde modum*: The Limits of Individual Roman Power (*Pun.* 4. 638 – 66)

After the flurry of deaths described in his individual combat scene at *Pun.* 4. 622 – 37 the river battle begins in earnest.<sup>373</sup> It is here that we must be on the highest alert for Silius'

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<sup>373</sup> Spaltenstein's comments *ad Pun.* 4. 622 ("Ici commence la potamomachie effective") seem a bit premature.

engagement with Homer, though Lucan and Statius should remain within our sight as well. Issues of identity will be equally important: is Scipio in this scene an Achilles or a Hippomedon, both transgressive heroes in this context (especially the latter)? What about the status of Hannibal, a normally potent transgressor but here completely absent? Scipio, as a major hero of Book 4 and the father of the emergent savior of Rome, holds an ambiguous position in his fight against the Trebia. Like many of the heroes we have encountered so far (Gracchus, Hannibal, Scipio – and the minor heroes from chapter 1 as well), the Roman general exhibits a mix of traits. On the positive side, he is the leader of the Roman forces, a consul, and a ferocious warrior, but, on the other hand, he will be defeated in this battle, has already shown at least one flash of Lucanian self-destruction (and will soon show another), and, in entering the river at Trebia, displays the same dangerously transgressive behavior of Achilles, Hippomedon, and even Hannibal.

Juhnke and Santini debate the ethical stature of Scipio and Achilles in their battles with the river. Juhnke argues that Scipio is not an excessive violator like Achilles and that Silius has crafted a hero who is both *implacabilis* and *pius*.<sup>374</sup> This is not unlike Spaltenstein's comments regarding Gracchus when he argued that Silius wants to correct Sempronius' rather negative depiction in Livy; here, Juhnke argues, Silius seeks to create a 'Roman Achilles,' or perhaps an 'Aenean Achilles,' with all the strength and ferocity of the Homeric hero yet without the dangerous theomachic elements. Like Santini, and as I did before with Spaltenstein and Gracchus/Sempronius, I disagree. Silius embraces the negative undertones of Scipio's likeness to Achilles, Hippomedon, and Hannibal because he *is* a flawed hero – as are all Roman leaders

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<sup>374</sup> “Scipio überschreitet auch in seiner Härte die Masse des Heldentums nicht, er ist kein übergewaltiger Töter wie der Pelide, und seine Taten verletzen nicht die Natur des Schauplatzes: er ist *implacabilis* und doch *pius*” (Juhnke 1972: 17).

(with perhaps the exception of Fabius Cunctator) until the ascension of Africanus at the end of the epic. Santini argues that “the Achilles of the Trebia is at this point Scipio, but the Roman hero’s role might just as easily been taken by Hannibal, no less arrogant than he, as Silius has made clear in the episode of the crossing of the Rhone and of the Alps,” and comments that “a strain of pessimism” can be seen in this scene.<sup>375</sup> With Scipio’s river battle, Silius reminds us the Romans lost these battles for a reason.

With the complexities of the Silian hero in mind, let us turn now to the Latin of the scene.

Intumuit Trebia et stagnis se sustulit imis  
 iamque ferox totum propellit gurgite fontem  
 atque omnes torquet vires. furit unda sonoris  
 verticibus, sequiturque novus cum murmure torrens.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 638 – 41)

[And now the Trebia swelled high, and rose from its lowest depths,  
 driving all its water fiercely forward, and exerting all its might; the stream  
 raged with noisy eddies, and a fresh flood came roaring after.]

Santini 1991: 83 notes the “itemizing vision of nature” that begins the *mache parapotamios*, with the Trebia summoning each and every of its components, *stanga*, *fons*, *vires*, *unda*, and *torrens*. *Intumuit* begins the passage, marking both the rising of the waters and the anti-Callimachean ‘swelling’ of the genre into hyper-epic. The river exhibits some of the same traits we will soon see with Scipio: it is *ferox*, it rages (*furit*), the totality of its attack is marked by *omnes vires*, while *novus* once again does double duty by describing the change in the scene and the strangeness of the content (for a historical epic).

Scipio senses the tide changing and reacts accordingly:

sensit et accensa ductor violentius ira:  
 ‘magna, o Trebia, et meritas mihi, perfide, poenas

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<sup>375</sup> Santini 1991: 73.

exsolues' inquit. 'lacerum per Gallica rivis  
 dispergam rura atque amnis tibi nomina demam,  
 quoque aperis te fonte, premam, nec tangere ripas  
 illabique Pado dabitur. quaenam ista repente  
 Sidonium, infelix, rabies te reddidit amnem?'  
 (*Pun.* 4. 642 – 48)

[When Scipio felt this, his rage grew fiercer, and he cried: “O Trebia, you shall suffer as you deserve, and pay dearly for your treachery: I shall divide your stream and make it flow in separate channels through the land of Gaul: and I shall rob you of the name of the river, and stop the spring from which you rise; and never shall you be able to reach the banks of the Po and flow into its stream. What sudden madness has turned you, wretched Trebia, into a Sidonian river?”]

As with *intumuit* at the beginning of the passage, *violentius* continues the rapid escalation of the situation; this will be an excessive and hyperbolic encounter. Not only is Scipio competing with the river god, he also competes against Achilles' prowess and so, metapoetically, Silius competes with Homer. Chaudhuri notes that “from the very beginning of the *mache parapotamios*, Scipio's heroism appears greater than Achilles'.”<sup>376</sup> He begins the battle already wounded from his exploits at Ticinus, there is no inkling of fear as with Achilles at *Il.* 21. 248 (δείσας), and, as Chaudhuri elaborates, Scipio is actually capable of a credible threat against the river through the resources of Roman technology.

Perhaps in line with this *aemulatio*, Silius lets Scipio speak first, reversing the order of Homer's scene, as many have noted, where the Scamander orders Achilles to do his killing on the plain (*Il.* 21. 214 – 221).<sup>377</sup> The reversal of the speaking order also highlights the reversal of identity that Silius so loves. As Scipio threatens the river, he calls it *perfade* and *Sidonium*, a traitor who has gone over to the Carthaginians. In the *Iliad* it is Achilles, the Greek invader, who

<sup>376</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 207.

<sup>377</sup> cf. Santini 1991: 83 (“Homer's text orders things differently”) and Juhnke 1972: 17 (“In der *Ilias* erfolgte die Flutwelle des Stroms nach der Anklage des Skamandros, der trotzigen Rechtfertigung des Achilleus und der Klage des Flussgottes vor Apollon”).

attacks the Trojans and the pro-Trojan Scamander; in the *Punica*, Scipio, the Achillean/Roman/Trojan defender, attacks the pro-Carthaginian Trebia. This confusion of identities continues the trend we have seen throughout Book 4. It also plays into Silius' regular compression and confusion of timelines. The Trebia and the surrounding area in northern Italy were not, during the time of the Punic wars, officially 'Roman,' but were instead populated by many Gallic tribes who often opposed their southern neighbor. Scipio speaks from Silius' Flavian viewpoint, which, as Silius often does with Carthage, considered northern Italy to be an important part of the Roman Empire.<sup>378</sup> The idea underlies many scenes like this in the *Punica* and implies that, although the Carthaginians and their Gallic allies will be victorious at Ticinus, Trebia, and elsewhere, these enemies will inevitably be defeated and absorbed into the Roman empire. Scipio displays a kind of retroactive anger, threatening punishment for a revolt against future Roman power.

Scipio's threat to erase the Trebia river also has interesting ecological/historical implications. As Santini notes, Strabo briefly mentions that M. Aemilius Scaurus (cos. 115 BC) drained the marshes of Cispadana (mentioning also Hannibal's invasion and the Trebia river) with canals.<sup>379</sup> Scipio's threats against the Trebia river thus take on a more modern tone than

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<sup>378</sup> Chaudhuri comments on this idea: "Scipio rather occludes the fact, evident from the early books of the *Punica*, that northern Italy was not strictly Roman territory during this period, as attested by the alliance of many of its long-standing Gallic inhabitants with Hannibal. To a Flavian reader of the first century AD, however, by which time the Trebia had long been part of Roman territory, Scipio's view would have appeared entirely normal; this was land that would, eventually, necessarily, be incorporated into the Roman Empire, and on that basis its rivers should assist Rome, not her enemies" (Chaudhuri 2014: 208).

<sup>379</sup> Strabo 5.1.11: πολὺ δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐντὸς τοῦ Πάδου κατείχετο ὑπο ἐλῶν, δι' ὧν Ἀννίβας χαλεπῶς διήλθε, προϊὼν ἐπὶ Τυρρηνίαν· ἀλλ' ἀνέψυξε τὰ πεδία ὁ Σκαῦρος διώρυγας πλωτὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ Πάδου μέχρι Πάρμης ἄγων.

Santini 1991: 85 cites the commentary of Pietro Marso (1442 – 1512): *Verba Scipionis ad Trebiam cui minatur se adempturum alveum; quod ideo poeta fingit, ut ad veram historiam alluderet, quoniam auctore Strabone Marcus Scaurus deductis ex Pado usque in Parmensem agrum fossis navigationibus commodis paludes ipsas exsiccavit.*

Achilles' vain boasts in *Iliad* 21; he can take advantage of Roman engineering technology in addition to his superlative combat skills. This is not the first time Silius has brought the power of Roman engineering into his epic as well: during the battle of Ticinus, the gigantic Crixus collapsed as a mass of stone into the water “when masons build on the Tuscan shore...” (*Pun.* 4. 295 – 97). Chaudhuri compares this threatened canalization to the simile of the farmer irrigating his orchards at *Il.* 21. 257 – 64, although he notes that Scipio's is a much different, more domineering, all the more Roman kind of order. There is a thematic link between theomachy and technological progress, he writes, citing Caesar's felling of the Massilian grove in *BC* (just before the “godless theomachy” of the naval battle, one might add) and Xerxes' bridging of the Hellespont.<sup>380</sup> Silius ties Scipio directly into this tradition, matching Roman technological prowess against the raw power of nature, threatening a canalization that did in fact historically happen.

Scipio's superiority to Achilles continues as the *mache parapotamios* escalates. As the river surges against Scipio as he boasts (*Pun.* 649: *talia iactantem*), the Roman general stands fast against the entire might of the river:

arduus adversa mole incurrentibus undis  
stat ductor clipeoque ruentem sustulit amnem.  
(*Pun.* 4. 651 – 52)

[The general, standing erect, matched his strength against the onset of the waves, and held up the rushing river of with his shield.]

Unlike Achilles, who flees the Scamander in its might (*Il.* 21. 255 – 56: ὕπαιθα δὲ τοῖο λιασθεῖς / φεῦγ', ὁ δ' ὀπισθε ρέων ἔπετο μέγαλφ ὀρυμαγδῶ), Scipio stands fast and actually resists the

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<sup>380</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 208.

entirety of the river with his shield.<sup>381</sup> *Arduus* as noted before, is a sublime keyword, as well as the primary epithet of Hippomedon in the *Thebaid*, and *adversa* hearkens back to Scipio's entrance at *Pun.* 4. 622 (*ecce per adversum*). The scene quickly begins to become unstable as the river god first washes the ground from beneath Scipio's feet, then summons an army of waves, and finally this hyperbolic scene literally bursts at its seams and the river overflows its banks.

ire vadis stabilemque vetat defigere gressum  
 subducta tellure deus; percussaue longe  
 raucum saxa sonant; undaeque ad bella parentis  
 excitae pugnant, et ripas perdidit amnis.  
 tum madidos crines et glauca fronde revinctum  
 attollit cum voce caput:

(*Pun.* 4. 655 – 660)

[The river god, withdrawing the soil from beneath his feet, prevented him from wading through the water and finding firm footing; the boulders were smitten and sent afar a hollow sound; the waves, called forth to battle by their sire, joined the fray; and the banks of the river were lost to sight. Then the river god raised his dripping locks and his head crowned with blue-green weed, and spoke thus:]

With this passage, the man versus god portion of this theomachy reaches its climax. Santini notes the strength of the expression *et ripas perdidit amnis*, more fitting of a natural disaster, that precedes the god's physical manifestation.<sup>382</sup> The god's appearance at this point has received some mixed reception. "This is the kind of passage," Dewar comments, speaking to the analogous scene in *Thebaid* 9, "at which detractors of Silver epic have found it easy to point the finger of scorn, and which its admirers have found hard to defend."<sup>383</sup> He also adds, specifically of Silius' scene, that the topic is "so inappropriate to his historical subject" that it "almost

<sup>381</sup> Santini 1991: 86 comments upon Silius' *aemulatio* with Homer in this scene.

<sup>382</sup> "The following image of the river, now overflowing, which bursts its banks – the Latin text uses a stronger expression, *et ripas perdidit amnis*, suited to a natural catastrophe – brings the *mache parapotamios* to its climax, in which the river god intervenes in person ..." (Santini 1991: 87).

<sup>383</sup> Dewar 1991: 109.

renders Silius' otherwise flat and predictable narrative totally absurd."<sup>384</sup> Chaudhuri, using rather more measured language, calls the appearance of the god "a striking moment in the historical epic."<sup>385</sup>

The additional detail of the waves joining their parents' struggle recalls not only the ancient invocation *adesto, Tiberine, cum tuis undis*, as Santini keenly observes,<sup>386</sup> but also brings to mind Aeolus' gathering of the winds at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, an interesting parallel to the present river battle. Aeolus is motivated by the orders of Juno (*Aen.* 1. 65 – 75), just as the Trebia serves Juno's wishes (*Pun.* 4. 574: *precibus Iunonis suscitatur undas*) and gathers his natural strength to assault Aeneas and his crew before eventually being stopped by the intervention of Poseidon. Spaltenstein notes several parallels between the two scenes. *Talia iactantem* at *Pun.* 4. 649 seems to pick up on *Aen.* 1. 102 (*talia iactanti*). The context clarifies the parallel: *talia iactanti* refers to the words Aeneas spoke at the height of his despair during the opening storm. Silius, playing with his source material, places those words instead in the context of Scipio's domineering threats. The second half of that same *Aen.* 1 verse includes the words *stridens Aquilone procella*, which are picked up by Silius at *Pun.* 4. 653 (*stridente procella*). These two parallels, taken from a single line of Vergil, appear within five lines of each other in Silius; the allusion is unambiguous.<sup>387</sup> Vergil's storm imagery, used here in Scipio's battle

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<sup>384</sup> Dewar 1991: 102.

<sup>385</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 209. He continues, writing that "Scipio's theomachy consists not merely of poetic hyperbole, nor the threat of reducing and rechanneling the river, but of a Homeric confrontation between a mortal and a vividly realized deity."

<sup>386</sup> Santini 1991: 87. The Latin invocation is persevered in the Servian corpus. Santini also cites Aeneas' journey up the Tiber in *Aen.* 8.91 (*labitur uncta vadis abies: mirantur et undae*) as an example of the differentiation and cooperation between the river and its *undae*.

<sup>387</sup> Hardie 2013: 129 also notes the allusion to Vergil's opening storm in the *Thebaid* river battle.

against the Trebia, is inverted by Silius at the end of the poem, when Hannibal attempts to turn his ships back to Italy.<sup>388</sup>

Several other parallels are sprinkled throughout Silius' passage. In Vergil, Aeolus drives the waves forward (*Aen.* 1. 82: *impulit*), as does Silius' river (*Pun.* 4. 650: *impulit* – both verbs in enjambment); they attack “as if in armed array” (*Aen.* 1. 82: *velut agmine facto*), just as Silius' go to war (*Pun.* 4. 657: *ad bella*); Neptune lifts his head calmly out of the water in the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 1. 126 – 27: *et alto / prospiciens, summa placidum caput extulit unda*), which Silius dramatically reverses, having his watery god's head forced underwater (*Pun.* 4. 693 – 95: *ter caput ambustum conantem attollere iacta / lampade Vulcanus mersit fumantibus undis*); and the sublime is in full swing in Vergil's passage, with *velum adversa ferit, fluctus ad sidera tollit* (*Aen.* 1. 103).<sup>389</sup>

By setting up a comparison between Scipio's theomachy in *Punica* 4 and the storm scene from *Aeneid* 1, Silius achieves several interesting effects. First, and as usual, he has inverted the situation in Vergil; his Aenean hero (Scipio's father) provokes the ire of the natural divinity first, rather than receiving it passively (although we should not forget that Scipio and the Romans are technically on the defensive in this scene).<sup>390</sup> Second, Silius has in fact already alluded to this scene at the end of Ticinus, when Scipio's son despairs at his father's injury (see ch. 1, n. 83). So, the battles of Ticinus and Trebia both *end* with allusions to the *beginning* of the *Aeneid*; the allusion at Ticinus replicates Aeneas' despair in Scipio's grief, while that at Trebia recreates a

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<sup>388</sup> *Pun.* 17. 240 – 41, when Poseidon intervenes to prevent Hannibal's return: *extemplo ventos imbresque et rupe procellas / concitat Aeolias ac nubibus aethera condit*; Hannibal is now in the defensive and Aenean position.

<sup>389</sup> Hardie 1986: 90 – 97 notes the compelling similarities between Vergil's opening storm scene and theomachy.

<sup>390</sup> Silius' mixing of the defensive Italians and offensive Trojans from the *Aeneid* is likely also at play here; Scipio seems to be the reckless aggressor when the opposite is true.



However, Chaudhuri has a more positive interpretation of this issue, convincingly arguing that, in comparison to the Scamander's more justifiable anger, "Silius makes the Trebia appear far more disingenuous in its self-justification, thus legitimizing Scipio's own attitude towards the river."<sup>393</sup>

The end result is ambiguous. The Trebia is at least partially justified, its waters are in fact crammed with those slain by Scipio (and, one must assume, by the Carthaginians), despite the fact that the river attacked first. Scipio is likewise partially justified by the fact that this is a Roman river and therefore treacherous in its attack, though the river is not yet (in the language of Silian time dilation) truly a Roman river. While Silius' recreation of the river battle in *Iliad* 21 seems on the surface level to follow Homer's narrative closely, as the scene progresses it becomes clear that he has muddied the motivations of the hero and river god; on the one hand Scipio is an Achillean transgressor filling the river with corpses and refusing to bow to the current of history, but on the other hand the river's duplicitous justifications lend little credibility to its cause. The ambiguity of Scipio's heroism is furthered by the backhanded praise Silius puts in the river's mouth, *quot corpora porta / dextra fusa tua*. As Santini notes, Silius has reversed the 'laus ab hoste' topos; words that in the poet's mouth are fitting of a heroic *aristeia* take on, from the river god's perspective, "a sinister, pessimistic hue of *hybris* towards nature."<sup>394</sup> Scipio's ambiguous heroism neuters the effects of his epic battle with the river; he is in some ways greater than even Achilles, but in so doing he comes off as a reckless defiler of nature and, despite all his prowess and the intervention of the gods, the Romans – lest we forget – lose this battle.

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<sup>393</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 209.

<sup>394</sup> Santini 1991: 87. Santini cites Pietro Marso's comment *ad loc.*: "laus Scipionis ab hoste, quoniam propter cadavera hostium deiecta in vadum a Scipione fluvius restagnabat."

4.3.4: Fire and Water: Expansive Elemental Intervention (*Pun.* 4. 667 – 699)

The river of poetry has burst its banks, so to speak, and the scene is quickly approaching the limits of epic hyperbole. With *adde modum*, the Trebia speaks both to Scipio's excessive behavior and, metapoetically, to the poet himself. At this point Silius continues his mirroring of the end of Ticinus, furthering yet again the feeling of the 'recurring nightmare' of Roman defeat.<sup>395</sup> As at Ticinus, when the intervention of Mars causes the river to leave its banks and flow backwards to its source (*Pun.* 4. 443 – 44: *ripasque relinquit / audito curru fontique relabitur amnis*), the Trebia complains that its flow has been reversed (*Pun.* 4. 665: *retroque feruntur*) just before the gods intervene. Once again, Scipio, failing to prevent a Roman rout, makes a furious and desperate speech, wishing yet again for the death he was refused at Ticinus.

ingravat ad caelum sublatis Scipio palmis:  
 'di patrii, quorum auspiciis stat Dardana Roma,  
 talin me leto tanta inter proelia nuper  
 servastis? fortune animam hanc excindere dextra  
 indignum est visum? redde o me, nate, periclis,  
 redde hosti! liceat bellanti accersere mortem,  
 quam patriae fratrique probem.'

(*Pun.* 4. 669 – 75)

[Then Scipio raised his hands to heaven with a bitter cry: "Gods of our country, by whose favor Dardan Rome is preserved, did you save my life just now in the fierce battle for such a death as this? Did I seem unworthy to end my life by a soldier's arm? Give me back, my son, to danger, give me back to the foe! Suffer me to fight and to welcome such a death as my country and my brother would approve."

The speeches of Hannibal and Scipio bookend the beginning and end of the battle, and Scipio's speech responds to the taunts of Hannibal's, who wished to deny him a glorious death in battle.<sup>396</sup> Replicating the suicidal ideation that we saw previously in both Scipiones at the end of

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<sup>395</sup> See 3.2.1 above.

<sup>396</sup> See 3.2.5 above.

Ticinus, Scipio asks for his son to return him to – rather than rescue him from – a moment of certain death.

Scipio's desperate speech at the end of Trebia contains several echoes of Aeneas' speech in the house of Anchises during the sack of Troy in *Aen. 2*, tying it once again with Hannibal's speech at the beginning of the battle. In that scene, Aeneas has decided to embrace his father's wish for death and gives a brief speech questioning his mother's plan for him before calling for his arms:

‘hoc erat, alma parens, quod me per tela, per ignis  
eripis, ut mediis hostem in penetralibus utque  
Ascanium patremque meum iuxtaque Creusam  
alterum in alterius mactatos sanguine cernam?  
arma, viri, ferte arma; vocat lux ultima victos.  
**reddite me Danais**; sinite instaurata revisam  
proelia, numquam omnes hodie moriemus inulti.’  
(*Aen. 2. 664 – 70*)

[“Was it for this, gracious mother, that you saved me amid fire and sword, to see the foe in the heart of my home, and Ascanius, and my father, and Creusa at their side, slaughtered in each other's blood? Arms, men, bring arms; the last light of life calls the vanquished. Give me back to the Greeks; let me seek again and renew the fight. Never this day shall we die unavenged!”]

There are many clear similarities to the situation in Silius. Aeneas embraces death by invoking his relationship with his father, while Scipio calls for his son in Silius' inverted scene; both heroes question the purpose of being saved for such a death; both heroes command to be returned to battle (cf. *Pun. 4. 673 – 74: redde o me, nate, periclis, / redde hosti* and *Aen. 2. 669: reddite me Danais*) and to be allowed to seek a glorious death (cf. *Pun. 4. 674: liceat bellanti accersere mortem* and *Aen. 2. 669 - 70: sinite instaurata revisam / proelia, numquam omnes hodie*

*moriemur inulti*).<sup>397</sup> Silius' word selection is typically careful, avoiding quotation for the most part and replicating only *reddite me Danais* to grab the readers' attention. Scipio, like Aeneas in the sack of Troy, fails to recognize the shift in heroism from the traditional 'death before dishonor' values of the Homeric warrior to the Augustan virtue of *pietas*, and, before he makes a grave mistake, the gods must intervene. In *Aen. 2* it is a sudden and wonderful omen (*Aen. 2. 680: cum subitem dictuque oritur mirabile monstrum*), here it is full-fledged divine intervention.

Venus, watching the battle from a hill with Vulcan,<sup>398</sup> hears Scipio's prayer and deploys the fiery power of her husband against the watery might of the river god.

tum percita dictis  
 ingemuit Venus et rapidas derexit in amnem  
 coniugis invicti vires. agit undique flammam  
 dispersus ripis ignis multosque per annos  
 nutritas fluvio populatur fervidus umbras.  
 uritur omne nemus, lucosque effusus in altis  
 immissis crepitat victor Vulcanus habenis.  
 iamque ambusta comas abies, iam pinus et alni,  
 iam solo restans trunco dimisit in altum  
 populus adsuetas ramis habitare volucres.  
 flamma vorax imo penitus de gurgite tractos  
 absorbet latices, saevoque urgente vapore  
 siccus inarescit ripis cruor. horrida late  
 scinditur in rimas et hiatus rupta dehiscit  
 tellus, ac stagnis altae sedere favillae.  
 miratur pater aeternos cessare repente  
 Eridanus cursus, Nympharumque intima maestus  
 implevit chorus attonitis ululatibus antra.  
 ter caput ambustum conantem attollere iacta  
 lampade Vulcanus mersit fumantibus undis,  
 ter correpta dei crines nudavit harundo.

(*Pun. 4. 676 – 695*)

[Then Venus groaned, moved by his prayer, and turned against the river  
 the devouring strength of her invincible consort. Fire spread and burned all

<sup>397</sup> This reader cannot resist noting the closeness in line numbers between the words of Aeneas and Scipio (*Aen. 2. 664ff.* and *Pun. 4. 670ff.*) though, this time, it is likely to be only a coincidence.

<sup>398</sup> *Pun. 4. 667 – 68: Haec, Venere adiuncta, tumulo spectabat ab alto / Mulciber.* Vessey 1973: 95 calls the intervention of Venus and Vulcan "hardly less than absurd."

over the banks and fiercely devoured the trees that the river had nourished for many a year. All the corpses were burnt up, and the victorious flame crackled as it spread in full career to the high groves. Soon the foliage of the fir-tree was seared, and the leaves of the pine and alder; soon nothing was left of the poplar but the trunk, and the tree sent off into the sky the birds that were wont to nest on its branches. The devouring flame sucked the moisture from the very bottom of the stream and licked it up; and the blood upon the banks was dried up and caked by the fierce heat. The rugged earth everywhere split up and cracked, showing yawning chasms; and ashes settled in heaps in the bed of the river. Father Eridanus marveled when his immemorial stream suddenly ceased to flow; and the sorrowing company of Nymphs filled their inmost caves with anguished cries. Three times he strove to life up his scorched head, and three times Vulcan threw a firebrand which sent him down below the streaming water; and three times the reeds caught fire and left the god's head bare.]

This is a clear recreation of Homer's divine intervention at *Il.* 21. 228ff., though Silius is not content to simply copy his famous predecessor, as some have criticized.<sup>399</sup> The intervening goddess has been changed from Juno/Hera in the *Iliad* to Venus, due to Venus' longstanding role as protector of Vergil's Aeneas and the Julian clan – not to mention Juno's alliance with Hannibal.

Vessey, as noted above, has commented that this divine intervention is inappropriate to Silius' genre and that he follows Homer to the point of absurdity. Santini, a more sensitive reader of Silius, provides a useful counterpoint, arguing that Silius has actually abandoned his Homeric model for the sake of the pleasure of describing the natural phenomenon in detail. "He in fact," Santini continues, "allows the descriptive urge to take over, demonstrating his ability to depict every aspect of the phenomenon, right down to details such as the *rimae* which crack the now scorched clay and the sparks which settle on the surface of the pool."<sup>400</sup> Silius' description is

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<sup>399</sup> Vessey 1973: 102, commenting on Statius' own river battle, writes that Statius "is careful to learn from Silius' mistakes, particularly in choosing not to imitate the Homeric scorching of the river."

<sup>400</sup> Santini 1991: 89. Duff and Santini have different images in mind; Duff translates "and ashes settled in heaps in the bed of the river" while Santini has "sparks which settle on the surface of the pool." Duff's

indeed impressive and highlights the enormity of the environmental destruction that occurs to the Trebia and surrounding area. Silius' fixation on this destruction furthers the portrayal of Scipio as a transgressor and defiler of nature that we saw in his threats to engineer the river out of existence. Moreover, the immensity of the destruction caused by Vulcan's intervention sours Scipio's impressive battle with the river. Scipio's second salvation now becomes a dubious victory, one that results in the destruction of the entire landscape around the Trebia; this ominous conflagration anticipates the destruction that awaits the Italian countryside as Hannibal invades, seen most prominently in *Punica 7*.<sup>401</sup> Scipio's recklessness has not only failed to prevent Hannibal's victory, it has inaugurated the defilement of the Italian landscape. This is yet another self-inflicted wound, this time environmental, that will not be expiated until Livius' and Nero's defeat of Hasrubal at the Metaurus river in Book 15.

The transgressiveness of Scipio's behavior and the fiery destruction of the Trebia's surroundings is cemented through an interesting allusion to Phaethon's death in *Metamorphoses* 2. 210 – 328. There, Ovid describes in great detail the destruction wrought by Phaethon's out-of-control chariot on the lands and waters of Earth. Typical of Silius' use of Ovid, there are few exact verbal parallels in his description of the fire at Trebia, though several phrases stand out (cf. *Met.* 2. 210 – 13: *corripitur flammis ut quaeque altissima tellus / fissaque agit rimas et sucis aret ademptis; / pabula canescunt, cum frondibus uritur arbor, / materiamque suo praebet seges arida damno*). As usual, Silius picks around Ovid's vocabulary, avoiding direct and obvious

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seems closer to the Latin, since *imo penitus de gurgite* implies that the river has evaporated down to its bed; the deep, swiftly moving water of the river (*gurgite*) has become shallow and stagnant (*stagnis*).

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Littlewood 2011 on *Punica 7*'s relationship to Vergil's *Georgics*: "...the sequence of allusions [in *Punica 7*] to Vergil's *Georgics* inspired by Hannibal's destruction of Campanian vineyards and Roman plough-oxen direct the poet's reflections on the violation of the Italian land by a foreign invader. By interposing the military episodes of Fabius' campaign in *Punica 7* between three rural narratives, Silius highlights the literary antithesis of pastoral and war, of growth and destruction, life and death" (xxxix). Silius furthers this exploration of war and pastoral in his Sicilian mini-epic in *Punica 14*.

quotation. He does, however, supply two details which cement the connection between these two passages, both noticed by Alison Keith.<sup>402</sup> The first is the detail of weeping nymphs (cf. *Met.* 2. 238 – 39: *nymphae passis fontesque lacusque / deflevere comis* and *Pun.* 4. 691 – 92: *nympharumque intima maestus / implevit chorus attonitis ululatus antra* – again, the parallel is clear despite few verbal quotations). The second is Silius’ description of the river god raising his head three times above the water only to be thrown back down each time by Vulcan, which recreates Ovid’s description of Neptune (*Met.* 2. 270 – 71: *ter Neptunus aquis cum torvo brachia vultu / exserere ausus erat, ter non tulit aeris ignes*). Silius has modified his scene to have the water god be the primary victim of the fire rather than a failed intervener, as in Ovid. In Ovid, the impotence of Neptune is perhaps meant to contrast with Vergil’s rather more powerful and effective sea god in *Aen.* 1, a contrast that, since Silius himself has recently alluded to Vergil’s storm scene (see 3.5.3 above), may still be in effect.<sup>403</sup>

A final confirmation of the link between Silius’ Trebia scene and Ovid’s Phaethon scene can be found in Book 7 of the *Punica*, when Silius describes the Eridanus (Po) river as “Phaethon’s river” (*Pun.* 7. 149: *Phaëthontius amnis*), referencing Phaethon’s crash site in Ovid. This detail’s location in *Punica* 7 also furthers the links between that book’s description of Hannibal’s destruction of the Italian landscape and the inferno at the Trebia. It remains

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<sup>402</sup> “Throughout the passage, Silius’ lexical choices are informed by Ovid’s description of the conflagration ignited by Phaethon, even as he adapts an Ovidian picture of the Earth going up in flames to a Homeric description of a river on fire” (Keith 2014: 81 – 82).

<sup>403</sup> Anderson 1997 *ad loc.*: “Many in Ovid’s audience might well have been reminded of the magnificent presentation of Neptune in *Aen.* 1. 124ff. He raised his head above the water and quickly brought order into the chaotic situation created by Juno, Aeolus, and the storm. In 271 here, Ovid, deliberately using the anaphora of *ter* to link his two clauses, lets Neptune dwindle into bathetic impotence: he can’t stand the heat!”

problematic that Scipio, as the cause of the river battle and the ensuing firestorm, is placed in the position of Hannibal menacing the Italian countryside with flaming cattle.

Indeed, the figure of Phaethon is useful for more than just the vivid language of his fiery demise. Phaethon represents the dangerous rashness of striving beyond mortal limits, as his father reminds him at *Met.* 2. 56: *sors tua mortalis; non est mortale quod optas*. As a quasi-theomachic figure, Phaethon seeks to compete with the gods and perform an act that not even Jupiter is capable of; he is accordingly labelled *demens* by Epaphus (*Met.* 1. 753). The theomachic subtext of Phaethon's story is confirmed by the Sun's speech to him, in which he describes the path as *ardua* (*Met.* 2. 63: *ardua prima via est*), using the same sublime vocabulary that we have seen with Scipio and Hippomedon; fittingly for a would-be theomach, Phaethon is destroyed by the thunderbolt of Jupiter. Chaudhuri comments on Phaethon's "excessive ambition," concluding that it "proceeds from a spirit of admirable daring and allows the reader the opportunity of a glimpse of the world from an extraordinary perspective, a view typically unavailable to humankind."<sup>404</sup>

The comparison with Phaethon does not bode well for Scipio, whose heroic feats against the river god have now resulted in the fiery destruction of the Italian landscape and whose fate, one might begin to worry, may also mirror his Ovidian predecessor. Fortunately for the Romans, Scipio does not fall in the Trebia river as Phaethon does in the Po, and the battle quickly comes to an end after this scene. The dangerous and self-destructive rashness of the Roman commander, however, leaves much in doubt about the Romans' ability to overcome their internal flaws against the threat of Hannibal's invasion.

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<sup>404</sup> Chaudhuri 2014: 138, who compares Phaethon with Seneca's Hercules.

Silius' *mache parapotamios* and the elemental battle between Vulcan and the Po river brings the battle of Trebia, and indeed the whole of *Punica* 4, to its thematic and narrative climax. Once again, we have seen Silius' remarkable ability to weave together multiple literary predecessors into a set piece encounter that is both high traditional, building upon the *mache parapotamios* in *Iliad* 21, and wonderfully new and inventive, bringing in Livy, Vergil, Ovid, Lucan, and Statius. Three major figures govern Silius' depiction of Scipio, each showing Silius' engagement with literary predecessors and contemporaries and each subtly (or not so subtly) detracting from the Roman's heroism. Scipio's characterization as a Roman Achilles is problematized by Silius' ambiguous implementation of the Homeric hero's virtues and flaws; Scipio is in some ways even stronger than Achilles, yet neither his nor the Trebia's motives are completely clear and, despite his superiority, he still cannot defeat the river. Silius' deep engagement with Hippomedon's river battle in *Thebaid* 9, whose death can be seen in the death of Silius' elephant (regardless of the order of composition), reveals the fascinating *aemulatio* that characterizes the two poets' relationship with Homer and with each other, while simultaneously staining Scipio's heroism with another transgressive parallel. Finally, Ovid's description of Phaethon's fiery death colors Vulcan's intervention at the end of the battle, cementing Scipio's depiction as a hubristic mortal overreacher. Finally, Scipio's river battle is another example of the self-destructive tendencies the Romans exhibit in these first battles, seen first in Catus' suicidal and ever more programmatic death and now brought to its most expansive end in the fiery destruction of the Trebia's Italian landscape. The battles of Book 4, as they come to an end here, put on full display the flaws that will characterize the Romans' behavior through Book 10 and the battle of Cannae: self-destructive tendencies, suicidal recklessness, and transgressive and overreaching generals.

With *ac tandem* in 4. 698, Silius marks – finally – the end of the long combat narrative that began more than 500 lines ago with Bogus’ errant prophecy and Catus’ futile death. Never one to miss an opportunity for anticipation and inversion, Silius describes Scipio’s tired retreat in nearly the same way as he will Hannibal’s final exhaustion in Book 17 (cf. *Pun.* 4. 698 – 99: *ac tandem a Trebia revocavit Scipio fessas / munitum in collem, Graccho comitante, cohortes* and *Pun.* 17. 597: *at fessum tumulo tandem regina propinquo / sistit Iuno ducem*). The final lines of this section make up a transitional passage as rapid as that which opened the battle at *Pun.* 4. 480 – 97: Silius describes the Roman withdrawal and Hannibal’s grateful offerings to the river in four quick lines (*Pun.* 4. 698 – 701), ending with the ominous *nescius heu ... quos Ausoniae luctus, Thrasymenne, parares* (*Pun.* 4. 702 – 3). Gracchus, absent since his brief *aristeia* 150 lines ago, is present once again as Scipio’s sidekick (*Pun.* 4. 699: *Graccho comitante*), but after this final mention fades almost completely from the narrative. Before Silius continues on to the conflict between Hannibal and the Carthaginian senate that takes up the remainder of *Punica* 4, he spends 20 lines introducing yet another flawed Roman reader and preparing the audience for the disaster of Trasimene in *Punica* 5.

#### 4.4.1: *Genitum ad fatalia damna*: A Foreboding Epilogue (*Pun.* 4. 702 – 721)

The 20 lines that separate the end of the battle and the episode of Hannibal with the Carthaginian senators act as the epilogue to the battles of Ticinus and Trebia, introducing a new Roman general (Flaminius) with ominous and foreboding imagery. It will get worse – much worse – before it gets better.

nescius heu, quanto superi maiora moverent,  
 et quos Ausoniae luctus, Thrasymenne, parares.  
 Boiorum nuper populos turbaverat armis

Flaminius, facilisque viro tum gloria belli  
 corde levem atque astus inopem contundere gentem.  
 sed labor haud idem Tyrio certasse tyranno.  
 hunc laevis urbi genitum ad fatalia damna  
 ominibus parat imperio Saturnia fesso  
 ductorem dignumque virum veniente ruina.  
 inde ubi prima dies iuris, clavumque regendae  
 invasit patriae, et sub nutu castra fuere  
 (*Pun.* 4. 702 – 712)

[He knew not, alas! the much greater boon Heaven intended for him, or the mourning that Lake Trasimene had in store for Italy. The tribe of the Boii had formerly been attacked by an army under Flaminius; then he had gained an easy triumph and crushed a fickle and guileless people; but to fight the Carthaginian was a far different task. Flaminius was born in an evil hour to inflict fatal loss upon Rome; and Juno now chose him as ruler of an exhausted nation and a fit instrument of coming destruction. When his first day of office came, he seized the helm of the state and commanded the armies.]

Hannibal, having just given thanks to the river Trebia for its help against the Romans, is unaware (*nescius*) of the even greater victories he will achieve. Trasimene, the battle which occupies most of the following book, is here invoked by name less than 10 lines after the battle of Trebia ends; Silius gives neither the Romans nor his readers any rest. However, *nescius* is not a flattering descriptor and highlights the same lack of awareness of or control over his future that we saw in the boastful and inaccurate speech that began Trebia (see 3.3.2 above). Furthermore, *maiora*, signifying the greater battles that await Hannibal, may also subtly hint at Scipio Africanus (known later as Scipio Africanus *Maior*) and his future triumphs, just as Mars predicted “greater” things yet to come (*Pun.* 4. 476: *et adhuc maiora supersunt*) after Scipio’s rescue of his father. *Maiora* at the end of Ticinus and here at the end of Trebia subtly contrasts the opposing figures of Hannibal, whose greatness will be only temporary, and Scipio (Africanus), whose divinely ordained achievements will last forever. But Scipio’s time is still yet to come, and we are shortly introduced to yet another incompetent Roman general.

Silius' description of Gaius Flaminius (cos. 223 and 217 BC) is not flattering. Fresh off an easy victory against the Boii, he immediately displays the same over-eagerness and reckless overconfidence that doomed Catus, Scipio Maior, and Gracchus to defeat, injury, or death. *Genitum ad fatalia damna* is a powerful phrase, revealing Flaminius' total lack of agency as a pawn in Juno's plan, as well as giving one of the starkest examples of the 'enemy within' theme; Flaminius is as dangerous as any Carthaginian army.

Flaminius' role becomes ever more active as the description continues: he is worthy (*dignum*) only for the destruction of his own state (*veniente ruina*). *Dignum ... ruina* is perhaps a subtle allusion to Pompey's death in Lucan, who notably did *not* die at the hands of someone worthy (BC 9. 128 – 29: *non Caesaris armis / occubuit dignoque perit auctore ruinae*). Silius' use of *dignum virum* is sharply ironic, highlighting just how unworthy Flaminius is to lead the Romans at this moment. The allusion to Pompey's death is good supporting evidence for Marks' argument that Pompey and the losers of the civil war are used in the first half of the poem to highlight the futility and suffering of the Romans.<sup>405</sup>

Silius' final description of Flaminius is the harshest: the Roman general 'seizes' (*invasit*) control over the state. *Invadere* is an almost entirely hostile verb, used for attacking, invading, the onset of disease, pushing one's way into political power, or the seizing of possessions; only the *OLD*'s seventh definition could be interpreted positively ("to go, enter (precipitately or boldly)"). *Invasit patriae* in particular nearly reeks of the language of civil war – not a propitious way to receive command. Finally, Silius caps off this first look at Flaminius with a simile that underscores the inexperience, misfortune, and self-sabotaging nature of his command.

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<sup>405</sup> Marks 2010: 129.

#### 4.4.2: The Roman Ship of State: A Final Simile

As he often does, Silius uses a simile to mark a turning point or transition, and the simile here concludes the battle in a very foreboding manner.

ut pelagi rudis et pontum tractare per artem  
 nescius accepit miserae si iura carinae,  
 ventorum tenet ipse vicem cunctisque procellis  
 dat iactare ratem, fertur vaga gurgite puppis  
 ipsius in scopulos dextra impellente magistri –  
 ergo agitur raptis praeceps exercitus armis  
 Lydorum populos sedemque ab origine prisca  
 sacratam Corythi iunctosque a sanguine avorum  
 Maeonios Italis permixta stirpe colonos.  
 (*Pun.* 4. 713 – 721)

[So, if a mere landsman, with no skill to manage the sea, has got the command of a luckless vessel, he himself does the work of foul weather, and exposes the ship to be tossed by every gale; she drifts at random over the sea, and the hand of her own captain drives her upon the rocks. So the army was equipped in haste and led toward the land of the Lydians, where stands the sacred city founded of old by Corythus, and where Maeonian settlers had mixed their blood with that of Italians in ancient times.]

Flaminius is compared to sea captain with zero experience, a landlubber who, somehow or another, has obtained control over an unfortunate ship. Like Hannibal just above at *Pun.* 4. 702, this captain is *nescius*, and it is his ignorance, rather than the proverbially hostile sea, that is most dangerous to the ship. Revealingly, in this simile the captain plays an active role (*ipsius dextra magistri*); he drives the ship with his own hand against the rocks; so too do the Romans lead themselves to their own doom at Trasimene.

Spaltenstein notes – and is characteristically hesitant about – a very similar comparison under very similar circumstances in Polybius.<sup>406</sup> At 3.81.11, Polybius derides the character of Flaminius and describes Hannibal’s plan to take advantage of his opponent’s flaws. “For just as a ship,” he concludes, “if deprived of its pilot will fall with its whole crew into the hands of the enemy, so the general who is his opponent’s master in strategy and reasoning may often capture his whole army.”<sup>407</sup> Spaltenstein comments that these sorts of maritime similes are quite frequent (‘fréquent’ and ‘habituel’ may in fact be his two favorite words) and its use in the Polybius passage may be only a coincidence. It seems rather to me that, since we have seen the *cura* with which Silius has lavished all of Book 4 and indeed all of the *Punica*, the co-occurrence of context (Flaminius’ character flaws) and content (a leaderless ship at sea) is too strong to be anything but an allusion. With Silius’ watchful eyes always on Livy and Polybius, it would be almost inconceivable that he wrote this simile describing Flaminius in ignorance of Polybius’ language on the same subject.

The Roman troops continue their retreat into “the land of the Lydians” (i.e. Etruria), towards Cortona and Lake Trasimene. It is revealing that the Roman troops at this time are led (*agitur*) in the passive voice; the Roman commander is conspicuously absent from this line. Yet despite this, these final lines also contain a hint of the collective solidarity that will save the Romans in the end. This final long sentence (*Pun.* 4. 718 – 721) speaks of Corythus, the founder of Cortona and either a son of Zeus (and father of Dardanus) or a son of Paris;<sup>408</sup> in any case,

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<sup>406</sup> Spalt. *ad loc.*: “Ces comparaisons maritimes sont fréquentes, de sorte que ce n’est peut-être qu’une coïncidence si Polyb. 3.81.11 en présente une à propos de Flaminius ...”

<sup>407</sup> Polyb. 3. 81.11: καθάπερ γὰρ νεὼς ἐὰν ἀφέλη τις τὸν κυβερνήτην, τὸ ὅλον αὐτανδρὶ σκάφος ὑποχείριον γίνεται τοῖς ἐχθροῖς, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐὰν τὸν προεστῶτα [πόλεμον] δυνάμει χειρώσῃται τις κατὰ τὰς ἐπιβολὰς καὶ συλλογισμούς, αὐτανδρὶ γίνεται πολλάκις κρατεῖν τῶν ἀντιπατομένων. Trans. Paton.

<sup>408</sup> There is some debate over where Vergil meant to locate Corythus’ town; for a surprisingly lively discussion, see Horsfall 1973, who argues for Tarquinii rather than Cortona, E.L. Harrison’s 1976

Corythus is closely associated with Vergil's pre-Roman Italy and the Trojan War. By invoking his name at this time, Silius reminds the readers of the Romans' mixed heritage as seen in the second half of the *Aeneid*, a bond that is perhaps recreated in verse by the back to back elisions at the end of line 720 (*iunctosque a sanguine avorum*) *Permixa stirpe* in the final line emphasizes the strength of the Roman collective, Trojan, Greek, Italian, that will ultimately triumph over – and fully absorb – the Carthaginian invader.

#### 4.5.1: Trebia: The End of the Beginning

The battle of the Trebia is finally over, and with it ends the extended battle narrative that began some 600 lines ago. The Roman army flees south into Etruria, a ship piloted by a blind captain, as Silius begins to set up for the next grand conflict, the battle of Lake Trasimene, which will consume most of the following book. It is time now, yet again, to step back from our close reading of this intense series and make a final examination of Trebia as a whole and its relationship to Ticinus in chapters 1 and 2.

I began chapter 3, the first half of the battle of the Trebia, by examining the complex and intricate compression Silius uses in transitioning from Ticinus to Trebia, a feat which takes only 18 lines from the end of Ticinus, to the movement of the Romans and Hannibal, to the introduction of the new general Gracchus. This highly wrought transitional passage uses ring composition to reinforce the feeling of the Romans' reoccurring nightmare and the cyclical and repetitive nature of these opening defeats. Gracchus, whose name purposefully invokes the controversial brothers of the post-Punic war era – themselves descendants of Scipio Africanus –,

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response, Horsfall's 1976 response to Harrison's response, and Dingel's 1995 retrospective. For our purposes, the figure's Vergilian and Trojan War heritage remains unspoiled.

is immediately likened to Turnus; once again, Silius plays with the identities of his Roman commanders and associates them with the defeated Italians from the *Aeneid*. This association creates many problems, however, the most prominent of which is that it casts Hannibal as an Aeneas figure, invading Italy and defeating a brash (and doomed) Italian leader, while we in the audience know that Hannibal will ultimately lose this conflict.

Hannibal's speech before the opening of the battle highlights the problems of his identity in the *Punica*, as the Carthaginian leader taunts Scipio Maior and the Romans, unknowingly invoking Anchises, Creusa, and Dido – all figures whose deaths were necessary for Aeneas' journey. Throughout this fiery and dramatically ironic speech, Hannibal reveals his complete ignorance regarding his fate, much in the same way as Dido, whose life (and death) Hannibal will ultimately recreate. Hannibal is *nescius* in this scene, a trait that Silius attributes to him again at the end of the battle with *nescius heu* at *Pun.* 4. 702; he does not understand his place in the divine plan.

Despite the short-sightedness revealed in his pre-battle speech, Hannibal is nonetheless able to goad the Romans out from their defensive positions to begin the battle. Gracchus reveals his self-destructive recklessness as he rushes first into combat (*Pun.* 4. 514: *prior volat*) and the Romans collectively embrace Catus' flaws from the beginning of Ticinus. The cyclical nature of these conflicts is yet again reinforced, as Trebia begins in much the same way as Ticinus. The opening of the Trebia exhibits a complex relationship with converging moments in the *Aeneid*, when Turnus tries unsuccessfully to draw the Trojans out in Aeneas' absence, and in the *Punica*, as the openings of Ticinus and Trebia are compared and to be contrasted with Hannibal's recreation of Turnus' failure outside the walls of Rome in *Punica* 12; all of these moments, back

to the *Aeneid*, back to Ticinus, and ahead to Book 12, meet in a single point at the beginning of the battle of Trebia.

The combat opens with the ‘Simultaneous’ between Gracchus and Hannibal, a compressed recreation of that of *Aeneid* 12 between Turnus and Aeneas – with all the problems of identity inherent in Gracchus’ Turnian coloring. Silius includes two of the same victims as Aeneas, Murranus and Cupencus, but splits their deaths between Gracchus and Hannibal, further blurring the lines between the two heroes. A third victim, Phalantus, is not present in Vergil’s narrative, but in a dazzling use of ‘allusion by omission,’ Silius cleverly alludes to a very similar dual *aristeia* in Statius’ *Thebaid* which *does* include the name of Vergil’s third victim, Hyllus. The double *aristeia* that opens the battle of Trebia is a clear example of Silius’ inventive use of Vergil as mediated through Statius – a technique that Silius will use to very great effect throughout the battle of Trebia.

Lucan is present as well, appearing as the battle begins to deteriorate into chaotic slaughter. The Romans and Carthaginians become depersonalized, with Silius using imagery from the *Bellum Civile* to highlight the totality of the Roman defeat. Allusions to the time of Sulla reinforce Silius’ use of civil war poetics, pitting the Romans not only against the Carthaginians but also, and perhaps more dangerously, against themselves. Silius also alludes to Lucan’s *BC* 4 depiction of Curio’s defeat in North Africa, using the already present Punic War context to execute a wonderful retroactive allusion. Compressive history continues to be the hallmark of Silius’ battle narrative, with Sulla’s civil war, Caesar’s civil war, the battle of Allia, and the Second Punic War all bound together at the battle of the Trebia.

The death of Allius, whose name perhaps carries a hint of that *dies ater*, is the longest necrologue in the battle and provides a great example of many traits of Silius’ battlefield poetics

in miniature. His death by simultaneous spears once again invokes the death of Catus in *Bellum Civile* – and so Catus at Ticinus as well –, further linking Trebia and Ticinus with Lucan's first major battle scene. His geographical origin, southern Italy near Argyripa, is used by Silius to connect him with the towns that most famously go over to Hannibal's side in *Punica* 11 and, through specific references to Mt. Garganus and the *iapyx campum*, with the site of the battle of Cannae. Thus Allius, as the rustic manifestation of Cannae and southern Italy, represents with his death at the hands of Mago and Maharbal the fate of southern Italy in the aftermath of Cannae. Additionally, his death, with all the Lucanian parallels, becomes a powerful symbol of the intra-Italian strife that will begin in *Punica* 11.

After the death of Allius, Silius transitions into the second half of the battle, which is dominated first by the Romans' desperate struggle in the now flooding river and then by Scipio's battle with the river god incarnate. The section opens with an invocation of Homer, as Silius foreshadows the poem's rising register. Silius is at his most intertextual in his description of the chaotic deaths in the river, alluding simultaneously to Livy, Lucan, and Statius, as well as looking ahead to his own naval battle in *Punica* 14. The mass slaughter culminates (marked conspicuously by *accumulat clades*) in the battle between a Roman soldier and Carthaginian elephant. This elephantomachy and the subsequent death of the elephant under a hail of missiles, is in close engagement with the death of Statius' Hippomedon in *Thebaid* 9, who dies in a very similar way under very similar circumstances. The Romans' victory over the elephant in the river provides a brief moment of collective success in the midst of a terrible defeat, looking ahead to the unified strength that will ultimately beat back the Carthaginian invasion, while simultaneously engaging (regardless of the ever-present issue of primacy) with his contemporary Statius' analogous *mache parapotamios*.

The death of the elephant marks the end of the collective river battle and the beginning of Scipio's one-man battle against the forces of nature. In many ways this scene represents the Romans' embrace of the power of the individual over the collective, a change they will eventually be forced to accept with Scipio Africanus by the end of the poem, but here in Book 4 it is much too early and Scipio Maior is the wrong man for the job. The brash, arrogant, and reckless Roman general rushes into the river, much like Gracchus flew into battle not long ago, and very much like Scipio's first suicidal charge at the end of Ticinus. Once again, the Romans embrace this definition of insanity, trying the same thing over and over again and meeting the same results. Silius must carefully manage Scipio's transgressive behavior with his status as aggrieved defender of Italy. The result is an ambiguous characterization of both the river god and Scipio, with each figure's motives left somewhat unclear; the Trebia, now swollen to become the whole Eridanus/Po, attacks Scipio for his arrogant threats and the pollution of his waters, while the readers know that the river has risen up at Juno's command, while Scipio, ostensibly the noble Roman commander, chastises the river for its perceived betrayal, despite the fact that during the time of the Punic wars it would not have been considered part of Roman territory.

Although Silius makes it clear that his monolithic hero's strength exceeds even that of Achilles in *Iliad* 21, Scipio nonetheless can only hold back the tide of the river (and the inevitability of history) for so long. Fearing a shameful death by drowning, Scipio sees his prayers answered by Venus, who sends her consort Vulcan to burn the river into submission. The detailed description of the fiery destruction of the river and its surrounding environment anticipates the destruction that the Italian landscape will experience under Hannibal's invasion, most notably in *Punica* 7. Yet, this destruction is self-inflicted, brought about by Scipio's refusal

to admit defeat even in the face of a divine adversary; the Romans' self-destructive tendencies continue to run rampant.

The battle of the Trebia has now come to an end, and we have returned to the most recently discussed passage, the foreboding epilogue and Silius' harsh introduction of Flaminius. As he did at the beginning of the battle, Silius quickly begins to transition to the battle of Lake Trasimene, whose name is invoked only a few lines after Trebia has ended. Scipio's time in the spotlight is now over, as the mortally flawed Flaminius is introduced in the harshest terms. An agent of Juno, Flaminius is representative of the essence of the Roman self-destructive mindset and compared to an ignorant captain who is even more dangerous than the treacherous sea. Flaminius' characterization as *nescius* aligns him with Hannibal, himself recently described with the same word, as an internal enemy of the state.

The battle of Trebia exhibits many of the same features as Ticinus; it is divided into two halves and concludes with the exploits of a Scipio. In it, Silius expands on many of the themes which were established at Ticinus, that of self-destruction and civil war imagery, the ambiguity of identities, and the dangers of theomachy, while the cyclical nature of these battles becomes an important thematic addition. He also continues his use of several hallmark techniques, his subtle and meaningful implementation of nomenclature, programmatic necrologues, and a continuous and simultaneous engagement with Homer, Livy, Polybius, Vergil, Lucan, Ovid, and Statius.

While there are many similarities between the two battles, Silius is not content simply to repeat Ticinus exactly. Whereas at Ticinus Hannibal and Scipio never fully engage, with Scipio instead fighting Crixus as a surrogate, at Trebia Gracchus and Hannibal come much closer to, if not a duel, then at least a 'competitive *aristeia*'; whereas at Ticinus the unknown Roman Catus recklessly charges forth, at Trebia the flaw is made more severe through its embrace by the

Roman general and soldiers collectively; whereas at Ticinus Hannibal displays vain ambitions of rivalling the war god which are ultimately undercut by Mars' appearance at the end of the battle, at Trebia Scipio engages in a direct theomachy with the river god that not only vastly overshadows Hannibal's pretensions but even surpasses Achilles himself. The scale at Trebia is increased in every way over Ticinus, and the climactic destruction of the river by the fiery power of Vulcan represents the climax of the first section of the epic; Hannibal has bludgeoned his way into Italy, but the gods – for the most part – are on the Romans' side.

The battle of Trebia is now over, and with it ends the extended battle narrative that began at *Pun.* 4. 131 with Bogus' errant spear throw. Book 4 ends with a 100-line interlude describing Hannibal's crossing of the Apennines (another transgressive moment) and his refusal to sacrifice his son at the Carthaginian senate's request (another foreboding sign of intra-Carthaginian strife that mirrors the civil strife of the Romans). But it is not long before Silius renews his battle narrative again with the battle of Trasimene in Book 5; the Romans' misfortunes are far from over.

## Conclusion:

### The *Punica*: An Epic of Battles

The battles of the *Punica*'s fourth book are, on the surface level, a messy jumble of arbitrary encounters and fictional or fictionalized Carthaginian, Gallic, and Roman characters, punctuated by overly-long and repetitive descriptions of fighting and deaths. Yet, if we can push past Pliny's prejudice and allow Silius the same assumptions given to other poets, it quickly becomes clear that this is a scandalously overlooked poetic talent. Far from random or arbitrary filler, Silius' battlefields are complex and intricately crafted showpieces of poetry; virtually every detail Silius includes is packed with subtle and insightful allusions to Vergil, Lucan, Statius, and numerous other authors, from the symbolically loaded decapitation of Quirinius and the purposefully chosen names of the triplet brothers at Ticinus, to Fibrenus' battle with the elephant and Scipio's river theomachy at Trebia. This is not allusion for allusion's sake; instead, as we have seen over the last four chapters, Silius is in constant engagement with his references, exploring new readings and creating interesting contrasts and reversals. Nor is this empty imitation; rather, Silius' dense style exhibits a keen understanding of his influences and an intelligent, creative use of intertextuality. With the allusive battlefields of *Punica* 4, Silius has left behind a remarkable legacy, one that invites a reading at the closest level and is deserving of its place in the canon of Latin epics.

The battle narrative that begins in *Punica* 4 does not end with the battle of the Trebia. Rather, the battles of the *Punica* are strongly tied to the larger narrative that develops over the

seventeen books; the battle narrative and the end of the poem occur at the same time, only 30 lines after the end of the battle of Zama. Trasimene (217 BC), a massive 549-line disaster, follows immediately on the heels of Trebia and consumes most of book five with combat as complex and well-crafted as that of book four; after a long digression in book six (Regulus and the serpent) and Fabius Maximus' delaying tactics in book seven, the battle of Cannae (216 BC) dominates books eight through ten as the depth of Roman misfortune reaches its lowest point. Books 11 – 13 leave the main battle narrative behind for some time, although there are some important smaller battles that are worthy of study. Book 12 especially can be considered a 'battle book,' with Hannibal's back to back defeats at Naples, Cumae, Puteoli, and Nola; Hannibal's confrontation at Rome in the second half of book 12 is a theomachy that exceeds even Scipio's at the Trebia, and I should also mention the brief but exciting cameo that Ennius makes in battle in the middle of book 12. By book 14, we have returned to the main battle narrative with Marcellus' Sicilian Expedition (214 – 212 BC) that culminates in the battle of the great harbor. The battle of the Metaurus (207 BC) in northern Italy follows in book 15, as the consuls Marcus Livius and Claudius Nero reverse the defeats of book four and kill Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal. Book 17 contains one final large battle, the battle of Zama (202 BC), that brings the narrative to its conclusion with Hannibal's defeat and Scipio's triumph.

These six major combat episodes, Ticinus/Trebia (which I consider to be one large encounter), Trasimene, Cannae, Syracuse, Metaurus, and Zama, form the bulk of Silius' battle narrative. All in all, within books 4 – 10 of the *Punica* there are 1,811 verses of proper combat description, well more than a third of the total verses of books 4 – 10. Taking all the battles together, keeping in mind that the battles of the second half of the poem are shorter than those of the first, we count 2,515 lines of pure combat narrative out of the 12,202 total lines of the poem,

a full 20% of the poem's entirety; one out of every five lines of the *Punica* occurs in the midst of a pitched battle. This does not include the major battle outside the walls of Saguntum in book 2, nor the many small battles of book 12, nor the numerous skirmishes and other combat encounters scattered throughout the work, scenes which add hundreds of lines to this sum.

The *Punica* is, then, an epic of battles, centered around and predicated on a series of battle scenes, their build ups, and their aftermaths; a battle is the centerpiece of the prologue (Saguntum in book 2), battles open the main narrative in books 4 (Ticinus/Trebia) and 5 (Trasimene), a battle marks the central turning point at the middle of the epic (Cannae), and three battles track the Roman recovery in books 14 (Syracuse), 15 (Metaurus), and 17 (Zama). An examination of these six battles begins to reveal the macrostructure of the poem. The three opening books act as a prologue, followed by the beginning of the war and three major defeats in books 4 and 5; three books delay Cannae in a metapoetic display of the Fabian strategy, with Cannae consuming books 9 and 10; three more books follow that detail the decline of Hannibal and the rise of the Scipionic hero (11 – 13), and the succeeding pair (14 – 15) showcases the first Roman victories, mirroring the defeats of books 4 and 5; finally, two more books conclude the poem, culminating in the defeat of Hannibal in Africa, mirroring his first victory in Spain.

From here, a structural pattern begins to emerge, with the *Punica* progressing in triads and dyads (3 – 2 – 3 – 2 – 3 – 2 – 2(?)). This is perhaps the strongest evidence in favor of a hypothetical 18-book structure (3 – 2 – 3 – 2 – 3 – 2 – 3) centered around Cannae's two books, which would account for a proposed lacuna in book 17.<sup>409</sup> This would also explain the notable absence of the meeting of Scipio and Hannibal before the battle, an omission that Duff calls

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<sup>409</sup> Duff *ad* 17.460 on the lacuna: "That some verses, perhaps a great many verses, have been lost here seems to me certain. For the present episode is not completed; and the following episode requires introductory matter which is lacking. There is no other instance in the poem of narrative so faulty."

“inconceivable”; I am inclined for once to agree with him.<sup>410</sup> An 18-book structure would also bring Silius’ *Punica* in line with Ennius’ *Annales* – but *that* is a topic for another day.<sup>411</sup>

A reading of the *Punica* that focuses on its battle scenes rather than ignoring them not only reveals a remarkable level of both *cura and ingenium* but also illuminates and defines many of the poem’s most important themes. These battles are far from ‘monotonous and repulsive’ slogs, to reuse Duff’s critique quoted at the beginning of chapter one; instead they are masterful examples of the poem’s craftsmanship and, most importantly, they are fundamental to any reading of Silius’ great work. The battles of the *Punica* are intricately linked. Each battle is designed to be read thoroughly, slowly, and in simultaneous engagement with each other battle in the poem; only then can the design of Silius’ program be revealed. So, I conclude, as we leave behind the battles of book 4 and look ahead to the remainder of the poem, there is now a need for a comprehensive study of the battle scenes of the *Punica*, examining how Silius engages inter- and intratextually with the battles of Homer, Vergil, Lucan, Statius, Livy and his own poem. This study would provide an essential resource for large passages of the book that remain critically understudied to this day and would contribute significantly to our ever-growing understanding of Silius’ monumental Roman poem.

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<sup>410</sup> Duff *ad* 17.460 continued: “Further, it is known that Scipio and Hannibal met in conference before the battle; and it is inconceivable that Silius should pass over an incident so dramatic.”

<sup>411</sup> The debate over the *Aufbau* of Silius’ poem is far from over, and there are many who disagree with the 3 – 2 structure outlined above. See Augoustakis 2010a: 8-10 for a useful overview of the work on the *Punica*’s structure; there, Augoustakis (n.18) notes that the most recent supporter of the eighteen-book theory is Delarue 1992. A lacuna in book 17 seems, to me at least, nearly certain; the most compelling argument in favor of a 17-book structure is that it matches the number of years in the war. For older but still useful overviews of the structure of the *Punica*, see von Albrecht 1964: 133-34 (esp. 133 n.35) and Wallace 1958. Livy counts the years of the war as 17 at 30.30.14 (Hannibal’s reckoning in his speech to Scipio before Zama) and 30.32.6. Livy seems to reckon the years of the war as 15 years in Italy + 1 year in Africa + 1 year for the siege of Saguntum. This accords with the omen before the battle of Ticinus at *Pun.* 4. 105 – 130 and Liger’s interpretation of 16 doves and 16 (counting inclusively, equivalent to 15 by our reckoning) years in Italy.

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