

*Parentum dedecus: Hannibal's Hatred and Memories of Defeat in Silius Italicus' Punica*

Silius' *Punica* depicts the rise and fall of Hannibal, but the shadow of Rome's first conflict with Carthage still looms large. Hannibal's hatred for Rome is tied to the impact of the First Punic War, while the war's explicit emergence in Book 6 suggests the futility of the Carthaginian invasion. Moreover, it is within these moments of the epic that Silius engages with the legacy of that war as the primary narrative of Latin epic poetry, stretching back to Naevius' *Bellum Punicum* (late third century BCE). Although the Republic's most renowned epicist to tackle the Second Punic War, Quintus Ennius, takes the field of battle at *Punica* 12.387-414 (Casali 2006), I suggest that Silius engages with the First Punic War's epic legacy in a more diffuse and subtle program of allusion.

A Carthaginian war cry shaped by the First Punic War is felt as early as Silius' first characterization of Hannibal. At 1.60-63, he relates that Hannibal is inspired and tormented by Juno and the shame of his father's loss in the earlier war (for Hannibal, see Stocks 2014). Silius even adds the explicit resonance of the First Punic War to this marked scene of martial motivation: *...his super, aevi / flore virens, avet Aegates abolere, parentum / dedecus, ac Siculo demergere foedera ponto*. The Aegates Islands were the site of the final Carthaginian defeat at sea during the earlier war, and they stand throughout the epic as a symbol for Carthage's new mission – *damnatio memoriae* (cf. 1.61, 622; 2.310; 4.80, 800; 5.246; 6.685; 11.527).

The First Punic War, however, is not only a locus for Carthaginian discontent. In fact, Book 6 effectively serves as a miniature narrative of the earlier war through a flashback to M. Atilius Regulus' campaign in North Africa and through the ekphrastic imagery of the Temple at Liternum. Regulus enters the narrative during his son's chance encounter with Marus, Regulus' former squire. In a scene of humble hospitality, Marus restores Serranus to health by recounting

his father's slaying of a giant North African serpent – the serpent serving as a symbol and avatar for Hannibal and his mission throughout Silius' epic (Bassett 1955; Fröhlich 2000; Soerink 2013). Analepsis allows for a proleptic victory to emerge, at least fleetingly, through which the serpent-slaying past of the First Punic War vouchsafes the eventual destruction of the serpent by Scipio at Zama. Furthermore, Serranus' interaction with the memory of Regulus introduces a generational link that parallels Hannibal's relationship with his father and Silius' own poetic interactions with his predecessors.

At the close of Book 6, Hannibal arrives at Liternum (1.651-666) and encounters a temple that depicts scenes of Roman victory from the entire span of the earlier war (Manuwald 2009; Harrison 2010). The images enrage Hannibal and prompt him to demand the erasure of First Punic War memory (6.714-16), a desire that Silius' epic thwarts through its narrative creation of the monument and through allusions within it to Naevius' epic on the First Punic War, the *Bellum Punicum*. And it is here, at the moment Hannibal is confronted with images of Carthage's past losses, that Silius as poet explicitly confronts the earlier epic tradition on the First Punic War.

In Book 7 of his *Annales*, Ennius, Naevius' epic successor, famously recuses himself from narrating the First Punic War, since it is the hackneyed topic of the prior generation (see e.g. Hinds 1998: 52-72). While Silius makes Ennius a character in his epic, it is through the ekphrasis of the temple at Liternum that he performs the poetic task that Ennius seems to have avoided. By means of the explicit confrontation with Naevian territory in his potted narrative of the First Punic War, Silius harnesses Rome's epic memory as a resonant vehicle for presenting Hannibal with an image of his own inevitable defeat.

## Bibliography

- Bassett, E. L. 1955. "Regulus and the Serpent in the *Punica*." *CP* 50.1: 1-20.
- Casali, S. 2006. "The Poet at War: Ennius on the Field in Silius's *Punica*." *Arethusa* 39.3: 569-93.
- Fröhlich, U. 2000. *Regulus, Archtyp römischer Fides: Das sechste Buch als Schlüssel zu den Punica des Silius Italicus: Interpretation, Kommentar und Übersetzung*. Tübingen.
- Harrison, S. J. 2010. "Picturing the future again: Proleptic ekphrasis in Silius' *Punica*." In A. Augoustakis ed. *Brill's companion to Silius Italicus*. Leiden: 279–292.
- Hinds, S. 1998. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*. Cambridge.
- Manuwald, G. 2009. "History in Pictures: Commemorative Ecphrases in Silius Italicus' *Punica*." *Phoenix* 63.1/2: 38-59.
- Soerink, J. 2013. "Statius, Silius Italicus and the Snake Pit of Intertextuality." In G. Manuwald and A. Voigt eds. *Flavian Epic Interactions*. Berlin: 361-78.
- Stocks, C. 2014. *The Roman Hannibal: Remembering the enemy in Silius Italicus' Punica*. Liverpool.