

The Treatment of Virtue in Silius Italicus' *Punica*

Submitted by Kiu Kwong Yue, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics and Ancient History, January 2011.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the treatment of virtue in Silius Italicus' *Punica*, particularly at three key points in the epic, the battles of Saguntum, Cannae and Zama, which form the beginning, middle and end of the poem. I argue that Silius writes the *Punica* with a particular moral message in mind, a message that can be discerned through the analysis of the models of virtue demonstrated by the *Punica*'s characters at these points in the epic. Silius depicts an imperfect model of virtue through the Saguntines' brutal mass suicide. The Saguntines believe that they should be virtuous by remaining loyal to Rome, but they act through a misguided notion of *fides* that causes them to commit impious crimes. Virtue also plays a key role in Silius' Cannae narrative, as his conception of Cannae as a paradoxical turning point in Rome's history is reflected through the paradoxical nature of virtue that he depicts at Cannae. The contradictory role that virtue plays at Cannae is most apparent in Silius' portrayal of the two consuls Varro and Paulus. Even though Varro acts without virtue and Paulus seemingly acts according to it, Varro ultimately does more good for Rome than the heroic Paulus. The models of virtue seen at Saguntum and Cannae are connected to the failures that the Saguntines and Romans suffer on the battlefield, but Silius depicts a much more appealing model of virtue by the end of the epic, which leads to Rome's victory at Zama. This victory is due entirely to Rome's ability to finally adopt a model of moral behaviour that balances both *fides* and *pietas*. At Zama, Scipio leads the Romans by providing a moral example for all to follow. Ultimately, it is Scipio's moral behaviour that Silius endorses, by making it the true cause of Rome's victory over Carthage.

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Introduction

For most of its existence, Silius Italicus' *Punica*, the longest among surviving Roman epics, has been neglected for serious study by scholars, largely because of its reputation as a poorly composed poem, undeserving of attention. Critics have variously seen the *Punica* as being devoid of literary merit, as being merely an exercise in emulating Virgil without adding any originality,¹ and as being an unchallenging work, one which uses its subject matter, the Second Punic War, to flatter and support the regime of Domitian, in whose reign the epic was written.² This thesis argues that, far from the assessment of these critics, the *Punica* offers significant insight to readers, especially through Silius' commentary on the role that virtue plays in the world. Through analyzing Silius' treatment of virtue and morality in the *Punica*, we are able to gain greater insight into the overall message of the poem and the moral lessons that Silius wishes to teach to his audience. This analysis of the epic is, however, not merely useful for understanding the poet and his work. The *Punica*'s rare position as a historical epic means that unlike most epics, it participates in the broad traditions of both epic poetry and historiography. Analyzing the way in which Silius interacts with these traditions allows us to better understand both of them.

Being part of the epic tradition, the *Punica* provides valuable evidence concerning the development of the epic genre and the reception in Flavian Rome of poets from earlier periods (and even interaction between contemporary Flavian poets). Yet the *Punica* also uses history to make its point. Silius does not merely adopt the subject matter of the Second Punic War in order to weave an epic tale. Instead, Silius' attitude towards the significance of the war is crucial to the message of the poem. By giving his moral lessons through the depiction of specific episodes within the war, he allows us to see how the Second Punic War was perceived in the Flavian period, and

¹ Butler (1909), 240.

² Vessey (1974a).

what place in Roman history the war was seen to occupy, especially from a moral standpoint. In addition, Silius' use of famous *exempla* in Roman history provides new and interesting ways to interpret these *exempla*, and hence a fresh perspective on the tradition in which such *exempla* inhabit. Silius plays on previous presentations of *exempla*, but he also becomes a participant in the exemplary tradition by using them to make his moral message in the *Punica*. Finally, Silius' treatment of virtue in the *Punica* is in itself informative of attitudes towards virtue in the Flavian period. After all, Silius' interest in virtue and morality was not unique; the Flavian regime was similarly keen to promote the importance of virtue in its attempt to maintain power following the turmoil of the civil war in 69. While Silius does not necessarily align his moral agenda with that of the Flavians, his attitude towards virtue and allusions to the horrors of civil war provide insight into how Romans of the Flavian period might have approached these issues. In short, the *Punica* occupies a unique position in Roman literature and Roman culture. By analyzing the *Punica* from a moral perspective, we are able to exploit this position and open up numerous avenues of investigation, allowing us to gain a better understanding of not only the poem itself, but also the poetic and historiographical traditions in which it belongs, as well as the cultural issues with which the epic is vitally concerned.

The *Punica* is an epic that tells the story of the Second Punic War. In its seventeen books, Silius moves from the outbreak of the war in Spain to its conclusion at Carthage. Books 1 and 2 depict the beginning of the conflict, Carthage's siege of Saguntum. Once Saguntum is captured, Hannibal marches to Italy (book 3), and the war between Carthage and Rome begins in earnest. Rome falls to numerous defeats, at the Ticinus and the Trebia (book 4) and at Lake Trasimene (book 5). The defeat at Lake Trasimene is followed by the story of Marcus Atilius Regulus from the First Punic War (book 6). The appointment of Fabius Maximus as dictator briefly halts Hannibal's progress (book 7), but his removal from this position and the election of new consuls leads to Rome's worst disaster, her defeat at Cannae. Cannae's importance in the

narrative is signalled by the large amount of space it occupies: books 8, 9 and 10 are devoted to the prelude of the battle, the battle itself and its aftermath. After Cannae, however, the second half of the epic depicts Rome's gradual recovery. Hannibal is prevented from marching on Rome at the end of book 10, and despite Capua going over to the Carthaginians (book 11), the Romans begin to gain victory after victory, in contrast to their string of defeats in the first half of the poem. They successfully besiege Capua and withstand Hannibal's attempts to break the siege (books 12 and 13), Marcellus captures Syracuse in Sicily (book 14), Scipio Africanus takes Carthago Nova in Spain (book 15) and the consuls Claudius Nero and Livius Salinator inflict a heavy defeat on Carthage at the Metaurus, killing Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal in the process (book 15). After a brief interlude in which Scipio's character is more fully developed and preparations are made for a campaign in Africa (book 16), the epic concludes with Hannibal's return to Africa, Scipio's final victory over him at Zama and Scipio's triumphal procession following the victory (book 17).

I will argue in this thesis that in Silius' treatment of moral themes throughout the epic, he provides examples of both correct and incorrect conceptions of the meaning of virtue, in order to show the reader the importance of behaving in a properly virtuous fashion. In the *Punica*, Silius consistently associates military failure with moral failure, and military victory with moral superiority. Numerous cases of perverted, or misguided, virtue lead to the inability of Rome and her allies to stand up to the Carthaginians in the early stages of the war, and the turnaround in Rome's fortunes can be seen to coincide with her improved application of morality. The way in which the virtues of *fides* and *pietas* interact with each other is a particularly important aspect of the different models of virtue presented in the epic; in many episodes throughout the *Punica*, *fides* and *pietas* are seen to be in conflict with one another, or otherwise to be operating in paradoxical and ambiguous ways. Silius cautions the reader against the sort of virtue presented in these episodes by associating them with death and failure. By the end of the epic, however, a supreme moral hero emerges in the form of Scipio Africanus, whose

leadership of Rome brings the war to a successful end; his success is in turn attributed to his correct understanding of virtue, demonstrated by his ability to reconcile *fides* and *pietas*. Silius' attitude towards moral qualities in the *Punica* reveals a poet who is undoubtedly disgusted with past moral failures in Rome's history, the consequences of which he witnesses himself in the civil war of 69 AD, but also a poet who sees hope for the future, hope which is fundamentally based on virtuous behaviour, and especially on harmony between *fides* and *pietas*.

In discussing Silius' treatment of virtue in the *Punica*, it is important to clarify my usage of the term in this thesis. "Virtue" in this thesis refers to ethical virtue, rather than the military valor that the Latin term *virtus* often represents. At times, the concepts of ethical and military virtue overlap in the epic, as the *Punica's* protagonists must inevitably perform their duties on the battlefield, but it is possible to separate ethical virtue from military virtue in analyzing their actions in battle. For instance, while the actions of Paulus at Cannae certainly display plenty of *virtus*, in that he correctly acts as a proper Roman soldier should, whether he is ethically virtuous is another question. In this thesis, I aim to approach the issue of virtue from the perspective of morals and ethics, rather than the perspective of manliness in battle.

As my reading of the *Punica* analyzes the poet's treatment of virtue in the epic, it will build upon other readings of the text that also do so, especially those provided by Donald McGuire, François Ripoll and Raymond Marks.³ In this thesis, I will move away from the interpretations of McGuire and Ripoll, which, as I argue, inadequately explain the way in which Silius portrays virtue through the entire epic. Both McGuire and Ripoll provide readings of the *Punica* in which the poet approaches the topic of virtue in a consistent way; McGuire's deeply politicized reading of the *Punica*, which sees the epic as being directed against Domitian and empire, argues that the virtue that the *Punica's* characters appear to demonstrate is undermined by Silius' efforts to link such virtue with allusions to civil war; the reader is encouraged to look past the superficially

³ McGuire (1997), Ripoll (1998) and Marks (2005a).

virtuous nature of the characters' actions and focus on instead the civil strife and tyranny that allow these actions to take place. Ripoll provides a reading of virtue in the *Punica* that ignores the subversive subtext proposed by McGuire and sees the epic as depicting virtue in a fairly straightforward fashion; those who fight on the side of Rome display virtue and are deservedly praised, while their opponents lack virtue and are in turn condemned. I believe that Silius' treatment of virtue is more nuanced than either of these readings suggests. Silius is, as McGuire argues, deeply concerned with civil war, but such concern does not imply that he writes an anti-imperial epic. Similarly, some examples of virtue in the *Punica* are clearly praised and meant to be emulated, as Ripoll suggests, but others are presented in such a way as to question their significance. I will provide a reading of the *Punica* that incorporates aspects of both McGuire and Ripoll's arguments, and one that is most closely aligned to Marks' recent analysis of the text. I agree largely with Marks' contention that Scipio performs a critical didactic role in the *Punica*, and argue that Scipio's demonstration of virtue, when read in conjunction with the imperfect virtue of others in the epic, supports Marks' thesis but also allows us to see not just Scipio himself as an *exemplum* for the reader to follow, but the type of virtue displayed by Scipio in particular. In addition to interacting with these three critics, my thesis discusses many of the same issues present in Ben Tipping's recent monograph *Exemplary Epic*, published during the writing up phase of this thesis.⁴ Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I have been unable to make substantial use of Tipping's work, as well as the numerous articles in the recent *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus*, including those by Marks and Tipping.⁵

In order to place my thesis into context, I will now provide a review of Silian literature and situate my argument, as well as those of McGuire, Ripoll and Marks, among the current trends of critical approaches to the *Punica*.

⁴ Tipping (2010a).

⁵ Augoustakis (2010), Marks (2010) and Tipping (2010b).

Bibliographic review: contemporary relevance?

Negative attitudes towards the quality of Silius' poetry can be traced all the way back to the judgment of Silius' contemporary, Pliny the Younger. Upon Silius' death, Pliny wrote a letter in which he remarked on the poet's life, from which many of Silius' biographical details are drawn. In this letter, Pliny also offers a short, almost offhand assessment of the *Punica*, which he deems to have been written "with more diligence than talent" (*scribebat carmina maiore cura quam ingenio*, *Ep.* 3.7.5). Pliny's judgment, whether consciously or not, has been echoed in modern appraisals of the *Punica*. The attitude of some critics before the late twentieth century towards Silius and his poem resembles outright hostility. For instance, Harold Butler, in his 1909 text *Post-Augustan Poetry*, begins his chapter on Silius by introducing him as "the author of the longest and worst of surviving Roman epics"⁶ and follows by railing against practically every aspect of Silius' poetry. Among these, he attacks the intrusion of gods into the epic as "monstrous and insufferable",⁷ a complaint which later resurfaces in Denis Feeney's influential study on the gods in epic.⁸ Silius' allusions to epic predecessors such as Homer and Virgil are dismissed as "unintelligent plagiarisms and vexatious absurdities",⁹ and his characterization is summed up thus: "Silius failed to depict character".¹⁰ Such widespread hostility leads S.G. Owen to "enter a protest against the undue disparagement which has been meted out to this poet."¹¹ Clarence Mendell, an early defender of Silius, complains about the attitude of his fellow scholars and suggests a reason for their unrelenting attacks on the poem: "that select society of those who have read the seventeen [books] of the Punic War unite in magnifying their own perseverance by exaggerating the dullness of the poem."¹²

⁶ Butler (1909), 236.

⁷ Butler (1909), 239.

⁸ Feeney (1991), 301-12.

⁹ Butler (1909), 240.

¹⁰ Butler (1909), 242.

¹¹ Owen (1909), 254.

¹² Mendell (1924), 92.

Mendell's attempt to resuscitate Silius' reputation was not particularly successful. While critics since Butler have not been quite as harsh towards Silius' worth, his judgements have until recently been largely seen as correct. The extreme length of the *Punica*, which spans 17 books, the most among all Latin epics, was seen as a particular defect. David Vessey, who writes about Silius in the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, describes Silius as "a leviathan, wallowing in shallow waters that have been made turbid by his own frantic efforts to reach the open sea".¹³ The divine machinery is still seen as being "obtrusive" and "absurd".¹⁴ Vessey's treatment of Silius in the *CHCL* refrains from the savagery of Butler's invective and points out moments of poetic charm, for instance a lighthearted digression in book 7 on Bacchus and the farmer Falernus.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Vessey is disparaging of the *Punica*, and the impression of the epic conveyed by his depiction is one of a very long, uninspired poem, undeserving of being taken particularly seriously. Pliny's judgment is again cited in support of the critic's view, as Vessey bemoans the "chilling decorum, the fibreless and numbing dullness that pervades the *Punica*", attributes that are "in Pliny's terms... an absence of sustained *ingenium*."¹⁶

The attitudes that critics such as Butler and Vessey display explain why Silius, for a long period, was never seriously studied; his epic was simply deemed to be without the *ingenium* that made it worth studying on its own merits. The first study to attempt to give the *Punica* proper attention as a serious epic was that of Michael von Albrecht in 1964, who, in an indication of the *Punica's* poor reputation at the time, prefaced his work by stating that he did not wish to convince others of Silius' greatness as a poet.¹⁷ Despite this caveat, von Albrecht argues that Silius' epic is worth studying in greater detail, and particularly encourages readers to see Silius' interaction with his poetic predecessors less as unimaginative plagiarism, as Butler had done, than as an

¹³ Vessey (1982b), 591.

¹⁴ Vessey (1982b), 591.

¹⁵ Vessey (1982b), 592-3; see also Vessey (1973a).

¹⁶ Vessey (1982b), 595.

¹⁷ von Albrecht (1964), 12-3.

opportunity for the reader to gain new insights into these predecessors.¹⁸ Von Albrecht's study thus argued for a deeper way of reading Silius' relationship with his fellow poets, in comparison to previous scholars who had written Silius off as either a slavish imitator or as a poet whose references to other poets were merely superficial *color*.¹⁹ His work prompted a surge of interest in the *Punica*, although such interest was generally restricted to German scholars. Such studies include Jochem Küppers' investigation of the first two books of the epic,²⁰ Walter Kissel's analysis of the historicity of the epic in general,²¹ Reinhard Häussler's comparison of Silius and Lucan,²² Herbert Juhnke's study of Homeric references in Flavian epic,²³ Heinz-Günther Nesselrath's analysis of Silius' use of historical sources,²⁴ and Erich Burck's numerous discussions on the *Punica*, including general studies on the epic's blending of historical and epic treatments, and more specific ones dealing with the conclusion of the Battle of the Metaurus in books 15 and 16 (including the interplay between Silius, Virgil and Ovid during this episode), and the role played by the goddess Fides at certain parts of the epic.²⁵ However, English-language scholarship on Silius continued to be relatively limited until the seminal collaborative article by Frederick Ahl, Martha Davis and Arthur Pomeroy in 1986.

Scattered English-language studies on the *Punica* had been written before, many of which still remain very useful, such as John Nicol's analysis of Silius' use of historical sources.²⁶ Edward Bassett produced an important article pointing out the significant role that Hercules plays in the epic,²⁷ while Vessey, despite his opinion on the quality of Silius' poetry, provided informative studies on several episodes, such as the siege of

¹⁸ For instance, von Albrecht (1964), 166 argues that Silius reads Virgil like Lucan, while reading Lucan like Virgil. See also von Albrecht (1968) and its corresponding English version in von Albrecht (1999) for a discussion of Silius' use of Ovid.

¹⁹ Bruère (1958) and Bruère (1959) discuss Silius' use of Ovid, but labels such use as "*color*". A more recent treatment is Wilson (2004), who argues that Silius' use of Ovid goes beyond mere *color*.

²⁰ Küppers (1986).

²¹ Kissel (1979).

²² Häussler (1978).

²³ Juhnke (1972).

²⁴ Nesselrath (1986).

²⁵ General overview of the poem: Burck (1979). History and epic: Burck (1984). The Metaurus: Burck (1982). Fides: Burck (1988).

²⁶ Nicol (1936).

²⁷ Bassett (1966). He also wrote on other aspects of the epic, mainly focusing on specific passages; see Bassett (1955); Bassett (1959); and Bassett (1963).

Saguntum, which has now become a much-discussed part of the poem, the ecphrasis of Hannibal's shield and Jupiter's misleading prophecy given to Hannibal in book 3.²⁸ However, English Silian literature was still scarce, and the situation was deemed by Matier, one of the most ardent defenders of Silius, as the result of "prejudice" by critics.²⁹ Matier brands the attacks on the *Punica* by critics such as Butler and Vessey as "unworthy of the name of scholarship" and "based on preconceived notions or downright ignorance".³⁰ He further defends the poet from charges of unoriginality.³¹ Matier attempted to reverse what he regarded as an unfair neglect of the *Punica* by engaging in several studies of his own, on themes such as the role that Stoicism plays in the epic, the character of Hannibal and Ennian influence on Silius.³²

The work primarily responsible for moving Silian scholarship in an entirely new direction was the influential essay by Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy. A comprehensive overview of the *Punica*, it offered new ideas on how to interpret the *Punica*, and the arguments presented within it remain extremely influential in recent scholarship. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy condemn critics' tendencies to "begin with the assumption that the poem is the product of an inferior author and thus has little or no profundity of thought", arguing instead for their own approach, based on "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."³³ In their study, they draw attention to the creative ways in which Silius interacts with Virgil and Lucan, allowing the epic to achieve "an identity and a texture all its own."³⁴ In so doing, they attack the assumption by other critics that, since Silius makes use of epic models, he must have nothing original to offer. While arguing for a more positive appraisal of Silius' poetic ability, however, Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy present a reading of the *Punica* as a depressing poem about the gradual fall of

²⁸ Saguntum: Vessey (1974b). Hannibal's shield: Vessey (1975). Hannibal in book 3: Vessey (1982a).

²⁹ Matier (1989b)

³⁰ Matier (1989b), 4. See also Matier (1981).

³¹ Matier (1989b), 7-10.

³² Stoicism: Matier (1990). Hannibal: Matier (1989a). Ennius: Matier (1991).

³³ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2493.

³⁴ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2555.

Rome facilitated by its victory over Carthage, rather than a poem unreservedly celebrating the glory of Roman victory.

Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy portray the *Punica* as an epic “of subtle rather than of blatant paradox. It is, like the *Aeneid*, a tale of victory emerging from defeat; yet it is also, like the *Pharsalia*, a tale of ultimate defeat in victory.”³⁵ They are especially keen to point out what they see as the poem’s descriptions of the negative effects that victory has on Roman morality, through strategies such as naming participants in battles with names reminiscent of civil conflict,³⁶ displaying the cruelty of certain Roman generals such as Fulvius Flaccus and Claudius Nero towards their defeated foes,³⁷ and especially the poet’s “disconcerting” treatment of Scipio Africanus, whose attitude on how the war should be played out is seen as “chilling”.³⁸ The reading that Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy present has influenced all subsequent scholarship on the *Punica*, with scholars echoing the idea that Silius’ epic uses the Second Punic War to lament the civil conflict endemic in the late republic and early empire.

Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy’s attempt to rehabilitate the reputation of Silius participates in the broader trend of the late twentieth century in which Anglo-American scholars sought to read Silver Latin literature in a new light, one that sees the use of past literary models as a strength rather than a weakness. This type of reading is an important aspect of the New Latin movement and has, according to Don Fowler, “led to a great revaluation of so-called ‘Silver Latin’, and in particular of Ovid, Lucan, Seneca, and the Flavian epicists, above all Statius, who has to an extent regained in New Latin criticism the position of centrality that he possessed in the Middle Ages.”³⁹ Indeed, Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy’s discussion of the *Punica* was published alongside Ahl’s “Reconsideration” of the *Thebaid*, which similarly encourages the reader to regard

³⁵ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2556.

³⁶ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2518.

³⁷ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2536-42.

³⁸ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2542-55.

³⁹ Fowler (1995), 3.

Statius as a poet worthy of greater study,⁴⁰ and Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is given an in-depth reevaluation by Ahl in his *Introduction*.⁴¹ Fowler further notes that another aspect of the New Latin movement is "constant awareness of the politics of interpretation",⁴² and a consequent fundamental link between politics and poetics. One of the most emphatic demonstrations of such a link is Jamie Masters' study of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, which sees the epic's poetry as entirely evocative of the types of politics described within the poem.⁴³ The New Latinists' tendency to integrate poetry and politics is evident not only in Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy's analysis of the *Punica*, but in many subsequent studies of the epic as well. These studies are especially keen to see the *Punica* as displaying certain political attitudes towards Flavian Rome based on Silius' portrayal of the Hannibalic War.

One of the most prominent studies to argue that the *Punica* is a "subversive", anti-Domitianic epic is Donald McGuire's *Acts of Silence*, and in this thesis I will agree with various aspects of McGuire's interpretation of the *Punica*, but find his overall reading of the epic to be ultimately inadequate. Having already followed Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy in noting Silius' strategy of naming characters after civil war participants,⁴⁴ McGuire's work constructs a reading of Silius, as well as of his Flavian contemporaries Statius and Valerius Flaccus, in which rulers are depicted as tyrants, the oppressed frequently resort to suicide in order to demonstrate the tyranny of their oppressors, and allusions to civil strife are abundant. All of these factors are used by McGuire to suggest that the *Punica* was critical of the state that imperial Rome finds herself to be in, critical of the authoritarianism of emperors such as Domitian, and yet concerned with the inefficacy of methods of opposition to such authoritarianism, namely suicide, which by its very nature leads to the destruction of the oppressed rather than the oppressor. Like Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy, McGuire draws on the relationship between the *Punica*, the

⁴⁰ Ahl (1986).

⁴¹ Ahl (1976).

⁴² Fowler (1995), 3.

⁴³ Masters (1992).

⁴⁴ McGuire (1995).

Aeneid and the *Bellum Civile*. His reading of the poem is encapsulated in his understanding of the relationship between the *Punica* and the epics of Virgil and Lucan: “it uses the *Aeneid* and the *Pharsalia* as epic termini, or ‘bookends’ – where the *Aeneid* traced Rome’s epic, historic, and political origins, and the *Pharsalia* charted Rome’s political demise, the *Punica* slips inside these boundaries to define the key moment at which Rome’s energy finally and irreversibly shifted from positive evolution to strife-torn devolution.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Neil Bernstein argues in his discussion of kinship in Flavian epic that, after the brief moment of unity shown by the Italians in the face of Carthaginian invasion, “Rome’s subsequent history will be one of civil conflict”, showing Silius’ “full awareness of the causal connection between the defeat of Carthage and the subsequent episodes of civil conflict at Rome”, emphasizing the poet’s concern with the moral degeneracy of contemporary Rome.⁴⁶

In my thesis, I ultimately disagree with McGuire on the overall message conveyed by the epic, even though his study is one that has greatly influenced my own reading of the *Punica*. His treatment of the Saguntum episode of books 1 and 2 rightly draws attention to the ambiguity inherent in the poet’s praise of the Saguntines’ suicide,⁴⁷ after the long-held assumption that there was no problematic message to be found in the passage.⁴⁸ In general, McGuire’s contention that Silius deliberately crafts the episode to reinforce a paradoxical evaluation of the Saguntines’ actions is convincing, but I cannot agree with his conclusion that, through depicting the Saguntines’ suicide, “Silius turns his gaze ahead to the time of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* and to several eras of Roman civil war, giving the reader a first introduction to one of the epic’s major arguments, that it was in the very act of fighting Hannibal that Rome set itself on a course toward civil war.”⁴⁹ Instead, I see Silius as using the Saguntine episode to demonstrate the consequences of moral failure; by contrasting the fate of the Saguntines

⁴⁵ McGuire (1997), 32-3.

⁴⁶ Bernstein (2008), 190-2.

⁴⁷ McGuire (1997), 207-19.

⁴⁸ For instance, in Vessey (1974b). I will discuss this episode in greater detail in Chapter One.

⁴⁹ McGuire (1997), 219.

with more positive fates of others in the epic, such as Fabius Maximus and Scipio Africanus, Silius emphasizes the importance of the correct interpretation and application of virtue. Essentially, while McGuire sees the Flavian poets as painting a thoroughly bleak picture of the reality of Flavian Rome, I argue that Silius wishes to show that such bleakness may be avoided if one learns from the mistakes of those such as the Saguntines and emulates the actions of those such as Scipio.

McGuire's focus on the *Punica's* attitude towards Flavian Rome highlights the shift in recent scholarship towards reading the epic as one intimately connected with its contemporary surroundings, rather than one solely focused on the nostalgic past. In his recent monograph on the *Punica*, Raymond Marks offers several reasons why critics had previously seen the *Punica* as "escapist" and irrelevant to the contemporary situation in Flavian Rome: "the nostalgic tenor of the poem; its classicizing style, choice of subject matter (the distant, republican past), plaintive remarks on future moral decline, and relatively infrequent allusions to contemporary events and persons".⁵⁰ The relative scarcity of explicit references leads Albrecht Dihle, for instance, to compare Silius to Lucan; he argues that, while Lucan's poem shows "the poet's deep distaste for contemporary politics, Silius' work contains no recognisable allusions to events or conditions during the author's own lifetime."⁵¹ Matthew Leigh characterizes Silius' poetry as the "poetry of retirement", written at leisure by a man whose political career has ended, about subjects which were not intimately connected with that career. He does not go as far as Dihle, but also contrasts Silius with Lucan; Silius, he states, "is no Lucan. There is no condemnation of imperial power or representation of modern Italy as a land in ruin. Rather, the world of Silius, which penetrates the world of the *Punica*, manifests itself in allusions to friends and fellow townsmen and in celebrations of those whom he loved most dearly: the authors who sat upon his shelf."⁵² Leigh sees the *Punica* not as a work particularly relevant to its own time, but as a museum displaying the

⁵⁰ Marks (2005a), 209.

⁵¹ Dihle (1994), 176.

⁵² Leigh (2001), 196-7.

poet's devotion to authors from bygone eras; the *Punica* "collects poets and orators as he himself did in life."⁵³ Carlo Santini similarly argues that the events in the *Punica* are told "with the dignity of a museum piece, having become too distant to be used in interpreting the present", and that Silius "makes no attempt to relate the issues of the Second Punic War to his age, unless for the purposes of celebration, as when in Book III Jupiter's prophecy glorifies the Flavian dynasty and in particular the actions of Domitian."⁵⁴ The biography of Silius that Pliny provides may play a part in this type of characterization of Silius' poetry; Marcus Wilson, for instance, notes that "Pliny regards Silius Italicus himself as something of an anachronism", before echoing Pliny's picture of Silius, who "lived not in Domitian's Rome but with Cicero, Virgil and other poets and artists of the past, surrounded by books, statues and portraits".⁵⁵ This portrayal of Silius' life leads Wilson to claim that "[f]rom Silius' world contemporary politics are banished... Flavian Rome enters the *Punica* under a different aspect: not as the time in which the poem is composed but as part of the future awaiting Rome after the war with Hannibal is finished."⁵⁶ Thus, even though Wilson acknowledges the presence of Flavian Rome within the *Punica*, this version of Rome is nevertheless mythologized, with the problems and issues of the real Rome left unmentioned. For critics such as Santini and Wilson, the *Punica* offers us a glimpse of how Silius may have engaged with Rome's distant past, but this conception of the past bears no relation to how he viewed the issues of his own day.

Other critics, however, have argued that the *Punica* consciously engages with important contemporary issues. Arthur Pomeroy, in examining Silius' role as a learned man in Flavian Rome, points out several minor allusions in the epic which might have appealed to the interests of his audience. A column of Duilius is described by Silius as being made out of white marble (6.664), a detail that Pomeroy argues indicates that the column had been restored under Vespasian, a topic in which his audience would have

⁵³ Leigh (2001), 199.

⁵⁴ Santini (1991), 8-9.

⁵⁵ Wilson (1993), 233.

⁵⁶ Wilson (1993), 233-4.

been interested.⁵⁷ He further points out references to viticulture, a topic whose subtleties are obscure to modern readers, but which would have been “of especial contemporary importance, given Domitian’s extraordinary scheme to have the vineyards of the provinces either cut down or reduced by half to encourage growing wheat”.⁵⁸ Nor does Pomeroy focus merely upon the small details that mark Silius out as a learned man keen to impress his audience. He also argues that Silius’ choice of historical epic indicates a desire to support the Flavian regime, through properly representing traditional Roman moral values. Thus, he claims that “[i]t cannot be accidental that two of Silius’ major concepts are *Fides* and *Pietas*, the values of truthfulness and honesty, and of due respect for the hierarchy of family and state... Given the horrors of the Roman civil war in A.D. 69, it is not surprising that such values should be stressed to aid the stability of the new Flavian dynasty.”⁵⁹ Accordingly, Pomeroy concludes that “Silius is, above all, in tune with his times.”⁶⁰ His opinion on the *Punica*’s alignment with the moral programme of the Flavians is also held by others such as Alessandro Mezzanotte, who declares that “[n]on si può certo considerare casuale che due dei fondamentali motivi su cui si basa l’epos siliano siano *fides e pietas*, ovvero i valori della lealtà e del rispetto per la gerarchia sia della famiglia sia dello stato.”⁶¹ Mezzanotte also stresses the poet’s concern with *correctio morum* and the degenerative effects of *luxus*, issues the Flavians themselves were keen to address,⁶² and concludes that the *Punica* was written in praise of the emperor and ruling dynasty, disseminating the cultural values that the imperial court wished to impose upon its subjects.⁶³ The same evaluation of the *Punica*’s treatment of morality is made by Wolf Liebeschuetz, who argues that the poem “is written not in a spirit of opposition but of support for the *status quo*”.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Pomeroy (1990), 129-30.

⁵⁸ Pomeroy (1990), 130.

⁵⁹ Pomeroy (1990), 123.

⁶⁰ Pomeroy (1990), 123.

⁶¹ Mezzanotte (1995), 363.

⁶² Mezzanotte (1995), 367-70.

⁶³ Mezzanotte (1995), 388.

⁶⁴ Liebeschuetz (1979), 246.

Aligned generally with these views on the relevance of the *Punica* to Flavian Rome is François Ripoll, whose extensive study of morality in Flavian epic investigates how the Flavian epicists portray values such as *virtus* and *pietas* in their works. Like McGuire, I argue that Ripoll's reading of the text is ultimately inadequate, even though he makes many important observations on aspects of virtue in the epic. Ripoll argues that the *Punica* was not written as a justification for Domitian's regime, but that the Flavians' moral programme coincided with the poet's own belief in the importance of virtue. Thus Silius is able to weave his moralizing agenda into passages that directly reference the ruling emperor, such as the eulogy of Domitian in book 3, integrating these passages into the whole epic. However, Silius' moralizing is not done solely in support of Domitian. Ripoll concludes that, "contrairement à Virgile, le lien entre la politique contemporaine et les fondements éthiques du poème est plutôt de convergence que de consubstantialité."⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Ripoll sees Silius as being influenced by the optimism instilled by the new Flavian regime, an optimism that still marks the *Punica* out as being pro-Flavian in nature. This "optimisme épique virgilien", Ripoll suggests, is opposed by a "pessimisme historique sallusto-lucanien", which reflects popular contemporary views on the moral decline of Rome.⁶⁶ A desire to arrest this moral decline is thus seen as one of the reasons for the moralizing tone present in the *Punica*. While I agree with Ripoll that a tension exists within the epic between "optimism" and "pessimism", I argue in this thesis that Silius' portrayal of virtue in the *Punica* is less clearcut than Ripoll's study suggests. In Ripoll's view, virtue's role throughout the *Punica* is more or less consistent: those who are virtuous are apportioned praise by the poet, while those who do not act virtuously are condemned. I argue, however, that virtues such as *fides* and *pietas* influence events at the start of the epic in noticeably different ways from the end of the epic. Characters who appear to be acting according to virtue may in fact be seen to be applying a misguided interpretation of virtue to their

⁶⁵ Ripoll (1998), 515.

⁶⁶ Ripoll (1998), 526.

actions, which causes them to reach ignoble ends, despite their best intentions. Throughout the *Punica*, Silius challenges the reader to interpret his characters' demonstrations of virtue and overturn the initial assumption that their actions should be emulated. Thus I argue for a more complex treatment of virtue in the *Punica* than the one outlined by Ripoll.

Another recent study that has argued in favour of the *Punica's* contemporary relevance is Raymond Marks' *From Republic to Empire*, and it is Marks' reading of the epic that most closely coincides with the arguments presented in this thesis. In Marks' extensive examination of the role that Scipio Africanus plays in the *Punica*, he argues that one of Silius' "chief preoccupations" in writing the epic is "the value of legitimacy of one-man rule or, rather, of its Roman manifestation, the Principate."⁶⁷ In Marks' opinion, Silius clearly establishes a link between the Second Punic War and Domitianic Rome. The imperial Rome that makes its way into the *Punica* is not, as Wilson states, a mythologized version with the emperor being an impossibly superhuman figure, but rather the very Rome of Silius' day, with the real life role of the emperor forming a crucial part of Silius' agenda. In particular, Marks argues that Scipio is the "crucial link between the republican past of the Second Punic War and the imperial future of Flavian Rome",⁶⁸ and in fact acts as a model for Domitian to emulate. Marks argues that throughout the *Punica*, Scipio is built up to be an ideal ruler who finally emerges as a *princeps* at the end of the poem. The epic is seen as "a document of and for its times and... to be read with specific reference to Domitian's Rome and perhaps even by Domitian himself",⁶⁹ thereby fulfilling a didactic function. Thus Marks argues that the virtuous model of behaviour provided by Scipio the *princeps* is meant to be an object of emulation by the actual *princeps* himself. In his study, Marks refrains from providing an opinion on any pro- or anti-Flavian stance on the part of the poet, as others such as Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy, McGuire, and Mezzanotte do, pointing instead to a lack of

⁶⁷ Marks (2005a), 210.

⁶⁸ Marks (2005a), 210.

⁶⁹ Marks (2005a), 287.

conclusive evidence and suggesting that “we should be cautious about Silius’ views on the Principate.”⁷⁰

The reading of the *Punica* I present in this thesis agrees for the most part with the argument given by Marks. I agree that the epic has a didactic function, with Scipio’s virtue being the obvious target for emulation. However, the focus of my thesis is not solely on Scipio, a successful exemplar of *virtus* in the *Punica*, but on other examples of *virtus*, including the *virtus* of the Saguntines, whose misapplied version of *virtus* leads to their deaths, and the paradoxical and ambiguous *virtus* that makes its way into the battle of Cannae. I argue that, besides the exemplary model of morality provided by Scipio, Silius illustrates alternative models of morality which are not to be followed by the reader. By associating these alternative models with failure, defeat and death, Silius underlines the importance not only of being virtuous, but also of understanding the correct way of being virtuous. In Scipio, we find a model Roman who displays both *fides* and *pietas* in his actions, while in the failed examples of virtue elsewhere in the epic, *fides* and *pietas* are often found to be working against each other. The obligations of *fides* and *pietas* pull the *Punica*’s characters in differing directions, and the incompatibility of these directions leads to unwelcome outcomes. Silius’ belief not just in the importance of virtue, but in the harmful nature of misguided virtue, plays, I believe, a critical role for our understanding of the *Punica*. Through connecting the fate of those who follow such failed models of morality with allusions to civil conflict, Silius also connects improper use of virtue with the unhappy scenes of civil war of his own day. Thus my reading of the *Punica* suggests that the epic acts to mourn and to warn against the civil wars of late republican and early imperial Rome, one of which Silius himself witnessed as the last consul of Nero. It offers its readers a better way forward for Rome, one that can be attained if Romans follow the moral model offered by Scipio at the end of the epic, a model that will lead Rome to success in the future, just as it leads the Rome of the *Punica* to eventual success. The argument of this thesis thus falls

⁷⁰ Marks (2005a), 286-7.

between the pessimistic readings of the *Punica* given by Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy and McGuire, and the optimistic readings of Pomeroy, Mezzanotte and others. While Silius clearly displays frustration and unhappiness at certain aspects of the Rome in which he lives, he does not necessarily condemn the current regime and its autocratic system of government for being the cause of such problems. Rather, Silius gives a cautiously optimistic view of Rome, provided that its citizens learn from past mistakes and adopt the correct model of morality outlined in the *Punica*.

The *Punica* and its epic predecessors

The role of Silius' epic predecessors, Virgil and Lucan in particular, in the *Punica* has been a much-discussed aspect of the epic, from ancient times to modern. What Pliny tells us about Silius' life has been seen by scholars as being instructive of how Silius uses Virgil; Pliny says that Silius was an ardent admirer of Virgil and celebrated his birthday with greater reverence than his own (*Ep.* 3.7.8). Additionally, Martial comments that Silius bought the land on which Virgil's tomb lay and maintained the tomb with great piety (*Mart.* 11.48-9). Such comments have led critics such as Butler to suggest that Silius' allusions to Virgil in the *Punica* amount to nothing more than nauseous plagiarism. However, as criticism of Silius has moved towards taking the poet more seriously, so critics have re-evaluated Silius' interaction with Virgil within his epic.

Even though critical analysis of Silius' interaction with previous epicists has moved beyond accusations of mere plagiarism, the *Punica* nevertheless owes much to the *Aeneid*, a fact that Silius proudly outlines in the opening lines of the epic. As Marks notes, the second word in the epic, *arma*, recalls the first word of the *Aeneid*, and the first word of the second line, *Aeneadum*, is an even more obvious reference to the work of Virgil. Nor are such references rare; as Marks puts it, "Virgil's guiding hand can be seen everywhere in the *Punica*, from its diction, phrasing, and meter to its choice of

motifs, descriptive touches, and rhetorical tropes.”⁷¹ One of the clearest indicators of Virgilian influence in the *Punica* is the epic’s constant references to the Trojan origins of the Romans, manifested through the phrases that Silius uses to describe the Romans. Duff believes that the reason for the proliferation for such alternative epithets is that “Silius evidently felt that *Romani* and *Itali* might recur too often”⁷², but it is much more likely that these epithets are deliberately meant to recall Rome’s Virgilian past. Gossage outlines the numerous ways in which Silius reminds the reader of the Romans’ Trojan heritage: “Rome, for example, is described as *Aeneia regna*, *Troia moenia*, *fatalia regna Teucrorum* and *cineres Troiae*; the Romans are *Phrygiae stirpis alumni*, *gens recidiua Phrygum*, *gens Troiana*, *Idaeum genus* and *gens Hectorea*, and they are often referred to as *Aeneadae*, *Troiugena*, *Troes*, *Teucri*, *Dardanidae*, *Phrygii* and *Priamidae*”.⁷³ Through the constant use of such descriptions, the world of Virgil permeates every book of the *Punica*.

Thematically, too, the *Punica* derives much of its material from the *Aeneid*. The Second Punic War is seen as being the result of Dido’s curse upon Aeneas, a curse that Hannibal seeks to fulfil; Aeneas’ activities in Carthage have a direct causal effect on what happens to the Romans in the *Punica*. Hannibal swears to destroy Rome in the temple of Dido (1.81-122), and Hannibal’s oath (1.114-9) clearly recalls the curse that Dido places upon the Romans (*Aen.* 4.622-9).⁷⁴ The way in which the *Punica* makes use of the world established by the *Aeneid* is seen by Philip Hardie as being indicative of how Silius saw his own relationship with Virgil. Hardie argues that Hannibal’s oath to Dido is also “the poem’s promise to remain faithful to the *Aeneid* in exchange for the release of the model’s creative powers”, and he moreover links Hannibal with Silius and Dido with Virgil in claiming that the oath represents “Silius’ cultivation of the shade of Virgil in the hope of his own poetic birth (or rebirth).”⁷⁵ Hardie uses Pliny’s assertion that Silius

⁷¹ Marks (2005c), 529.

⁷² Duff (1934), vol. 1, xiii-xiv.

⁷³ Gossage (1969), 75.

⁷⁴ See Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2495-6 and Gossage (1969), 76.

⁷⁵ Hardie (1993), 64-5.

venerated Virgil's grave as evidence to support his reading of Silius' relationship with Virgil within the *Punica*. His argument convincingly demonstrates the attitude that Silius displays towards his most influential epic predecessor. Yet while it is undeniable that Silius proudly shows his devotion to Virgil throughout the entire epic, his use of Virgil also goes beyond merely aping the content and language of the *Aeneid* at every turn. On many occasions, Silius cleverly manipulates Virgilian allusions with legitimate creativity.

In an analysis of the interplay between the *Punica* and *Aeneid* 8, Pomeroy demonstrates that Silius' constant allusions to the *Aeneid* may be regarded as something more complex than meaningless plagiarism. In particular, Pomeroy's observation that Silius shapes many of his scenes deliberately to contrast with and reverse parallel scenes in the *Aeneid* is helpful to our understanding of the *Punica*'s relationship with the *Aeneid*. One example that Pomeroy uses to demonstrate this theme of reversal is a comparison between various details of Aeneas' arrival at Pallanteum and his meeting with Evander in *Aeneid* 8 and Scipio's arrival at the court of the Numidian king Syphax in *Punica* 16.170-274. While Scipio's journey to Africa is reminiscent of Aeneas' own journey to meet Evander, thus reinforcing the link between Scipio and Aeneas, Pomeroy takes particular notice of the construction of Syphax as an anti-Evander. Contrasts manifest themselves in both the descriptions of each character as well as what happens in each episode. Syphax's wealth and pride is contrasted with the poverty and humility of Evander and his people. While Evander sets out to meet Aeneas again on the second day, Syphax orders Scipio to come to his palace if he wishes to meet with him. Evander readily agrees to an alliance with Aeneas, while Syphax first attempts to persuade Scipio to make peace with the Carthaginians before finally agreeing to ally with the Romans. Each alliance is also met with differing portents; whereas Evander's alliance with Aeneas is met with several approving ones, the alliance between Syphax and the Romans is accompanied by two ill omens: the sacrificial bull bolts from the altar and the fillet on Syphax's head falls to the ground. In this episode, then, Pomeroy notes a clear strategy

on Silius' part to build his narrative on the foundation of Virgil, but also to deliberately reverse elements of the Virgilian narrative to contrast situations within the *Punica* with corresponding scenes in the *Aeneid*.⁷⁶ Furthermore, reversals of *Aeneid* 8 are not merely present in the Syphax episode; Pomeroy observes that the entire story "has been broken into components and scattered throughout the *Punica*", with examples being most clearly seen in books 2, 12 and 16. In Hannibal, he also sees an "Aeneas, but an Aeneas of the losing side, an *impius heros*, and his actions represent a reversal of traditional Roman values."⁷⁷ Although I do not consider Hannibal to be the hero of the *Punica*, Pomeroy's observations on Silius' usage of reversal in his "literary reworking of Vergil's vision"⁷⁸ are nevertheless relevant to my conception of Silius' use of Virgil in this thesis.

Silius' reversal of Virgilian scenes is most relevant in my discussion of the battle of Cannae, and more specifically in the Anna episode (8.50-201) that forms the prelude to Cannae. In this episode, the influence of Ovid's account of Anna Perenna in the *Fasti* is clearly present, but the main focus of Silius' and Ovid's telling of the story are quite different. In Silius' use of Ovid, he emphasizes his own interplay with Virgil. I argue that the entire Anna episode can be read as a miniature reversal of *Aeneid* 1-4. Rather than it being Aeneas who is shipwrecked on the coast of Africa, it is now Anna who, in fleeing from Pygmalion following the death of Dido, is shipwrecked in Italy. Anna is received as a visitor by Aeneas, just as Aeneas himself was received by Dido, and both episodes end with a death. However, Silius' reworking of the Virgilian model yields some changes in detail. It is the visitor instead of the host who dies at the end of the Anna episode. Yet interestingly, both episodes end with the departure of the visitor, after an outsider intervenes to remind them of their duty. In Aeneas' case, it is Mercury who tells him to

⁷⁶ Pomeroy (2000), 155.

⁷⁷ Pomeroy (2000), 160.

⁷⁸ Pomeroy (2000), 162. Another example of reversal of a Virgilian scene is given by Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2500-1, who see Hannibal's siege of Rome in *Punica* 12 as a reversal of *Aeneid* 2. Juno shows Hannibal the impossibility of his mission by revealing the gods that stand in Rome's defense, which recalls Venus allowing Aeneas to see the gods destroying Troy. The end of the book sees the Romans pouring out of the city in joy at seeing the departure of the Carthaginians, which is reminiscent of the start of *Aeneid* 2, where the Trojans do the same, believing that the Greeks have left. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy argue that "Silius has not simply reversed some Vergilian motifs; he has reversed the movement and mood of the second book of the 'Aeneid'."

resume the course that fate has set for him, while in Anna's case, it is her sister Dido who reminds her that her people are destined to be sworn enemies with the Romans. Moreover, when Anna finishes telling Aeneas about what happened to her sister after his departure, Aeneas greets this news with a demeanour that is exactly the opposite of the emotions attributed to Dido at the moment of his departure. Finally, the conclusion of the episode is strikingly different from the way in which the Dido episode ends in the *Aeneid*. In the *Punica*, Anna's drowning is followed by her deification and the establishment of a cult in Italy, contrasting with the curse that Dido places upon the departed Aeneas. In his retelling of Anna's story, Silius constructs it in a way as to invite the reader to contrast the behaviour of the characters involved with their counterparts in Virgil's epic. Yet the Anna episode is not merely one of Silius' attempts to interact with his epic predecessor. It also forms an essential part of Silius' conception of Cannae, for Anna and her double loyalty play a major role in getting the battle underway. Anna, though worshipped in Italy, retains her loyalty to Dido and Carthage, thus possessing a paradoxical sense of identity and morality, themes that return during the actual battle itself. Even in this single episode, then, it can easily be seen that Silius, though an admirer of Virgil, goes beyond mere boasting of his knowledge of Virgil in his allusions to the *Aeneid*. He encourages the reader to read the *Punica* in light of the *Aeneid*, and his Virgilian allusions fit neatly into the structure and agenda of his own narrative. However, Silius' invitation to read the *Punica* through the *Aeneid* raises the question of whether every Virgilian allusion the reader may see in the *Punica* is in fact intentionally made.

The question of intent has recently been explored by Randall Ganiban, in his study of Statius' interaction with Virgil in the *Thebaid*. Ganiban argues, rightly I think, that "to make sense of allusions and intertexts, it is not necessary to discover Statius' intentions, which are ultimately irretrievable and thus cannot be used to endorse one understanding of an intertext over another."⁷⁹ We may make a similar argument for

⁷⁹ Ganiban (2007), 7.

Silius' epic. As we have already seen, Silius does consciously, deliberately and very explicitly invoke Virgilian allusions on many occasions. Knowing this, what are we to make of passages that may have added meaning when we read it through the *Aeneid*, but whose Virgilian intertextuality is not so obviously spelled out by the poet? I believe that Silius' intent is irrelevant in these situations. By inviting the reader to keep Virgil in mind through the entirety of the epic, he compels the reader to look for hidden meaning in every passage of the *Punica*, whether he had actually intended such meaning or not. The interpretations that the reader makes of the text are equally valid thanks to the way in which Silius demands that the text be read. On Statius' relationship with Virgil, Ganiban states that the *Thebaid* "gives us the freedom to discover and make sense of intertexts from the *Aeneid*, even if Statius the poet had not consciously employed them."⁸⁰ His argument is equally applicable to the *Punica*. Compared to Statius, readers are even more inclined to see Virgilian allusions at every turn in the *Punica*, thanks to the biographical details provided by Pliny and Martial that point to Silius' reverence for Virgil. The fact that the subject matter of Silius' epic acts as a chronological sequel to the *Aeneid* also furthers this inclination. However, the tendency to pick out Virgilian allusions is predicated on the assumption that Silius has consciously placed these allusions within his text, and that these allusions have a fixed meaning that the poet has attributed to them. Such an interpretation of Silius' use of Virgil is no doubt valid for many of the *Punica*'s Virgilian references, but remains inadequate if we wish to understand Silius' relationship with Virgil as a whole. The role that the *Aeneid* plays in the *Punica* depends not just on Silius' knowledge of Virgil's epic and his application of Virgilian motifs, but also on the reader's own understanding and interpretation of the *Aeneid*.

If we assume that the reader possesses the ability to freely interpret the *Aeneid*'s role in the *Punica* based on the reader's own reading of the *Aeneid*, however, another problem emerges. Is it then possible to determine any unified reading of the *Aeneid* that

⁸⁰ Ganiban (2007), 7-8.

Silius himself might have had? Ganiban discusses this question in relation to the *Thebaid*; he assumes that there is a “reading of Virgil’s epic to which Statius’ poem reacts. But which *Aeneid* – the optimistic or pessimistic? Or one somewhere in between?”⁸¹ As previously noted, Silian scholarship has been characterized by “optimistic” and “pessimistic” interpretations of the epic. These interpretations appear to assume that Silius subscribes to an optimistic reading of the *Aeneid*. In general, the “optimistic” readings of Silius have argued that the *Punica* uses the *Aeneid* as a model, while the “pessimistic” ones argue that Silius’ pessimism is grounded in the influence of Lucan and civil war imagery. I argue in this thesis, however, that it is not necessary to see either Virgil or Lucan as Silius’ primary “model”, or to ascribe to Silius a world view that conforms directly to that of Virgil or Lucan. The unique moral programme espoused by the *Punica* shows significant influence of both Virgil and Lucan, but not strict agreement with either of them. The ambiguity that results from Silius’ use of Virgil and Lucan may even mean that he does not read either Virgil or Lucan in strictly optimistic and pessimistic ways. Silius’ ability both to be influenced by his epic predecessors and to differentiate himself from them is particularly apparent when we consider how he communicates with Lucan.

The influence of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* on the *Punica* is rather more controversial than that of the *Aeneid*. As previously mentioned, some critics have denied that Silius shared the same views as Lucan, and consequently that the *Punica* was influenced in any great extent by the *Bellum*. Instead, critics prefer to contrast the *Punica*’s implementation of the genre of historical epic with Lucan’s handling of it in the *Bellum*, with Silius being almost unanimously criticized for not following Lucan’s model. In particular, the participation of the gods in the *Punica* is seen as a major failing. Feeney’s criticism of Silius’ gods follows praise of Lucan’s decision to write a godless poem, and such criticism appears to stem not simply from the way in which Silius incorporates the gods into the *Punica*, but from the fact that he had a predecessor

⁸¹ Ganiban (2007), 8.

who had created the example of an epic without gods. So Feeney writes that “[i]t becomes irresistible to applaud Lucan for discarding the divine apparatus, and to blame Silius for retaining it against his example.”⁸² Through his rejection of Lucan’s innovation, Silius is also seen to be rejecting Lucan’s poetics. Marks argues that the two poets view Rome far too differently for Silius to adopt the *Bellum* as a model. Lucan offers a depiction of Rome in which “it is difficult to identify anyone who is not, in some measure, implicated in crimes against his fellow citizens and thus guilty of the very opposite of *fides*, namely *perfidia*”, while Silius’ Romans “follow the just and divinely sanctioned cause and in doing so exhibit their *fides* and trustworthiness”.⁸³ Marks concludes that Silius makes a conscious choice to adapt the *Aeneid* as a model for the *Punica*, rather than the *Bellum*, as his intent is to “sing of Rome’s glorious rise rather than her ignominious decline”,⁸⁴ an argument that assumes that Silius’ reading of the *Aeneid* was that of an epic of celebration.

Despite the perception of Silius as a poet who rejects Lucan in favour of returning to the tradition set out by Virgil, the *Punica* is unmistakably influenced by the *Bellum Civile*. One easily noticeable way in which Lucan’s influence manifests itself is Silius’ fascination with grotesque descriptions of wounds and death.⁸⁵ Numerous deaths in the *Punica* ask the reader to “picture the improbable, the incredible”, and their depictions are “pictorial and spectacular”, a hallmark of Lucan.⁸⁶ Lucan’s influence on the *Punica*, however, runs deeper than such verbal similarities. Just as the *Punica* should be read with full knowledge of the *Aeneid*, it should also be read with awareness of the *Bellum Civile* kept in mind. The events of Lucan’s epic may lie in the distant future, but Silius anticipates them as much as he recalls the past events recorded in the *Aeneid*. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy suggest that “Silius may have deliberately constructed his epic as a bridge between the antithetical masterpieces of Vergil and Lucan, thereby creating a

⁸² Feeney (1991), 251.

⁸³ Marks (2005c), 530.

⁸⁴ Marks (2005c), 530.

⁸⁵ Marks (2005c), 530.

⁸⁶ See Wilson (1993), 225-6 for examples of such death scenes.

trilogy running from the foundation of the Roman race to the destruction of Roman freedom.⁸⁷ Their reading of the epic sees the Rome of the *Punica* as a Rome at the height of her powers, but with signs embedded within the narrative that hint of a darker future that she will have to face; Silius' Rome is one that charts the city's transition from the Rome of the *Aeneid* to the Rome of the *Bellum*, with Silius' use of Lucan being seen as "more commonly structural or thematic than verbal."⁸⁸ Furthermore, they argue that the *Punica* is structurally based on a Lucanian paradox, "that defeat is morally better than victory", with the Romans' "moral watershed of Roman virtue" being the battle of Cannae.⁸⁹

In this thesis, I will argue that certain sections of the *Punica* are indeed greatly influenced by Lucan. In particular, Silius' portrayal of *fides* and *pietas* in the Saguntum episode recalls the twisted versions of these same virtues that are so readily found in the *Bellum Civile*. Numerous actions made by the Saguntines are reminiscent of morally corrupt actions committed by those who dwell in Lucan's world. In addition to these, I argue that much of the Saguntum episode is structurally based on Lucan's Massilian episode. The structural similarities between these episodes prompt the reader to consider the significance of why Silius chooses to link them together. I suggest that both episodes are studies on the consequences of *fides*: the Saguntines possess a fanatical *fides* to Rome which ultimately leads to their mass suicide, while the Massilians, renowned for their *fides* to Rome, endure the slaughter of many of their citizens during Caesar's attack. The theme of reversal, the importance of which in Silius' interplay with Virgil has been previously mentioned, returns here; the Saguntines are besieged by Hannibal on his way from Spain to Italy, while the Massilians are attacked by Caesar on his way to Spain from Italy. Through Silius' construction of the Saguntum episode, he displays a cyclical view of history and forces the reader to reconsider the praise that he gives to the Saguntines in light of the fate suffered by the Massilians and indeed other characters

⁸⁷ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2501. For more on this paradox, see Chapter Two.

⁸⁸ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2502.

⁸⁹ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2503-4.

notable for their devotion to *fides* in the *Bellum*, such as the Caesarian commander Vulteius.⁹⁰ In episodes such as these, the influence of Lucan and the grim nature of his epic is clearly apparent.

While the argument of Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy is thus convincing in some aspects, their interpretation of Lucan's influence on Silius implies that Silius' Rome corresponds more with Lucan than with Virgil, and that he shares Lucan's vision of a bleak, morally corrupt Rome. Contrary to their opinion, I argue in Chapter Three on the battle of Zama and the conclusion of the *Punica* that, although Silius shows a clear awareness of the Rome that Lucan describes and alludes to it on many occasions, the final vision of Rome that Silius provides differs fundamentally from Lucan's. Indeed, Silius aims to promote the possibility of a Rome that is morally sound, one that is opposed to Lucan's in the way that it operates.

Silius' fundamentally different outlook on Rome may be argued as being reflective of the poem's ongoing interplay with both the *Bellum Civile* and the *Aeneid*. As mentioned before, the idea that the *Punica* acts as a bridge between those two epics has been posited by Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy. A similar argument has recently been made by Ben Tipping, who suggests that the *Punica* should be read as "a belated middle episode in a trilogy of Roman epics on Rome", and that its unique position "makes it a complex epic critique of Rome and Romanity."⁹¹ Tipping's argument expands upon the initial suggestion made by Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy, and raises some intriguing possibilities about the structure of Silius' epic. He agrees with Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy in seeing *Punica* 12 as participating in close intertextual dialogue with *Aeneid* 2. In doing so, he argues that book 12 of the *Punica* can be seen as the poem's centrepiece, even though the entire epic only has a length of 17 books. In book 12, Hannibal is repulsed from the walls of Rome, marking a definitive turning point in Rome's fortunes; from book 13 onwards, Rome goes on the offensive, relying on dynamic leaders such as Marcellus and Scipio Africanus rather than defensive leaders

⁹⁰ For Silius' cyclical view of history, see Dominik (2003), 493-4.

⁹¹ Tipping (2004), 346-7.

such as Fabius Maximus.⁹² The defence of Rome's walls at the end of *Punica* 12 is, according to Tipping, significant because the *Aeneid* is about Aeneas' mission to found a city around which these same walls are to be built; the *Punica* then relates how the Romans defended these walls.⁹³ Books 1-12 of the *Punica*, which equal the length of the *Aeneid*, can thus be read as a self-contained, Virgilian portion of the epic. However, Tipping also echoes the observation made by Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy in seeing a parallel between the Romans' reaction to Hannibal's departure at *Pun.* 12.744-9, in which they joyously pour out from the gates to gawk at the places where Hannibal's camps once stood, and the Trojans' reaction to the Greeks' supposed departure at *Aen.* 2.27-30.⁹⁴ The Trojans believe that the end of the siege has arrived, but as it turns out, the real attack is only just beginning, and such a sentiment may also be found in the final lines of *Punica* 12 as, although Hannibal's attack has been repulsed, another phase of the war is about to begin.

Although Tipping does not argue that the books that follow *Punica* 12 constitute the "Lucanian" section of the epic,⁹⁵ he does suggest that if we analyze the Lucanian influences present within the text as a whole, a new centre of the epic can be found: book 9 and the battle at Cannae. Reading the *Punica* from a Lucanian rather than Virgilian point of view leads us to see Cannae as the turning point of the epic, rather than Hannibal's repulsion from the gates of Rome. Cannae can even be read as a point of merger between a Virgilian *Punica* and a Lucanian *Punica*. Specific verbal gestures reinforce the possibility that Cannae can be read as a blend of Virgilian and Lucanian influences: as the battle opens, the use of the words *virorum* and *armis* (9.278, 9.280) convey a Virgilian feel to the scene, but soon "this conflict swiftly takes on a Lucanian colour", with strife entering the realms of the gods and forcing them to enter into battle as well. Tipping observes that at Cannae, "terrestrial madness is not merely mirrored in

⁹² Tipping (2004), 353.

⁹³ Tipping (2004), 354.

⁹⁴ Tipping (2004), 355.

⁹⁵ Hardie (1993), 96-7 similarly suggests that book 13 marks a "new beginning" and argues that the remaining five books are a *Scipiad*, detailing the rise of Scipio as the dominant Roman leader in the war.

the heavens, but infects the gods so conspicuously absent from Lucan's epic."⁹⁶ Thus it can be argued that the presence of the gods in the *Punica* does not merely reflect Silius' preference of the Virgilian tradition over Lucan's innovation. Tipping does not provide any conclusions on whether book 12 or book 9 is the "true" centrepiece of the text, and indeed there is no need to do so. The complex way in which Silius interacts with both Virgil and Lucan ensures that a myriad of readings are possible, and attempting to determine precisely how each poet influenced the construction of the poem is a fruitless endeavour. I have previously argued that Silius encourages us to read the *Punica* through Virgil, with the reader free to draw his own conclusions on where Virgilian meaning may be extracted from the text. I would suggest that the same approach may be applied to Lucan as well. Verbal and structural references to the *Bellum* are plentiful enough that the reader is also invited to read the *Punica* through Lucan and to interpret episodes within the *Punica* while keeping Lucan's world in mind.

While Silius interacts most extensively with Virgil and Lucan, he also alludes to the influence of other poets, most notably through their inclusion within the poem as characters. One example is Ennius, who himself wrote a historical epic covering the Second Punic War. Ennius appears within the *Punica* as a Roman centurion fighting in Sardinia (12.387-419).⁹⁷ Ennius, while fighting against the Sardinians, is saved from being struck by a spear by the intervention of Apollo, whose reason for such an action allows us to gain an insight into Silius' view of his own relationship with Ennius. Gesine Manuwald, in an examination of Apollo's explanation for his rescue of Ennius, notes that, when Apollo mentions Ennius' future poetic career, he describes the contents of his poem as *bella Itala*, "even though this epic also included the foundation of Rome and domestic politics", which "allows Silius Italicus to align his own work more directly with the characteristics established by the founder of proper Roman epic, since what Silius

⁹⁶ Tipping (2004), 366.

⁹⁷ See Casali (2006), 571-5 for an examination of Silius' "invention" of Ennius' role of warrior-poet at Sardinia.

Italicus narrates are wars in Italy (in hexametric verse).⁹⁸ Thus, in addition to his debt to Virgil, Silius places himself in the context of a poetic tradition established by Ennius. In addition, the warrior-poet characterization that Silius attributes to Ennius is seen by Manuwald as being indicative of Silius' appraisal of his own status as a poet in the Ennian tradition. As she puts it, two main objectives are accomplished via Silius' depiction of Ennius in the *Punica*: "he makes it clear that by uniting war and poetry in heroic metre Ennius has established the Roman epic tradition, which he himself follows, and thus connects his own poem to the precedent of Ennius. And by elevating Ennius he makes it clear that in writing an epic on Roman history he does not follow an ignoble ancestry."⁹⁹

Moreover, in addition to connecting his own epic to that of Ennius within this episode, Silius alludes to Virgil by constructing the episode using a Virgilian model, thus placing the *Punica* within a lineage that includes both Ennius and Virgil. Hardie notes that the Ennius episode is an adaptation of a corresponding episode in *Aeneid* 9, in which Apollo blesses Ascanius, who shoots down Remulus Numanus. It is a scene that "functions as *rite of passage* for Ascanius and gives divine guarantee of the continuity of the Julian family."¹⁰⁰ While Ascanius is no poet, Hardie argues that "[i]n Silius the epic poet takes the place of epic hero... the diversion of the model from epic hero to poet reveals clearly how epic success, in the sense of successful deeds of valour successfully preserved for posterity, depends on the proper succession of both hero and poet."¹⁰¹ The connection that Hardie makes between the Ascanius and Ennius scenes is supported by verbal parallels that exist between the two episodes, which Sergio Casali outlines.¹⁰² Casali, however, suggests that, despite the similarity between the two scenes, Silius injects an element of tension into his Ennius scene through the different roles that Apollo plays in the two episodes. Silius' Apollo, he argues, acts as the god of poetry

⁹⁸ Manuwald (2007), 80-1.

⁹⁹ Manuwald (2007), 82.

¹⁰⁰ Hardie (1993), 114.

¹⁰¹ Hardie (1993), 114.

¹⁰² Casali (2006), 582-5.

when he saves Ennius from death, while Virgil's Apollo intervenes as the patron god of the Iulii, who actually plays the role of a "Callimachean" Apollo, one who, instead of promoting a future poetic career, "takes back and cancels every promise of epic glory" in his address to Ascanius.¹⁰³ To Casali, the fact that Silius' Apollo intervenes to favour Ennius' poetic career appears paradoxical, and he attempts to explain the paradox thus: Apollo favours Ennius by performing his traditional Callimachean role, by killing and silencing the poetic career of the man whose spear he deflects away from Ennius, Hostus.¹⁰⁴ Hostus, the son of the Sardinian leader Hampsagoras, is, according to Casali's suggestion, an allusion to the poet Hostius, who was an actual poetic rival of Ennius.¹⁰⁵ Thus, if Casali's conjecture is correct, then the entire Ennius episode, in addition to providing obvious insight into the way in which Silius viewed his relationship with his epic predecessors, represents the literary battle between the poetic rivals Ennius and Hostius, a battle which Hostius loses, just as Hostus the Sardinian fails to defeat Ennius. Since Hostus was an actual historical figure, it is impossible to know whether Silius really meant to allude to the poet Hostius through the Ennius episode, but such a reference would fit in well with the extensive poetic interactions that already exist within the episode between Silius, Ennius and Virgil.

Just as Ennius personally appears in the *Punica* as a character, Silius also pays homage to Homer by having him appear in the epic, in the *nekyia* of book 13 (13.778-97). In Scipio's journey through the underworld, he comes across the shade of Homer, and, while the shade is silent, Scipio converses with the Sibyl he is travelling with about Homer's accomplishments. Hardie, just as he argues for a reading of the Ennius episode in conjunction with the Ascanius scene in Virgil, offers a reading of Homer's appearance in the *nekyia* that plays on the *nekyia* of the *Aeneid*; he argues that the model for Homer is Marcellus, whose potential greatness was made impossible by premature death. As evidence, he notes that Homer is characterized as a youth, like Marcellus, and

¹⁰³ Casali (2006), 588-9.

¹⁰⁴ Casali (2006), 590-1.

¹⁰⁵ Casali (2006), 591-3.

that the headband Homer wears is “purple, the colour of youth and death.”¹⁰⁶ While Homer had already achieved a great poetic career, Hardie argues that Silius’ portrayal of Homer’s poetic achievement indicates that it is “past and partial”; Scipio’s wish that there were still a Homer to sing of the deeds of Rome is seen as echoing in its language Anchises’ lament of Marcellus’ inability to realize his potential.¹⁰⁷ While Hardie admits to the pessimistic nature of such a reading of Homer’s appearance in the *nekylia*, he notes that the reader, who has learned of Apollo’s promise to Ennius in the previous book, will know that in Ennius, “Rome has already in its midst a man with the power to write a Latin epic adequate to succeed the Greek predecessors. Scipio’s unwitting use of Virgil’s words reveals to the reader the continued succession after Ennius – dare one say down to Silius?”¹⁰⁸ Thus, in Hardie’s view, by reading the Homer and Ennius episodes together, the reader notices a clear system of poetic succession; Ennius succeeding Homer, and Silius possibly succeeding Ennius.

Silius’ own place in the Homeric lineage is made clearer by Manuwald’s analysis of the Homer episode. Silius describes Homer’s poetry as “raising your Troy to the stars”, which, she notes, makes the subject of Homeric epics “historic” from a Roman perspective, and thus places Homer within the tradition of historical epics, rather than just within the epic genre in general.¹⁰⁹ The subject of Homeric epics is then compared to the deeds of the Romans that Homer would have sung about if he were still alive, deeds that are *Romula facta* (13.793). For Manuwald, this subject, clearly distinct from the Trojan stories of Homer, differentiates the narrative of the *Punica* from its Homeric predecessor, while also referring to the career of Ennius, whose epic recounted the post-Romulus history of Rome.¹¹⁰ Thus Silius indirectly states that his poem fills a need in the epic tradition. The events recounted in his epic form a subject that would be worthy of a Homeric epic, yet are also entirely distinct from the events of Homer’s epics.

¹⁰⁶ Hardie (1993), 115.

¹⁰⁷ Hardie (1993), 115.

¹⁰⁸ Hardie (1993), 115-6.

¹⁰⁹ Manuwald (2007), 84-5.

¹¹⁰ Manuwald (2007), 85.

Additionally, Silius, without explicitly remarking on the future longevity of the *Punica*, “asserts his own poetic power as he suggests that Homer would have been a worthy bard for his subject matter and that he ensures it will be transmitted to future generations.”¹¹¹

In Silius’ introduction of Ennius and Homer, then, we can witness further complexities in his relationship with his epic predecessors. Even as he encourages the reader to read his work in relation to Virgil and Lucan, he openly places the *Punica* in the context of the genre of historical epic, in which the roles of Ennius and Homer are acknowledged. With so many different intertexts present in the epic, it is possible to conclude that Silius is merely displaying his extensive literary knowledge in his interplay with so many different authors, with the *Punica* itself in danger of turning into a “collection” of the giants of classical literary history, which, as we have seen earlier, is how Leigh characterizes the poem.¹¹² Yet Silius does not just revel in displaying his knowledge of the literary past. He is also keen to show what he himself can offer to the genre. At the very least, his blending of Virgilian and Lucanian epic shows that, far from slavishly imitating Virgil, he attempts to adapt Virgil’s work to a post-Lucan epic tradition. Manuwald states that Silius “demonstrates that he is deeply steeped in the epic tradition and at the same time self-confident enough to define his own position within it.”¹¹³ The countless instances of intertextual dialogue that will be discussed in this thesis will shed light on both issues: Silius’ knowledge and relationship with other epicists, and how these relationships work together to form a new, coherent epic with its unique agenda and individuality.

Thus far I have discussed the multitude of ways in which Silius interacts with his epic predecessors. The *Punica*’s subject matter, however, means that a new level of complexity must be added into the mixture – the influence of Silius’ historical sources, both in terms of the content they provide and the attitude that they display towards

¹¹¹ Manuwald (2007), 87.

¹¹² Leigh (2001), 199.

¹¹³ Manuwald (2007), 90.

Rome. I will now briefly discuss how we may interpret Silius' use of prose history in the *Punica*.

The *Punica* and the historiographical tradition

Though the *Punica* belongs firmly in the genre of historical epic, it has been characterized as one in which the “epic” part of historical epic largely overshadows the “historical” portion. Wilson’s overview of the poem is one such opinion: he states that in the *Punica*, “[h]istory is... mythologized, wrenched not just in language but in event into the epic mode. The epic imagination is everywhere victorious over historical probability. History is there only to be transmuted.”¹¹⁴ Certainly, considering how much the influences of the epic tradition permeate the epic, it is clear that Silius moulds historical fact to suit his own purposes, particularly in the structure of the poem. As Marks argues, the *Punica* is first and foremost a poem, rather than a history lesson, and it is a poem that therefore “does not strive to be comprehensive, scholarly, or accurate in its use of historical sources, but aims at telling its own epic truths and its own epic story.”¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, Silius does on occasion allude to his debt to prose historians, Livy in particular. Additionally, as I pointed out at the beginning of this introduction, Silius actually participates in the historiographical tradition by providing his unique perspective on the significance of historical events. Like the prose historians, Silius comments on Rome’s past and tells it in order to impart his own particular agenda. Through the *Punica*, Silius interprets the broader significance of the Second Punic War, just as historians such as Livy and Polybius do, while doing the same for individually noteworthy episodes. Silius’ moralizing in these episodes causes him to contribute to the same historiographical tradition in which these episodes are also told. He does it in a different format, epic poetry, but his contribution to our understanding of the Second

¹¹⁴ Wilson (1993), 218.

¹¹⁵ Marks (2005c), 531.

Punic War as well as specific *exempla* set within the war is no less significant than that of his prose counterparts.

Critics have pointed to Silius' preface (1.1-14) as evidence that the poet was deeply influenced by Livy's interpretation of the Second Punic War. Pomeroy compares Silius' preface to the opening lines to Livy's treatment of the Second Punic War (Livy 21.1.1-3) and argues that we can notice "an acknowledgement of debt to the historian, not only for material, but also for his kindred outlook on Roman history."¹¹⁶ Livy's view that the winners of the war came closer to defeat than the eventual losers can also be seen in Silius' own interpretation of the war, and this theme is seen as manifesting itself in the general structure of the poem. Thus Marks breaks the *Punica* down into three parts: books 1-3, in which hostilities between Carthage and Rome had not yet begun, a seven book section of books 4-10, in which Rome suffers defeat after defeat, culminating in the disaster of Cannae, and finally another seven book section of books 11-17, in which Rome's fortunes turn around and eventually culminate in conclusive victory at the end of the epic.¹¹⁷

Marks' proposed structure for the *Punica*, however, reminds us that Silius, while influenced by Livy's interpretation of the war, builds his epic on a structure that is much less confined by the demands of annalistic history. Livy's work is relatively confined by the annalistic chronology on which it is based, with the events of each year given their proper attention. In contrast, Silius' epic is much less concerned with chronology. Events that the poet believes to be more important to the theme of his work are expanded in scope, while events with little relevance to the message he wishes to send are compressed or left out altogether. This results in an epic that covers the length of the war but with the post-Cannae years receiving much less attention than the years before. In Marks' scheme, "seven books (4-10) are devoted to Rome's defeats early in the war, though these events cover only three years, 218-216 BCE, and another seven (11-17) to Rome's recovery and victory, though these events cover, disproportionately, fifteen

¹¹⁶ Pomeroy (1990), 124-5.

¹¹⁷ Marks (2005c), 531-2.

years, 215-201 BCE.”¹¹⁸ To fit the events of the war within the thematic structure of his epic, Silius both compresses time and omits events that have no impact on the message of his epic. Many examples of such manipulation of time and events are provided by Malcolm Wallace,¹¹⁹ who argues that Silius’ attempt to tackle the problem of chronology in the *Punica* reflects Silius’ poetic intent. According to Wallace, “the *Punica* is not a history of the Second Punic War. It was never intended to be... His *Punica* is rather a literary epic, written on a historical theme, the greatness of Rome, against a historical background.”¹²⁰ I agree partly with Wallace in this assertion, with the slight modification that Silius wrote his epic on a moral, rather than historical, theme. His argument, however, simplifies the situation somewhat. It is true that the *Punica* is plainly not to be read as a historical document, but as a work of epic poetry in which the basic events of the Second Punic War are moulded to fit into Silius’ moral programme and to reveal Silius’ particular interpretation of the war. Silius, unhindered by the demands of prose history, is free to manipulate the events of the war in a way that provides a more emphatic enunciation of his own views. However, Wallace’s strict distinction between “a history of the Second Punic War”, which he claims that the *Punica* is not, and “a literary epic”, seems to me to be unnecessary. It appears to imply that such a “history” of the war lacks the “historical theme” that characterizes Silius’ work. In fact, as I have argued earlier, Silius participates in the historiographical tradition just as much as the prose historians, whose histories are themselves not merely “history” but literary works in their own right, written with a particular purpose. Marks’ analysis of Silius’ use of Livy is apt: “one might even say that the *Punica* turns out to be a better vehicle for conveying Livy’s paradoxical interpretation of the war than Livy himself.”¹²¹ Both Silius and Livy possess particular interpretations of history that they convey through their works. The main difference is that Silius’ message is delivered through the medium of poetry, while Livy’s is delivered through prose.

¹¹⁸ Marks (2005c), 532.

¹¹⁹ Wallace (1968).

¹²⁰ Wallace (1968), 93.

¹²¹ Marks (2005c), 532.

In this thesis, I argue that we may understand the *Punica* better if we approach it from a moral perspective, and that Silius is keen to give moral lessons through his depiction of events within the war. Livy similarly does not write a simple account of Rome's history; his work is, like Silius', moulded to suit his moral and literary purposes. P.G. Walsh argues that moral qualities are in fact the main protagonists of Livy's work.¹²² Livy does not merely provide historical details, but moulds these details to provide moral lessons, just as Silius does. For instance, Rex Stem argues in a recent article that in the *Ab Urbe Condita*, Livy characterizes Romulus in such a way to present him as an exemplary figure who ought to be emulated, but only when one considers both the actions that Romulus takes, which may be morally ambiguous, alongside Romulus' motivations behind these actions.¹²³ Morality in the *Punica* is treated in a similarly complex way. One such example of this complexity is the *exemplum* of Regulus that I discuss in Chapter One. Regulus, who is presented as a shining model of *fides* thanks to his famous preference to return to Carthage as a prisoner than remain in Rome and break his word, is a figure whose story is told by many other authors, including those in the exemplary tradition, such as Valerius Maximus (1.1.14) and Cicero (*Fin.* 2.20.65, 5.37.82, *Off.* 3.99.26-115.32). Furthermore, the story is also given poetic treatment by Horace (*Carm.* 3.5). Each of these sources gives its own interpretation of Regulus' actions, and it is this tradition in which Silius participates. As I argue, Silius undermines the *fides* of Regulus by presenting counterarguments against his actions and providing an alternative model to Regulus through the *exemplum* of Fabius Maximus. In doing so, Silius directly contributes to our understanding of the Regulus *exemplum*, adding to, and even interacting with, the interpretations given by Valerius Maximus, Cicero and Horace. The Regulus as presented in the *Punica* is one interpretation of the pre-existing Regulus *exemplum*, which demands to be read alongside the other portrayals of Regulus on which the *exemplum* is also constructed.

¹²² Walsh (1961), 66.

¹²³ Stem (2007).

Regulus is merely one example of Silius' participation in the exemplary tradition. As Tipping writes, many of the *Punica's* most important characters "were already exemplars before Silius reshaped them for his epic... The agents in Silius' epic invite assessment in terms of their response to intratextual example and their re-enactment of the examples set by figures with whom they are intertextual."¹²⁴ Silius is thus not limited to being a poet writing in the epic genre; the subject matter he chooses to deal with requires that he participate in multiple traditions. Earlier in this introduction, I demonstrated that Silius constantly interacts with his epic predecessors. Adding to these interactions, we must also consider Silius' depiction of exemplary episodes in light of the depiction of these episodes by authors both inside the prose tradition (such as Valerius Maximus and Cicero) and outside it (such as Horace). The convergence of so many different influences is part of what makes the *Punica* such a unique and interesting work. It is not an epic poem that happens to be written on the Second Punic War, nor is it a history of the Second Punic War that happens to be written in epic form. The *Punica* is fundamentally concerned with both epic and history, and thus contributes greatly to our understanding of both traditions.

In this introduction, I have argued that in reading the *Punica*, the reader must be aware that the epic is constructed on many layers of intertexts. The impression that Silius was a poet wholly devoted to Virgil is unhelpful if we wish to unravel the meaning of the *Punica*. Throughout the *Punica*, Silius demands that we read his work in relation to the *Aeneid*, but we must also read the *Punica* through other authors, including those in the epic tradition (such as Lucan), but also those in the tradition of prose historiography, whose works provide both the historical events on which the events of the *Punica* are based, as well as moral messages embedded within the telling of these events, which in turn should be considered in Silius' interpretations of these episodes. All of these influences ultimately interact in a way that emphasizes the epic's unique poetic and moral framework. In the following chapters, I will describe in further detail

¹²⁴ Tipping (2010a), 9.

how Silius makes use of his collection of intertexts to further his moral portrayal of the Second Punic War.

I will build my argument through three chapters which focus on three crucial battles in the *Punica*: Saguntum, Cannae and Zama. Structurally, these three battles form the beginning, middle and end of the epic. The war begins with Hannibal's assault on Saguntum, whose inhabitants attempt to repulse the invaders but ultimately fail. The final scene at Saguntum (2.457-707), which sees the surviving Saguntines commit mass suicide, is portrayed by the narrator as virtuous, but there are suggestions throughout the episode of a perverse quality to the Saguntines' virtue. While the Saguntines aim to end their lives in a noble fashion, the crimes that they commit during their theatrical suicide render their claims to moral superiority suspect. Specifically, the Saguntines' crimes point to an inability to reconcile the virtues of *fides* and *pietas* that leads to their moral inadequacy. They attempt to become paragons of *fides*, but must sacrifice their *pietas* in order to do so. The failure of these two virtues to coexist means that the Saguntines' ultimate defeat is assured.

In the second chapter, we move from the beginning of the epic to Cannae, the poem's centrepiece. While the mass kinslaying that defines the end of the Saguntum episode is absent from Cannae, many episodes within the battle nevertheless provide treatments of virtue that can best be described as paradoxical. The immediate prelude to Cannae contains the story of the Roman soldier Solimus, who accidentally kills his father Satricus, who had escaped from the Carthaginian camp under the cover of night (9.66-177). Before recognizing his father, Solimus explicitly attributes the slaying of his foe to *pietas*, for he believes that he would be avenging the death of his brother, whose shield Satricus has unknowingly picked up on the battlefield. However, despite Solimus' desire to be pious, he commits the ultimate sin of patricide in a scene that introduces the spectre of civil strife to the *Punica*. Through Silius' depiction of this episode, as well as his description of the relationship between the consuls of Cannae, Varro and Paulus, Cannae is seen as much as a battle fought between Romans as a battle against a foreign

foe. The fates of Varro and Paulus, described throughout books 9 and 10, also represent examples of misguided virtue. Varro flees disgracefully from the field while Paulus steadfastly remains to fight his way to a glorious death. However, it is not as clear cut as it first appears as to how the reader is meant to judge their actions. Even though Paulus' decision to stay and die shows his desire to demonstrate his virtue, I argue that his death does not actually provide any tangible aid for Rome. In my argument I draw on the Roman concept of *devotio*, a suicidal ritual that Roman generals are said to have performed in dire situations to turn defeat into victory.¹²⁵ While Paulus' death is depicted using language reminiscent of the *devotio* (10.1-308), I argue that the result of his *devotio* is not the victory that we expect. In fact, the catalyst for Roman revival following Cannae is Varro's disgraceful return to Rome (10.613-24). Varro's survival is what allows Fabius Maximus to reunite the Romans and direct their energies towards fighting the enemy rather than themselves. Thus, although virtue is present at Cannae, the role it plays is still problematical, and Paulus' virtue is, I argue, symptomatic of the misguided virtue that plagues others in the epic, such as the Saguntines.

In the third chapter, I turn to the final battle of the epic, Zama, which illustrates the proper usage of virtue. At Zama, *pietas* and *fides* finally act in harmony, and, through the correct utilization of virtue, the Romans are able to triumph. This is shown through both the Romans' own demonstration of virtue and the enemy's lack thereof. For the former, the concluding book of the *Punica* begins with the story of Claudia Quinta (17.1-47), whose chastity is portrayed as, in addition to a personal virtue, fulfilling the obligation of *pietas* towards Rome. Furthermore, Zama sees Scipio Africanus rise to become the unquestioned leader of Rome, and Silius' Scipio embodies the qualities of *fides* and *pietas*, skilfully managing both virtues without allowing one to cause the neglect of the other. The virtue shown by the Romans at Zama is contrasted with the impiety of the enemy. In particular, the barbarian king Syphax allows his immoral sexual desire to overrule his better judgment (17.62-70) and in so doing fails to

¹²⁵ On the ritual, see Versnel (1976).

uphold either *fides* or *pietas*. Even as the Romans attack Syphax's troops in battle, they accuse the king of immorality, thus wielding their moral superiority practically as a weapon in itself. The end of the *Punica* thus shows the virtues working in harmony, rather than competing against each other as they do at earlier stages. Rome's victory is ultimately founded on its morality.

In addition to outlining the moralistic tone adopted by Silius in this final book, I argue that the defeat of the Carthaginians is presented as an event that heralds the beginning of a new Rome. Scipio is the man who takes her into this new era, and the divide between old and new Rome is hinted at even before the battle of Zama itself, when Scipio debates with Fabius Maximus, the representative of old Rome, about whether the Romans should invade Africa (16.600-700). The differing viewpoints offered by Scipio and Fabius during the debate allow the reader to contemplate two possible models for the Roman state. Scipio's desire to take the fight to Africa wins out over Fabius' insistence that Hannibal must be driven from Italy before Rome can risk sending troops abroad, signifying Rome's shift towards becoming a state with foreign interests rather than merely being concerned with the wellbeing of Italy. Such a shift undoubtedly implies the beginning of empire. Rome's progress towards empire is made further apparent in the closing section of the epic, which sees Scipio at the head of the triumph after Zama, a procession which places great emphasis on the far reaches of the world which, thanks to the victory at Zama, have now come under Rome's control.

Thus the end of the *Punica* looks forward to the reality of empire in which Silius lives. Through my overall reading of the epic, I argue that Silius' appraisal of empire, and by extension Domitian's regime, cannot be seen as either purely supportive or purely subversive. Rather, Silius, having experienced the horrors of civil war in his own lifetime, associates such horrors with a misguided approach towards virtue. By also imbuing the epic's harmonious ending with an improved understanding of virtue, Silius offers the reader a lesson that he hopes will lead to a better Rome, one that is, above all, morally sound. Silius laments the evils that have befallen Rome in the past, but his epic

ends on a hopeful note. Through the *Punica*, Silius not only provides commentary on virtue and morality and the role they play in Rome's past, but also the role they could yet play in Rome's future.

Chapter One: Saguntum and excessive virtue

Fides and *pietas* as conflicting virtues

We begin our investigation of Silius' treatment of virtue in the *Punica* with an analysis of one of the first episodes of the epic, the battle of Saguntum in books 1 and 2. In this chapter, I will provide a reading of the Saguntum episode that casts the virtue displayed by the Saguntines during their mass suicide in a problematic light. The Saguntines demonstrate their loyalty, *fides*, through committing suicide rather than submitting to the Carthaginians, and such virtue is praised by the narrator. I argue, however, that the plentiful *fides* shown by the Saguntines is undermined by a corresponding lack of *pietas* that they simultaneously show through their familial slaughter. Despite the narrator's outward show of support for the Saguntines' actions, hints are embedded in the text that point to the irrationality and madness of their mass suicide. The madness associated with the nature of their *fides* is particularly noticeable when we consider the roles that the Fury Tisiphone and the goddess Fides play as the events unfold. The Saguntines' failing lies in their inability to reconcile the two virtues of *fides* and *pietas*; their overzealous adherence to *fides* leads them to commit impious crimes against their own kin. I argue that the Saguntines' failure to achieve a harmonic balance between *fides* and *pietas* is a recurrent motif throughout the epic.

Parallels and contrasts to this motif are found particularly in the events at Capua, where Silius provides two separate examples of *fides* and *pietas* at odds with each other, but in completely opposite ways. I will examine both of these examples and argue that we gain new insight into both by reading them through the Saguntum episode. In the attempt by Pacuvius' son to assassinate Hannibal (11.303-68), Pacuvius' son is burdened by the demands of both *fides* and *pietas* when he is confronted by his father's opposition to his plan. Pacuvius' challenge to his son, that he must kill him before he can reach Hannibal, forces his son to choose between *fides* and *pietas*. The decision by Pacuvius'

son to abandon his assassination attempt presents an alternative outcome to the fate suffered by the Saguntines. He refuses to perform familial slaughter, but in the process he must sacrifice his claim to *fides*. On the other hand, a more explicit connection to Saguntum is found in the Capuan leaders' own mass suicide (13.261-98). Preferring to die rather than witness their city being retaken by the Romans, the Capuan oligarchs commit suicide, a fate that Silius describes as being punishment meted out by Fides, who appears on the scene, just as she does at Saguntum. I argue that the Capuans' fate provides further commentary on its mirror, the Saguntum episode. Just as at Saguntum, Fides is strongly associated with the Furies, and, despite the fact that the Capuans' deaths are attributed to their lack of *fides*, they arrive at a similar end to that of the Saguntines. Furthermore, the Capuans' suicide does not include the grim kinslaughter that defines the Saguntum episode, and thus the reader is urged to contemplate whether the Saguntines and the Capuans do in fact receive a fate suited for their virtue, or lack of it.

I argue in this chapter that this conflict between *fides* and *pietas* is indicative of Lucan's influence upon Silius. The civil strife that accompanies this conflict between virtues is naturally reminiscent of the civil strife that is found all through Lucan's work, but I argue that much of the Saguntum episode is structurally based upon Lucan's Massilian episode. The link between the two episodes is more than just the borrowing of an existing siege narrative. Saguntum and Massilia were both cities famed in antiquity for their *fides*, and their plights were similar, since both acted as roadblocks placed in the way of a conqueror advancing towards his main objective. We thus gain more insight into Silius' understanding of *fides* if we read the Saguntum episode not in isolation, but through the events of Massilia. Both Massilia and Saguntum suffer terrible fates through their adherence to *fides*, but the Saguntines go beyond the example of the Massilians by expending their destructive energies upon themselves, rather than their enemies.

The madness of the Saguntines is also influenced by another Lucanian episode, that of Vulteius in *Bellum Civile* 4. I argue that the suicide of Vulteius and his men,

which is similarly driven by *furor*, offers us further insight into the way in which the *Punica* interacts with the *Bellum*. The Saguntines' over-the-top *fides* is greatly reminiscent of the sort of *fides* that Vulteius espouses, with both the Saguntines and Vulteius' men ultimately participating in frenzied slaughter to prove their loyalty. However, despite the similarities between the two episodes, they are depicted in slightly different ways which highlight fundamental differences between the *Punica* and the *Bellum*. Vulteius' suicide is associated with the element of spectacle, which implies that his understanding of *fides* is one that is predominant in his world. The Saguntines' suicide is, in contrast, covered up and hidden from view by darkness, with even the participants themselves unwilling to witness their actions, suggesting that, even in the world of the *Punica*, their type of *fides* is not to be emulated. Rather than painting an entirely bleak picture of the world, Silius wishes to show the reader failed models of morality, so that he can later provide the same reader with a proper example of how to achieve both *fides* and *pietas*.

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of an episode which encapsulates all of the concerns discussed earlier in the chapter, the story of Regulus. In Regulus, we see a man who, like the Saguntines, prefers *fides* over *pietas*. As with the Saguntum episode, the Regulus episode is clearly influenced by Lucan, especially in the role that Regulus' wife Marcia plays. I argue that even though Regulus' tale is set up as an exemplum of virtue, Silius makes the reader question the legitimacy of Regulus as such an exemplum. Regulus' steadfast adherence to *fides* represents a model of leadership that is inflexible in the extreme; Marcia's appeals to Regulus' emotions are rejected without a second thought. Regulus' inflexibility, however, may do more harm than good. I argue that Regulus is actually yet another failed hero whose application of virtue is once again inadequate. Silius provides an improved model of leadership in the form of Fabius Maximus, whose flexibility and display of empathy on the battlefield offer a clear contrast to Regulus. I argue that for all of Regulus' claim to *fides*, he is in the end associated with failure, while Fabius achieves success via his less antiquated version of

virtue. Fabius thus acts as a model of the correct usage of virtue, but his example is one that is rare throughout much of the epic.

The traditional virtues of *fides* and *pietas* have always played a large part in epic. However, more often than not, *pietas* has been the more noticeable theme. The importance of *pietas*, a core Augustan value, is crucial in our conception of Virgil's ideology in the *Aeneid*. A major aspect of Aeneas' characterization is based on his familial devotion; thus he is *pius Aeneas*, and it is his *pietas* that prompts Virgil to ask just why the gods have chosen to punish him with so many hardships.¹ Later poets exploit Virgil's use of *pietas* in order to make their own ideological statements; so Lucan's depiction of the horror of civil conflict in the *Bellum Civile* often focuses on the utter lack of *pietas* in civil war.² Statius' *Thebaid* continues on this theme, as the climax that it inevitably builds up to involves brother killing brother in an *impius* war that has been partly instigated by their own father; at the climactic duel between Eteocles and Polynices, the personified Pietas is routed from the field by the Fury Tisiphone. Randall Ganiban's recent work on Statius' use of Virgil even argues that the *Thebaid's* world is one in which *pietas* is completely irrelevant, in a deliberate challenge to Virgil's previous depiction of virtue and power.³ One could then expect that Silius would keep in line with his predecessors by giving *pietas* a prominent position in his epic.⁴ Yet while *pietas* remains an indispensable element in the *Punica*, the theme of *fides* emerges to challenge

¹ *Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso, / quidve dolens, regina deum tot vulvere casus / insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores / impulerit* (*Aen.* 1.8-11). Ripoll (1998), 256 sees *pietas* as a "pillar" of Virgilian heroism: "Avant d'être, dans l'épopée virgilienne, l'un des piliers de la morale héroïque, la pietas est l'une des valeurs fondamentales de l'éthique du uir Romanus."

² For the perversion of *pietas* (and *virtus* in general) in Lucan, see Ahl (1976), 274-9; Putnam (1995), 223-39; Fantham (1995); Hershkowitz (1998), 209-11; Sklenář (2003), 13-58.

³ This is a theme found throughout Ganiban (2007). A general study of *pietas* in the *Thebaid* can also be found in Ripoll (1998), 286-312. For *pietas* in the prologue of the *Thebaid*, see Hill (1990), 101-2 and Ahl (1986), 2824-5. On the defeat of Pietas at the climax of the epic, see Feeney (1991), 387-9; Dominik (1994), 38-9; McGuire (1997), 119; Ripoll (1998), 308-10; Bernstein (2004), 80-1; Ganiban (2007), 170-5.

⁴ Wagenvoort (1980), 17, without mentioning Silius, suggests a causal relationship between *pietas* and the Second Punic War, tracing back to the Dido and Aeneas episode: "[Dido] bases her lament on Aeneas' piety, which she cannot understand in a more elevated sense. And after that... she cries prophetically that an avenger of Carthaginian blood will arise to complete the deserved punishment in a bitter war against Aeneas' descendants. What does this mean? It means that the war against Hannibal and the Punic wars in general were a result of Aeneas' piety... a necessary consequence of Rome's obedience to the divine calling."

the supremacy of *pietas*. In fact, *fides* has been put forth by Michael von Albrecht as a candidate for the “hero” of the epic.⁵

The importance of *fides* and *pietas* is not surprising. They are, after all, two fundamental aspects of our notion of *Romanitas*. The Flavian regime was, like Augustus’, dependent on victory in civil war. Naturally, emphasis on core Roman virtues would have been welcome to the principate, as it attempted to consolidate its power and maintain stability. It has therefore been proposed that Silius’ introduction of *fides* alongside *pietas* reflects the moral programme of the Flavians, especially that of Domitian.⁶ Yet while both virtues play undeniably key roles in the *Punica*, they do not always coexist in a completely harmonious fashion. The complex and often problematic interaction between these two themes will be the main focus of this chapter.

The Second Punic War is characterized by Silius as a battle between the perfidious Carthaginians and the morally upstanding Romans. This is already laid out in the proem, in which the beginning of the war is attributed to the Carthaginians’ inability to keep their word (*sacri cum perfida pacti / gens Cadmea*, 1.5-6).⁷ To make matters worse, the Carthaginians do not merely break their word once, but three times. Their leaders violate the agreement that they had sworn with both the Romans and Jupiter himself (*ter Marte sinistro / iuratumque Iovi foedus conventaque partum / Sidonii fregere duces*, 1.8-10), and they wage war against the Romans with impious steel (*impius ensis*, 1.10). Thus within the first ten lines of the epic, the moral superiority of the Romans in

⁵ von Albrecht (1964), 55. The overarching reach of *fides* in the epic is also stressed by Liebeschuetz (1979), 175-9. Burck (1988), 50 notes that among the Flavian epicists, Silius is the only one to make real use of the goddess Fides, but contrary to von Albrecht, believes that Fides is ultimately not central to the epic: “Weder bei Valerius Flaccus noch bei Statius tritt die Göttin Fides auf oder wird ihrer Bedeutung und göttlichen Wirksamkeit gedacht. Nur Silius Italicus räumt ihr einen gewissen – wenn auch letztlich im Rahmen des Werkganzen nur bescheidenen – Raum ein.”

⁶ For instance, Mezzanotte (1995), 363-5 sees the important roles that *fides* and *pietas* play in the epic as fully related to the atmosphere and political agenda of the Flavian period: “Non si può certo considerare casuale che due dei fondamentali motivi su cui si basa l’epos siliano siano *fides* e *pietas*...” His words echo the sentiments of Pomeroy (1990), 123: “It cannot be accidental that two of Silius’ major concepts are *Fides* and *Pietas*, the values of truthfulness and honesty, and of due respect for the hierarchy of family and state... Given the horrors of the Roman civil war in A.D. 69, it is not surprising that such values should be stressed to aid the stability of the new Flavian dynasty.” However, the argument that Pomeroy and Mezzanotte make, that Silius is contributing to the legitimization of the Flavian regime through his emphasis on *fides* and *pietas*, cannot satisfactorily explain the way in which Silius utilizes these two virtues as a whole.

⁷ The text of the *Punica* is taken from Delz (1987). Unless otherwise specified, all translations are my own.

the conflict is already established. The crucial difference between the Romans and the Carthaginians is that the Romans possess *fides* and *pietas*, while the Carthaginians do not. So at Cannae, when Scipio and Hannibal are compared, the two “were well matched in the art of war, but in other respects the Latin leader was superior, better in *pietas* and *fides*” (*Marte viri dexetraque pares, sed cetera ductor / anteibat Latius, melior pietate fideque*, 9.436-7).⁸ Scipio, as I will argue in Chapter Three, is the ideal exemplum of *fides* and *pietas* in the *Punica*, whose adept balancing of these virtues aligns perfectly with Silius’ own conception of them. Scipio’s virtue compares favourably even with the other Romans within the epic, so it is no surprise that he is morally superior to the Carthaginians as well. His *pietas* is demonstrated in the rescue of his father at the Ticinus.⁹ His *fides* is also proven through his dealings later in the epic with Syphax and Masinissa.¹⁰ Meanwhile, on the other side, the Carthaginians are absolutely devoid of *fides*; Silius constantly reminds us that perfidy is one of the innate characteristics of the Carthaginians. In respect to *pietas*, François Ripoll argues that even though the Carthaginians do not necessarily lack this virtue, Silius describes their type of *pietas* as a perverse form of Roman *pietas*, as demonstrated in their practice of child sacrifice.¹¹ It is clear that Silius uses these two virtues to schematize the two sides of the war. Yet, troublingly, *fides* and *pietas* are not always compatible. Scipio’s ideal demonstration of *fides* and *pietas* only comes to the forefront at the end of the epic. Before Rome’s final

⁸ Ripoll (1998), 277 compares this passage to the duel between Aeneas and Turnus at *Aen.* 12.707-9, and Diomedes’ comparison of Aeneas and Hector at *Aen.* 11.291-2; in both cases Aeneas comes out on top due to his *pietas*.

⁹ See Ripoll (1998), 275-8 for the Virgilian connection to Scipio’s action and Marks (2005a), 120-1, and 121 n. 19 for further bibliography.

¹⁰ In fact, Scipio’s demonstration of *fides* in books 16 and 17 forms a contrast with the type of *fides* shown by the Saguntines in book 2. For a more detailed examination of the role that Scipio’s morality plays at the end of the epic, see Chapter Three.

¹¹ On Roman piety versus Carthaginian impiety, see Ripoll (1998), 280. Ripoll suggests that Silius denounces the practice of child sacrifice through the words of Hannibal’s wife Imilce (4.791): “A contrario, la *pietas* des Puniques, liée aux rites cruels de sacrifices sanglants, est dénoncée par Imilcé comme une perversion de la *pietas*.” It is reasonable to think that Silius indeed condemns this practice, but what do we then make of Hannibal’s refusal to sacrifice his son? Hardie (1993), 50-1 and 96 argues that Hannibal’s attempt to find a surrogate victim for the sacrifice (this victim being Rome), instead of accepting the necessary sacrifice of his son, condemns him to failure. If we accept Hardie’s view, then it would appear that Hannibal is damned if he accepts the sacrifice, in that he conforms to the stereotype of the savage Carthaginian, and damned if he does not, in that he fails to conform to the duties of a Carthaginian.

victory, largely brought about as a result of Scipio's correct application of virtue, conflict often arises between *fides* and *pietas*, resulting in dire consequences. One of the most readily apparent examples of such conflict is the collective suicide performed by the Saguntines in book 2. I will argue in the following section that while the Saguntines show a remarkable adherence to *fides* in not surrendering to the Carthaginians, their decision to slaughter themselves also demonstrates a blatant disregard towards *pietas*. The Saguntines can thus be seen as being excessively devoted to *fides*, to the extent that their desire to be virtuous descends into madness. While they are praised by the narrator, signs within the text point to the criminal nature of the Saguntines' actions, and one may legitimately question the sincerity of such narratorial praise. Ultimately, the Saguntines' interpretation of *fides* and *pietas* is one that results in failure, and therefore one that is not meant to be emulated.

Suicide at Saguntum: *fides* without limit

We begin our examination of *fides* and *pietas* in the *Punica* with the suicide of the Saguntines in book 2. Silius, after briefly discussing the causes of the war, turns to the first military action in the war, Hannibal's siege of Saguntum, a city in Spain founded by Greek colonists and an ally of Rome. Livy and Polybius, our two main historical sources for this event, devote very few words to this siege, but Silius spends much of books 1-2 on this historically minor skirmish,¹² culminating in the *pièce de résistance* in which the Saguntines commit mass suicide. This episode, being one of the most dramatic and imaginative episodes in the entire epic, has naturally attracted much attention from scholars.¹³ Before taking on the suicide itself, I will briefly give a summary of the lead up to the final event.

¹² For their briefness compared to Silius' length, see McGuire (1997), 208. On the historical sources for the siege of Saguntum available to Silius, there is Nicol (1936), 25, the response of Nesselrath (1986), 210, and the recent revision of Lucarini (2004), 110-1.

¹³ For various interpretations of the Saguntum episode, see von Albrecht (1964), 55-62; Juhnke (1972), 192-3; Vessey (1974b); Liebeschuetz (1979), 170 and 176; Fears (1981b), 928; Küppers (1986), 164-70; Burck (1988), 54-60; McGuire (1990), 35-41; Feeney (1991), 307-8; Hardie (1993), 81-3; McGuire

By the later stages of Hannibal's siege of the city, it becomes clear that no outside help is coming and that the end is near; the inhabitants are trapped and starving (2.457-74).¹⁴ Hercules, the founder of Saguntum, sees the suffering of his city and asks the goddess Fides to give them aid (2.475-92). Fides replies that the most she can do is to prevent the Saguntines from surrendering to the Carthaginians, by providing them with a noble death (2.493-512). She follows her speech by descending to the earth and instilling a burning passion for loyalty into the Saguntines (2.513-25). Juno happens to see this and, in a fit of rage, orders Tisiphone to send all of Saguntum down to Erebus (2.526-42). Obeying her wishes without a word, Tisiphone rises from hell, enters the city and, disguised as the widowed Tiburna, persuades the inhabitants to build a pyre on which they burn their possessions (2.543-608). Once this is done, she compels the unwilling Saguntines to murder each other (2.609-95). Silius concludes the book by offering a short epilogue on the eventual fate of Hannibal (2.696-707).

One immediately notices, of course, that the suicide of the Saguntines is brought about not by any single entity, but by the separate actions of both Fides and Tisiphone, the proxies of Hercules and Juno. It has been noted that Fides and Tisiphone, while outwardly polar opposites, essentially work together to seal the fate of the Saguntines. Denis Feeney neatly points out the paradox inherent in the situation: "In effect, Fides and Tisiphone are collaborators. The divine figures have enabled Silius economically to encapsulate the paradoxical nature of the act, at once glorious and repellent, noble and bestial, by juxtaposing two diametrically opposed creatures as the jointly responsible agents."¹⁵ There are two key elements in Feeney's statement: the opposing nature of

(1997), 205-19; Hershkowitz (1998), 53 and 57; Ripoll (1998), 406-11; Keith (2000), 92-3; Dominik (2003), 485-90; Franchet d'Espèrey (2003), 437-8; Ariemma (2004); Dietrich (2005), 79-80; Marks (2005c), 533-4; Dominik (2006), 118.

¹⁴ On the historicity of this starvation, see Nesselrath (1986), 210, who offers the hypothesis that Silius has transferred Livy's descriptions of Hannibal's sieges of Casilinum (23.19.13) and Petelia (23.30.3) into his Saguntine episode. On the poetic importance of this hunger, particularly in relation to the Vulteius episode in Lucan, see Ariemma (2004).

¹⁵ Feeney (1991), 308. Dominik (2003), 486-7 presents the same argument: "Even though the Saguntines do not act upon the instructions of Tisiphone until she possesses them, her role is essentially the same as Fides – to incite the Saguntines to destruction. Even though the goddesses oppose each other, they are unwitting associates in death... Saguntum finally falls with the fury's attempt to pervert the aim of

Fides and Tisiphone and their mutual responsibility. Little need be said of the first element, since it makes itself quite clear; just as Hercules and Juno operate in an obvious protagonist-antagonist relationship, Fides and Tisiphone represent two opposing realms, with each intruding into the earthly sphere – Fides from heaven, Tisiphone from hell. Further, they each represent contrasting moral qualities:¹⁶ Fides embodies traditional Roman *virtus*, while Tisiphone, as a Fury, symbolizes *furor*, uncontrolled madness.¹⁷ A closer look at Fides and Tisiphone reveals, however, that they have more similarities than one would expect. In fact, as I will argue, by the end of the book Fides is entirely supplanted by Tisiphone as the two deities silently merge into one.

In Fides' response to Hercules, she reveals what she intends to do for the Saguntines:

‘sed, si cura tua fundata ut moenia dextra
dignum te servent memorando fine vigorem
dedita nec fessi tramittant corpora Poeno,
quod solum nunc fata sinunt seriesque futuri,
extendam leti decus atque in saecula mittam
ipsaque laudatas ad manes prosequar umbras.’

‘But, if you wish that the walls founded by your hand should preserve a dignified vigour worthy of you by a memorable end, and not hand themselves over, exhausted, to the Phoenician, I will do the only thing that fate and the sequence of future events now allow; I will prolong the glory of their death and send it to future generations, and I myself will escort the praiseworthy souls down to the shades.’

(2.507-12)

Fides, which in effect achieves the same goal of mass suicide.” Also Hardie (1993), 82: “the effects of *Fides* and Tisiphone are disconcertingly alike: both inspire the Saguntines with a desire for death...”

¹⁶ The contrast between Hercules and Juno as well as Fides and Tisiphone is covered by Vessey (1974b), 30-3. Vessey, like Hardie, reads the mass suicide as a stark moral conflict: “Silius externalizes a human situation by presenting the inner or absolute meaning of the siege as a struggle between divine beings... Ranged on the side of the Saguntines stand Hercules, the personification of *virtus*, and Fides; supporting Hannibal we find Juno, the heavenly agent of Punic *impietas*, and Tisiphone, the instrument of madness and anarchic evil... Fides is an inhabitant of heaven, an embodiment of light, law, and peace; Tisiphone is a denizen of hell, a harbinger of darkness, disorder, and war.” Accordingly, Vessey sees little controversy in the final result of the suicide; the faithful Saguntines triumph over the nefarious schemes of Tisiphone, representing the triumph of *fides* over *perfidia*. As we shall see, Vessey’s argument is inadequate, as it glosses over many of the problems in the text.

¹⁷ The role that Furies play in representing madness in epic is well explored by Hershkowitz (1998), 35-61. More recently, the connection between Furies, madness and civil strife is developed by Franchet d’Espèrey (2003). Silius’ Tisiphone owes much to previous poetic models, of course, as Vessey (1974b), 32 notes: “Tisiphone is endowed with the full panoply of descriptive characteristics which we find attributed to the Furies in Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca.” The most “obvious” precedent cited by Vessey is Virgil’s Allecto; he also acknowledges the Fury in Seneca’s *Thyestes* and Statius’ Tisiphone as other models.

Everything Fides promises to do is directly related to the deaths of the Saguntines. She assures Hercules that the Saguntines will not surrender to Hannibal and that their deaths will remain famous forever, with herself leading their souls to the underworld, but the precise meaning of her words is as yet unclear. We might expect that the Saguntines will achieve Fides' desired goal by resisting the Carthaginian invaders to their deaths. There is in fact a hint that this is what will happen when the effects of Fides' intervention are first seen: "They long for arms and, despite their weakness, attempt to exert themselves in battle" (*arma volunt temptantque aegros ad proelia nisus*, 2.518).¹⁸ We are given little time, however, to take in the significance of Fides' entrance, as within moments Juno appears to summon Tisiphone. When Tisiphone assumes the form of the war widow Tiburna,¹⁹ her words remarkably parallel those of Fides:

'sed vos, o iuvenes, vetuit quos conscia virtus
posse capi, quis telum ingens contra aspera mors est,
vestris servitio manibus subducite matres.
ardua virtutem profert via. pergite primi
nec facilem populis nec notam invadere laudem.'

'But you, oh young men, you whose conscious virtue has prevented you from being taken captive, you for whom death is a giant weapon against adversity, rescue your mothers from slavery with your hands. The road that brings out virtue is steep. Hurry to gain praise that is not easy to accomplish, praise as yet unknown.'
(2.575-9)

David Vessey tries to read behind the speech, into Tisiphone's intentions. He declares that "her rhetoric is speciously logical. It is true that there is no hope of salvation for Saguntum, and that Hannibal, when victorious, would wreak a terrible vengeance on the survivors. It is, however, the Fury's real intention to tarnish, not to enhance, the glory of

¹⁸ Dominik (2003), 486 sees a parallel here to *Theb.* 11.477-81, where Pietas "exhorts men to wage a profane war in an attempt to prevent the even worse crime of fratricide from being perpetrated."

¹⁹ Much has been made recently of the femininity of figures used to represent madness or disorder. Keith's (2000, 92-3) discussion of Tisiphone's intervention, for instance, attempts to prove that Silius pits the feminine disorder of Juno/Tisiphone/Tiburna against the male order of Hercules. Yet it seems that Keith is oversimplifying the complex Herculean theme in Silius and ignores the fact that Hercules' proxy Fides is feminine. Dietrich (2005), 79-80 points out the problematic nature of Keith's argument in her own gendered discussion of lamentation in the *Punica*. She emphasizes the web of connections between Silius' Tiburna/Tisiphone and Virgil's Iris/Allecto/Amata, as well as the close connection between feminine lamentation and frenzied violence: "In evoking Virgil's lamenting women through the figure of Tiburna Silius emphasises her potential violence, realised in the havoc wreaked upon Saguntum."

the Saguntines.²⁰ Yet what Tisiphone is saying is exactly what Fides has said, in that it would be virtuous to avoid being taken captive by the Carthaginians. We cannot, as Vessey does, simply dismiss what Tisiphone is saying on account of her ulterior motives, since what would we then make of Fides' speech? Fides plays her part by announcing her intention to make the end of Saguntum notable; Tisiphone in turn plays her part by fulfilling it.²¹

In a way, Tisiphone acts not to subvert Fides, but to destroy the limits set by her. When the Saguntines are infected with their love of loyalty, Silius mentions the horrific effects that this love has on their minds:

it tacitus fessis per ovantia pectora sensus
vel leto graviora pati saevasque ferarum
attemptare dapes et mensis addere crimen.
sed prohibet culpa pollutam extendere lucem
casta fides paribusque famem compescere membris.

A silent sensation fills the rejoicing hearts of the weary; they would even suffer worse things than death, and try the diet of wild beasts, and make their meals criminal. But pure Fides prevents them from prolonging their lives by polluting them with crime, and from checking their hunger by consuming the limbs of their fellow men.

(2.521-5)

Already we see hints of the price of adhering to *fides*. Silius tells us that Fides has at least set one limit on the Saguntines: she will not allow them to commit cannibalism.²² But the mere fact that they *would* contemplate cannibalism is a cause for concern, as it shows that the Saguntines' sense of loyalty is already on the verge of teetering out of control, their actions barely held in check by Fides. The introduction of Tisiphone onto the scene acts to erase any limits set by her counterpart. Noticeably, unlike in *Thebaid*

²⁰ Vessey (1974b), 33.

²¹ See the discussion of Ripoll (1998), 411 on the question of Fides' and Tisiphone's responsibility; he sees Silius as providing no satisfactory answer to this question.

²² Spaltenstein (1986), ad 2.512 mentions that in Petronius, Eumolpus claims that the Saguntines ate human flesh during the siege (*Sat.* 141.9), which makes Silius' passage less outlandish than it may at first appear. As can be seen from the passage, cannibalism is linked very closely to the behaviour of wild animals. Braund and Gilbert (2003) explore the connection between anger and bestial behaviour in epic; in their discussion of cannibalism (275-80), which does not mention the Saguntum episode, they see it as "the most horrific manifestation of anger on the battlefield" and conclude that it represents the collapse of limits that must be placed on anger. The *Punica*, aside from this near-cannibalism at Saguntum, features an actual act of cannibalism at Lake Trasimene, in which a furious Roman soldier gnaws at the face of his Numidian adversary (6.41-53). Unfortunately, apart from mentioning that this is "a case of *ira* rampantly out of control" (276), Braund and Gilbert pass over it without comment.

11, where Pietas is driven off by Tisiphone, Fides does not ever explicitly disappear in the course of Silius' narrative. She influences the action by "invading" the minds of the Saguntines (*invadit mentes*, 2.515), infusing their minds with her power (*immittitque animis numen*, 2.516) and breathing a burning love into them (*flagrantem inspirat amorem*, 2.517), language that is certainly aggressive and, to William Dominik, "demonic".²³ Tisiphone does much the same, since her impersonation of Tiburna ultimately has little effect. She must resort to brute force; she drives the Saguntines to their deeds (*agit addita Erinys*, 2.595), she rejoices as she physically pushes forward a Saguntine's sword (*pressit ovans capulum... impulit ensem*, 2.615), and, just as Fides possessed her targets, breathes dark fear into another Saguntine's frame with her hissing mouth (*Erinys / incutit atque atros insibilat ore timores*, 2.625-6).²⁴ There is nothing to suggest that Fides' influence is being driven from the Saguntines' bodies; instead, Tisiphone takes advantage of Fides' already potent effect by pushing the Saguntines over the edge.²⁵ What follows is still not cannibalism, but the crimes that the Saguntines do commit are arguably not much better. Their mass suicide is accompanied by plenty of language evoking madness and the criminal nature of the killings. The Saguntines know that what they are doing is wrong (*nefas*, 2.618), wicked (*sceleri*, 2.619; *scelerum*, 2.658), murderous (*necem*, 2.634; *caedum*, 2.665), monstrous (*monstra*, 2.650), and inhuman (*immania facta*, 2.657), but despite their stated unwillingness (*invitas*, 2.617; *aversa mente*, 2.618),²⁶ they are completely caught up in madness (*feralis*, 2.609; *rabie*, 2.620; *furorem*, 2.623; *furis*, 2.633; *furor*, 2.645; *furit*, 2.657; *furores*, 2.665).²⁷ The repetition of

²³ Dominik (2003), 486.

²⁴ The Saguntines are here described with a favourite phrase of Silius: *excussae mentes* (2.592), which he later uses to make a connection between Flaminius and Varro, for more of which see Chapter Two. Perhaps we are meant to think of the Saguntines' self destruction when we later come to Flaminius' own desire for death.

²⁵ Silius gives Tisiphone the adjective *feralis* (*feralis Erinys*, 2.609), thus associating madness with wild beasts and recalling the earlier description of the Saguntines' bestial behaviour. In effect Tisiphone is only enhancing a part of their nature that has existed since Fides' entrance.

²⁶ An example of their unwillingness is a man who is about to hurl his axe at the neck of his wife. He throws it down in disgust before he can finish the job, but Tisiphone then compels him to murder her anyway (2.622-8).

²⁷ Cf. Ripoll (1998), 410: "le poète... emprunte les détails de son évocation du suicide mutuel aux thèmes et au vocabulaire de la guerre civile, d'où une inflation de termes tels que *nefas*, *scelus*, *furor* et ses dérivés qui tendent à donner à cet héroïsme une tournure assez inquiétante."

words such as *nefas* and *furor* evokes Lucan's descriptions of civil war; one is reminded, for instance, of the poet's indictment of Caesar at Pharsalus: *hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar* (BC 7.551).²⁸

Surprisingly, *pietas* makes an appearance amidst the mad slaughter, but it has no resemblance to anything we normally associate with *pietas*. Silius tells of a Tymbrenus, who, in an attempt to prevent the Carthaginians from murdering his father, does the deed himself and follows it up by mutilating the face and desecrating the body (2.632-5). Silius describes Tymbrenus as prompted by a *pietate sinistra* (2.632);²⁹ in fact he is maddened by it (*furis*, 2.633). Immediately before this mini-episode, we see a man hurling a body into "the flames" (*in flammas*, 2.630), a reminder that the entire city is going up in flames,³⁰ surely bringing to mind the fate of the epic Troy. Saguntum has indeed become another Troy, but a warped version of Troy.³¹ Its inhabitants are killed not by the attackers but by the besieged. Tymbrenus himself plays the part of an inverted, or perverted, version of Aeneas. Aeneas demonstrates his renowned *pietas* by carrying his father on his shoulders out of the doomed city, but Tymbrenus' idea of *pietas* is to slaughter his father and render him unrecognizable through mutilation. His act of mutilation can have nothing to do with his professed aim, which was to save his father from the Carthaginians; rather, this mutilation suggests a wish to erase evidence of his father's involvement in the Saguntines' own mass suicide. The mutilation of

²⁸ Lucan also describes the soldier Crastinus, who is noted as being particularly unhindered by the immorality of fighting against his own kin, as *rabies* (BC 7.474); another description of Caesar equates him with *rabies* directly (*hic Caesar, rabies populis stimulusque furorum*, BC 7.557). To Gorman (2001), 268-9, Caesar is thus seen as "the very annihilation of moral excellence."

²⁹ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 2.632 sees this phrase as an oxymoron, and notices a similarity with *impietate pia est* (Ovid, *Met.* 8.477).

³⁰ We are reminded of this again later with *furit ensis et ignis* (2.657). See also the emphasis on black smoke (*densum qua turbine nigro / exundat fumum*, 2.630-1; *erigit atro / nigrantem fumo rogos alta ad sidera nubem*, 2.658-9). But it is not clear why the entire city is on fire, since the only thing that is explicitly said to be lit up is the pyre that the inhabitants have built to burn their possessions. Perhaps the fire from the pyre is supposed to have spread throughout the city, much as Tisiphone's *furor* cannot be stopped once it has been sparked.

³¹ von Albrecht (1964), 172-83 argues that in the *Punica*, Saguntum is another Troy, and Rome also another Troy or an anti-Troy. Dominik (2003), 493-4, following von Albrecht, puts forward the idea that Silius had a cyclical vision of history: "Silius seems to suggest that history never changes: it merely repeats itself in cyclical fashion. Cities (Troy, Alba Longa, Ardea, Saguntum, Carthage) come and go; only the names change. Time present and time future are contained in time past." The fact that Silius places the fall of Saguntum in his second book, the same book in which Virgil places the fall of Troy, is a significant indicator of Silius' intentions.

Tymbrenus' father is evocative of the mutilation of the very idea of *pietas*, as the essence of traditional Roman *pietas* has also become completely unrecognizable through the murderous actions of the Saguntines.³² Tymbrenus' patricide is also portrayed through language that emphasizes the likeness between Tymbrenus and his father, and thus the familial bonds that have been destroyed by his violent deed (*reddentia formam / ora tuam laceras temerasque simillima membra*, 2.634-5).³³ Moreover, the use of *simillima membra* is a reminder of the Saguntines' near-cannibalism, as they were then said to have wished to soothe their hunger by consuming *paribus... membris* (2.525). Tymbrenus may not be eating the corpse of his father, but his rending of the face and defilement of the limbs easily show the extreme extent of his madness.

The confusion presented by Silius is reflected in yet another short scene taking place after the story of Tymbrenus. A mother tries to persuade her sons, twins named Eurymedon and Lycormas, to turn their swords on her. Unable to recognize her sons, she calls them by the wrong names and watches as they kill themselves, leaving her to commit suicide on her own (2.636-49). This mini-episode alludes to a corresponding Virgilian episode in which two indistinguishable twins are slain by Pallas.³⁴ It is not by accident that one of the twins in the Virgilian passage is named ThyMBER, a name that surely recalls Tymbrenus, whose fate Silius has just related to us. Silius' name game does not end there, however, as the name Tymbrenus appears to be an amalgamation of both ThyMBER and Tyrrhenus, a player in Lucan's Massilia episode.³⁵ Lucan's Tyrrhenus, a Roman soldier blinded by a slingshot, manages to mortally wound a Massilian named

³² Cf. McGuire (1997), 215-6: "what we see... is a frightening perversion of *nobilitas* and *decus*, and Silius presses this point home throughout the passage, both by the length of the description itself and by repeatedly pairing up images of *pietas* with those of *dira scelera*."

³³ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 2.633 notices a striking parallel here to a passage in *Thebaid* 5 in which Hypsipyle is recounting the Lemnian massacre: *similis perituro in corpore vultus / aspiciens* (*Theb.* 5.227-8). There, Statius tells of a Lycaste who weeps over her twin brother Cydimus, whom she does not wish to kill; she is nevertheless driven to murder him by her mother. Silius may have adopted this scene for the passage discussed in note 26 above. It is not an accident that the Lemnian massacre in Valerius Flaccus is also heavily influenced by *furor*, and the war between the Argonauts and Cyzicus is started by a Fury; so McGuire (1997), 107 and 109-10.

³⁴ *Aen.* 10.390-2: *vos etiam, gemini, Rutulis cecidistis in arvis, / Daucia, Laride ThyMBERque, simillima proles, / indiscreta suis gratusque parentibus error*; see Spaltenstein (1986), ad 2.636.

³⁵ Confusingly, Tyrrhenus was also a name used by Virgil (*Aen.* 11.612) as well as an adjective; see Hunink (1992), ad 709. It is also a name Silius gives to the father of Thrasymmenus, who lent his name to Lake Trasimene.

Argus, which in turn causes Argus' father to commit suicide (BC 3.709-21). Tyrrhenus' physical blindness has been interpreted as "symbolic of the moral blindness of civil war" by Vanessa Gorman,³⁶ a moral blindness that also afflicts Tymbrenus, who in his madness confuses piety and impiety. Both Thymer and Tyrrhenus, then, are characters intimately connected to family tragedy, a situation in which Tymbrenus himself is embroiled.

Eurymedon and Lycormas' own tragic story is fraught with the language of confusion and uncertainty (*deceptaque visis*, 2.642; *decepta figurae*, 2.646; *mutato... nomine*, 2.647; *ambiguous... natos*, 2.649). The twins' identical appearance confuses their mother, whose inability to call them by their correct names seems almost comical, the type of grim humour that recalls the fate of Lucan's Massilian twins at BC 3.603-26,³⁷ there, one twin survives when his brother, reduced to nothing but a torso, shields him from enemy attacks and hurls himself out like a missile in a last insane attempt to wound the enemy. While neither Eurymedon nor Lycormas performs such an incredible feat, the mass suicide that they participate in is arguably similar to the act of the Massilian twin in its patriotically suicidal nature. Matthew Leigh describes the actions of the Massilian as possessing "disastrous *virtus*" and "a lunatic vigour", phrases that would not be out of place in our discussion of the Saguntum narrative.³⁸ Moreover, at the end of the battle, Lucan describes Massilian parents hugging mutilated Roman bodies in the mistaken belief that they belong to their sons, recalling both the motif of mistaken identity that makes its way into the Eurymedon and Lycormas episode, as well as the motif of mutilation in the Tymbrenus episode. The sea battle itself can be seen as "more bizarre than heroic",³⁹ again a description appropriate for the suicide at Saguntum, a suicide that, for all its pretences of heroism, is undermined by the criminal acts by which

³⁶ Gorman (2001), 276.

³⁷ A scene that is, like Silius', based on *Aen.* 10.390-2. Lucan remarks that the twins will be able to become distinguishable once one of them dies (BC 3.605-6). Compare this to Virgil, whose twins are distinguishable in death due to their different manners of dying, and Silius, who goes further than both Lucan and Virgil in making the twins indistinguishable both in death and life.

³⁸ Leigh (1997), 253.

³⁹ Leigh (1997), 254. The influence of Lucan on the Saguntum narrative will be explored further later in this chapter.

it is manifested. As I argue later in this chapter, the echoes to Massilia are not accidental, and nor do they occur only in this story of Eurymedon and Lycormas. Rather, the entire Saguntum narrative is structurally based on the Massilian episode, and thus this Massilian allusion is not isolated in this instance. In Eurymedon and Lycormas, we see one example of how Silius communicates with Lucan's Massilia, and how, through creating such a link, he stresses the *furor* that characterizes the Saguntine twins' actions. By committing suicide, the twins die without committing matricide, but their mother, accusing them of *furor* (2.644) when she sees them slitting their own throats, appears to suggest that it is *furor* to abstain from the matricide that she desires, a suggestion that once again confuses the notions of *fas* and *nefas*, just as Tymbrenus' distorted idea of *pietas* confuses these same notions.

At Saguntum, all forms of what we understand to be *pietas* are destroyed, every type of familial relationship violated. As Dominik notes, under the supervision of Tisiphone “almost every possible parricide is committed (or suggested); fathers slay sons, sons fathers, sons mothers, husbands wives, wives husbands, brothers brothers, sisters siblings, twins twins, men and women themselves.”⁴⁰ It is thus a jarring surprise that Silius, providing a brief editorial comment in the midst of all the carnage, wonders:

Quis diros urbis casus laudandaque monstra
et fidei poenas ac tristia fata piorum
imperet evolvens lacrimis?

Who could control his tears when disclosing the dreadful fall of the city, the monstrous yet praiseworthy deeds, the punishment of loyalty, and the miserable fate of the pious?

(2.650-2)

As we have just seen, nothing in the preceding narrative is representative of normal *pietas*. How, then, can the Saguntines be considered to be *pious*? Silius is, of course, not showing an inability to remember what he has just been writing. The Saguntines *are*

⁴⁰ Dominik (2003), 487. In the same vein, McGuire (1997), 213 comments: “Here we see son about to kill mother, husband killing wife, man killing self, son killing father, and twin killing twin.” Vessey (1974b), 34 n.40 argues that “Silius has... kept the details of the massacre within decent limits”, but Silius could have skipped over the brutal nature of the mass suicide altogether. He does not attempt to limit the gory details; rather, he deliberately focuses on them.

pious, in the sense that Tymbreus is pious, but that type of *pietas* is a *sinistra pietas*, a phrase whose oxymoronic nature, like the Saguntines, turns upon itself, committing a sort of linguistic suicide. The paradox inherent in a *sinistra pietas* is echoed in another odd phrase, *laudanda monstra*. The former is a fundamentally positive concept attached to a negative descriptor, the latter a negative concept attached to a positive descriptor. The juxtaposition of these phrases suggests that the actions of the Saguntines cannot be interpreted in any single way. They are at once *pia* and *monstra*, *laudanda* and *sinistra*. Furthermore, Silius' comment clearly confirms that Fides is directly responsible for the acts of the Saguntines; their mutual murder is a "punishment" for staying loyal (*fidei poenas*).⁴¹ There is even the possibility of wordplay here, as *poenas* can of course evoke the word "Punic" as well as mean "punishment"; a *fidei poenas* would then be a third contradictory pairing.⁴²

The final death scene at Saguntum is that of Tiburna (2.665-80), who had been impersonated by Tisiphone in order to incite the mass suicide in the first place. Although this is the real Tiburna and not the disguised Tisiphone, she is nevertheless closely connected to a Fury in her death; Silius compares her to Allecto as she stands over the tomb of her dead husband Murrus (2.673). Yet the greater association to be made here is with Virgil's Dido; both women kill themselves on a burning pyre, and Tiburna takes care to bring the armour of her "departed" husband to the pyre before stabbing herself (2.675-6).⁴³ Despite her Fury-like aspects, however, Tiburna ultimately commits a dignified suicide; Dominik observes that her suicide "seems ambiguous given that she rages like a fury to her husband's tomb before striking a Stoic pose at the moment of her suicide".⁴⁴ He may be overstating the case, as Tiburna is ultimately much

⁴¹ Juno declares in her order to Tisiphone that "this is the price that Fides will pay for descending from heaven" (*hac mercede Fides constet delapsa per auras*, 2.542). Compare this to the scornful words of Statius' Tisiphone: "Let kindly *fides* and *pietas* fight back. They will lose" (*licet alma fides pietas repugnent, / vincentur*, *Theb.* 11.98-9). Statius' Tisiphone must contend against the struggles of *fides* and *pietas*, whose ultimate impotence leads to the fratricide; Silius' Tisiphone does not need to lift a finger against Fides, who does nothing to prevent the massacre.

⁴² Within three lines Silius gives us a typical epithet for the Carthaginians: *perfida gentis / Sidoniae* (2.655-6). For the pervasive use of oxymorons in the course of the mass suicide, see Ripoll (1998), 410.

⁴³ The connection between Tiburna and Dido is noted by Dietrich (2005), 80.

⁴⁴ Dominik (2003), 488.

more of a Fury than a Stoic, but as we have seen throughout the rest of the Saguntum episode, ambiguity is a familiar theme.

Silius' second book concludes with two contrasting passages in which the narrator describes the fate of the Saguntines and Hannibal. First, Silius addresses the Saguntines as starry ones whose deeds will never be matched (*at vos, sidereae, quas nulla aequaverit aetas*, 2.696) and tells them to go to Elysium where the pious reside (*ite, decus terrarum, animae, venerabile vulgus, / Elysium et castas sedes decorate piorum*, 2.697-8). This is not the first time Silius has described the Saguntines as pious, of course; we have already seen him do this at 2.650-2. The same problems that confronted the reader then resurface here, and they are accompanied by more problematic instructions by the narrator. Just before Silius' address to the *sidereae*, he describes Tisiphone gleefully leading the Saguntines down to Tartarus (2.693-5). How is this to be reconciled with Silius' command that they should go to Elysium? Vessey sees no problem: "Tisiphone's horrid joy is, however, shown to be ill founded by Silius' subsequent laudation of the Saguntine dead... By their devotion to *fides*, by their selfless acceptance of destiny, the Saguntines have earned immortality in this world and reward in the next."⁴⁵ In his view, the narrator's command overrides the previous actions of Tisiphone. Donald McGuire and Dominik, however, disagree.⁴⁶ Instead, they see a deliberate ambiguity in Silius' address; for instance, it is unclear why the Saguntines are "starry", and whether anybody will ever be able to match the Saguntines in the extent of their loyalty or their kinslaying. Furthermore, Dominik notes that "Tisiphone accompanies the souls of the Saguntines down to Hades, but Fides had promised Hercules that she herself would lead them to the underworld."⁴⁷ As I have argued, by the end of the Saguntum episode, Fides is

⁴⁵ Vessey (1974b), 35.

⁴⁶ McGuire (1997), 217 and Dominik (2003), 489-90. Dominik argues that Silius' apostrophe draws attention to Staius' address to Eteocles and Polynices at the moment of their deaths, in which he tells them to hurry to Erebus to receive their due punishment (*Theb.* 11.574-5): "The diction and phrasing of the Latin is much the same, although, of course, whereas Silius praises the Saguntine souls and directs them to Elysium, Staius damns the souls of the brothers on their descent to Tartarus. But the reminiscence of the Statian passage precisely at the point where Silius praises the Saguntine souls weakens the laudatory effect of his apostrophe and suggests that suicide, a heroic Roman act of defying tyranny, is in some respects ethically and morally dubious."

⁴⁷ Dominik (2003), 489.

nowhere to be seen. We do not see Fides abiding by her promise – we see Tisiphone instead. Are we to think that Fides, of all deities, has broken her own promise? Or are we to see that Tisiphone and Fides are now one and the same? Throughout the course of events at Saguntum, Tisiphone and Fides play equal roles in directing the Saguntines to their demise.

Silius' apostrophe to the shades of the Saguntines is followed by his prophecy of the fate of Hannibal (2.699-707), which brings the book to a close. In it, Silius tells us that Hannibal, exiled from his country, will forever be haunted by the ghosts of Saguntum, and, though longing for a death by sword, will eventually exit life as a corpse deformed by poison. Hannibal's fate is naturally meant to form a contrast to that of the Saguntines, but just as the comments made about the latter may be interpreted in different ways, the ones made about the Carthaginian contain more than what meets the eye. Vessey concludes his moral reading by declaring that "a day of vengeance awaits Hannibal. His perfidy will not go unpunished... It is on this prophetic note that the second book concludes. In it, good and evil, virtue and vice, reward and punishment are balanced and exhibited; in the divergent destinies of Hannibal and the Saguntines Silius typifies a moral truth which is transcendental and timeless."⁴⁸ Certainly, Vessey is correct in that Hannibal does not suffer a painless end, but his death is not as ignominious as it seems. Indeed, in some ways Hannibal's death can be seen as morally superior to the deaths of the Saguntines that we have just witnessed.

Silius' description of Hannibal's death is, to be sure, portrayed in an unflattering light. He is denied the sword, presumably a reference to his inability to die in battle, and heads to the Stygian waters as a deformed and discoloured corpse instead (*ferroque negato / invictus quondam Stygias bellator ad undas / deformata feret liventi membra veneno*, 2.705-7). However, as François Spaltenstein notes, suicide by poison was not necessarily viewed as a dishonourable way to die, and Hannibal was only one of many

⁴⁸ Vessey (1974b), 35.

famous historical figures to die in this manner.⁴⁹ This form of death was especially well known in Silius' own time, as it was often employed in the reign of Nero. The great Stoic Seneca himself attempted to use poison to end his own life.⁵⁰ Essentially, Hannibal commits suicide, the same method of death that the Saguntines choose, but unlike the Saguntines, Hannibal does not involve anyone else in his downfall. His death is quiet, self-contained, and planned well in advance, not in a moment of *furor*; it is, in comparison to its Saguntine counterpart, rather uncontroversial and possibly even praiseworthy. McGuire, in his analysis of suicide in the *Punica*, argues that "Seneca... in his philosophical discussions of suicide, consistently presents suicide as the rational act of the *sapiens*. The suicides that we find in the Flavian epics, on the other hand, regularly the product of political conflict, are hardly the cool, rational acts of *sapientes*; most of these suicidal figures provides [sic] a distorted and grim vision of conviction and madness."⁵¹ It is supremely ironic that Hannibal, the greatest enemy of Rome and the antithesis of *Romanitas*, displays in death perhaps the most noble, Stoic fortitude in the *Punica*, a virtue that the Saguntines, for all their adherence to *Romanitas*, fail to accomplish.

Furthermore, the *furor*-influenced tirade of Tiburna-Tisiphone may be connected to a later monologue within the *Punica*, that of Hannibal's wife Imilce in book 4. In this episode (4.779-802), Imilce, with her husband absent, attempts to dissuade her fellow Carthaginians from sacrificing Hannibal's child. Antony Augoustakis, in a thorough examination of Imilce's actions, argues that Imilce, while possessing the stereotypically Bacchic, frenzied traits of an anguished woman, also provides a well-reasoned, persuasive critique against human sacrifice, making her a non-Roman/Roman hybrid of sorts.⁵² He finds in Imilce allusions to Virgilian models, specifically Anna in *Aeneid* 4 and Amata in *Aeneid* 12, whose grief-motivated actions

⁴⁹ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 2.707. He also raises the suicide of the Capuans in Book 13 as an example of "death without shame", which we will come to later in this chapter.

⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.64.3.

⁵¹ McGuire (1997), 228.

⁵² Augoustakis (2008), 57-66.

are echoed in Imilce's own suffering, in addition to the obvious model of Dido and other borrowings from Ovidian models of grieving women. Augoustakis, however, notes that, while the Virgilian models are all in some way or other influenced by *furor*, Imilce is not; rather, she is simply motivated by the fact that her child is about to be sacrificed. Moreover, Imilce remains level-headed despite her frenzy: she "is portrayed as a figure utterly reasonable, who denounces the futility of child sacrifice and uses clear and concise arguments in order to persuade the elders of the Carthaginian senate", which gives her a coolness "that differentiates her from the irrationality of both Dido and Amata, who are completely out of control and give in to their grief."⁵³

Silius' characterization of Imilce further problematizes his treatment of the Saguntines. Dominik argues that Silius' numerous references to Saguntum as another Rome make the Saguntines even more Roman than the Romans themselves,⁵⁴ but when confronted by impending doom, they give in to destructive *furor* and slaughter themselves. How is their ultimate fate compatible with their previous role as model Romans? On the other hand, Imilce is, due to her role as a Carthaginian, implicitly placed in the sphere of the non-Roman, of the barbarian. Yet when she is faced with an excruciating fate (so terrible would the death of her child be that it may as well mean her own death), she is not taken over by external *furor* and remains capable of providing a persuasive argument against the sacrifice of her child. How is her rationality compatible with her innately Carthaginian qualities? Augoustakis explains that Imilce's civilized aspects act in opposition to her husband's bloodthirsty nature, transforming her into a sort of disseminator of Roman ideals, who nevertheless cannot become, or be seen as, wholly Roman.⁵⁵ Certainly, Hannibal may be seen as an essentially barbarian character, but he also acquires Stoic qualities in the process of his own death, as previously discussed. Meanwhile, the Saguntines, firmly established as bearers of *Romanitas*, transform into barbarians in their final hour. The narrator's praise of the *furor*-driven

⁵³ Augoustakis (2008), 60.

⁵⁴ Dominik (2003), 480.

⁵⁵ Augoustakis (2008), 63-66.

destruction of the Saguntines and simultaneous condemnation of the calm, Stoic suicide of Hannibal are symptomatic of a paradoxical world in which *fas* and *nefas* cannot be easily defined, much less correctly rewarded and punished.

In this section, I have established that the Saguntum episode is a clear example of incompatibility between *fides* and *pietas*. The Saguntines possess ample *fides*, but their desire to display this *fides* is influenced not by rationality but by *furor*, and the goddess Fides herself is as culpable in their familial slaughter as the Fury Tisiphone, as well as the Saguntines themselves. Thus, despite the outward praise of the narrator, the reader is led to question the Saguntines' excessive devotion to *fides* and their consequent abandonment of *pietas*. Silius does not necessarily condemn the Saguntines, but their actions cannot be seen as wholly ideal. Additionally, even though they are supposedly elevated to Elysium, the Saguntines meet with a much more unpleasant fate in the real world, one that sees their city sacked and their resistance to Carthage end with complete failure. In the rest of this chapter, I will show that the Saguntines' understanding of virtue is not an isolated phenomenon, by examining further examples of conflict between *fides* and *pietas* in the *Punica*. I will demonstrate through these examples that some characters in the epic possess radically different valuations of *fides* and *pietas*, while some have attitudes that are similar to those of the Saguntines, but both groups are united in their inability to balance the needs of both virtues. Like the Saguntines, those who are unable to achieve this virtuous equilibrium are associated with failure, not success. I will now discuss an episode which acts as a contrast to the excessive *fides* witnessed at Saguntum, the mooted assassination of Hannibal at Capua in book 11, which fails because its would-be perpetrator possesses *fides* which is limited by his *pietas*. In this episode, one virtue is once again abandoned in favour of the other, but the chosen and abandoned virtues are reversed.

Hannibal's non-assassination: *fides* limited by *pietas*

Hannibal's Capuan interlude, which takes up the better part of several books (11-13), is rarely analyzed by Silian scholars. Furthermore, in these rare analyses there is a tendency to focus on the effect that luxurious Capua has on Hannibal and his army, perhaps because the ancients themselves envisioned Capua as a decisive point that contributed to the undoing of Hannibal.⁵⁶ The clear Virgilian parallel, in which Capua is to Hannibal as Carthage is to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 1-4, also contributes to the Hannibal-centric way in which scholars approach the Capuan interlude. There is, however, much more to Silius' Capua than just its influence on the fortunes of Hannibal. In many ways it acts as a mirror to Saguntum – an inverted Saguntum in which the inhabitants abandon *fides* in favour of allying with the enemy, but also an episode that eventually brings out the disconcerting aspects of *fides* that, as we have seen, ever lurks beneath the surface in Silius' treatment of Saguntum.⁵⁷ *Fides* is fundamentally relevant to both Saguntum and Capua; this is shown particularly clearly in two episodes to which I now turn: the conflict between Pacuvius and his son in book 11 and the mass suicide performed by the Capuan oligarchs in book 13. In both episodes we see *fides* and *pietas* again clashing with each other in a manner reminiscent of the situation we see at Saguntum. As Neil Bernstein recognizes, “[t]he repetition of narrative motifs such as the intervention of personified *Fides* and a concluding collective suicide present the Capuan revolt against Rome as an inversion of the Saguntine resistance to Hannibal.”⁵⁸ What

⁵⁶ So for instance Bassett (1966), 259-60 sees the Capuan episode as commentary on the negative effect that luxury has on Hannibal and his troops.

⁵⁷ Pomeroy (1990), 127 recognizes the mirroring of Saguntum and Capua: “Capua is treated as the obverse of loyal Saguntum... But whereas the poet can praise the glorious end of the gallant Saguntines, perishing with their city, the deaths of the guilty Capuans, by a mass suicide which pre-empts due punishment or through Roman justice, gain no sympathy.”

⁵⁸ Bernstein (2008), 145. The role that *Fides* plays at both Saguntum and Capua is recognized by Hershkowitz (1998), 53 n.225. McGuire (1997), 219-25, following Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2547-8, analyzes the defiance of Decius and Taurea as part of an attempt to show a sustained opposition towards “tyranny” (of Hannibal and Fulvius Flaccus respectively) in the Capua interlude; he gives a brief mention to the mass suicide of Virrius and his friends. See Marks (2005a), 257-63 for an argument directed against McGuire's reading. Marks (2005a), 261 n.67 summarizes some of the issues relevant to the Capuan episode.

results from the two Capuan episodes is at once similar and entirely different from the climactic events at Saguntum.

I will now first analyze the failed attempt by Pacuvius' son to assassinate Hannibal. In preferring *pietas* to *fides*, Pacuvius' son chooses an entirely different valuation of the virtues from that of the Saguntines. Unlike the Saguntines, who are uninhibited by any concerns for *pietas* in their desire to stay loyal, Pacuvius' son cannot go through with his plan when his father threatens to throw himself in front of his son's sword. Pacuvius' son thus values *pietas* more highly than *fides*, but his choice also forces him to abandon an opportunity to return *fides* to the Capuan community, which means that, like the Saguntines, he is unable to become an exemplar of both virtues, and that, like the Saguntines, his inability to do so means that he represents another imperfect model of morality.

Silius sets out his mission in the introductory lines of book 11: his aim is to tell of the people who went over to the Carthaginians after the defeat at Cannae (11.1-3). "Never does *fides* stay in men's hearts for long when Fortune wavers" (*stat nulla diu mortalibus usquam, / Fortuna titubante, fides*) (11.3-4), Silius laments, whereupon he lists a brief catalogue of the peoples who left *fides* behind. Eventually he comes to the Capuans, who are given an especially rough treatment by Silius. Their decision is one made in madness (*furorem*, 11.29), and their ethnic affinities to the Romans are emphasized (*Senonum genti... et Dardana ab ortu*, 11.30). Their faithlessness is contrasted with that of the Celts, whose alignment with Hannibal, in light of their traditional conflicts with Rome, could still be considered to be *fas impia bella* (11.28), as paradoxical as that may sound. And although the Saguntines are not mentioned, we can reasonably think back to luckless Saguntum, which kept faith with the Romans even though they were only Greeks. Compared to Saguntum, the faithlessness of the Capuans appears all the more appalling. Who could believe that they would do such a thing,

especially given the complete integration of Capua into Flavian Rome, Silius asks? (*quisnam, mutato tantum nunc tempore, credat?*, 11.32)⁵⁹

The two principal figures named by Silius who take part in the revolt are Pacuvius and Virrius, representatives of the oligarchic rule at Capua. They decide to demand a place in the consulship, and Virrius is sent to Rome for this purpose.⁶⁰ After being immediately rebuffed by the angry senate (11.73-121), Virrius returns and stirs up the Capuans to clamour for an alliance with Hannibal; only one man, Decius, tries to resist (11.131-89). His entreaties are naturally useless, and Hannibal arrives as the distinguished guest of Capua.

Soon after his arrival, however, Silius describes the daring deed of Pacuvius' son,⁶¹ who hatches a plot to assassinate Hannibal during the feast that the Capuans are holding in his honour (11.303-68); the story is heavily based on Livy.⁶² In this short episode we can see an initial clash between *fides* and *pietas* at Capua, as the youth's bold desire is ultimately thwarted by the intervention of his father. In a recent study, Bernstein uses the actions of Pacuvius as an example of the perversion of paternal authority, arguing that the "conflict between Pacuvius and his son undermines the identifications made elsewhere in the epic between virtue, ideal governance, and paternal authority."⁶³ Described as the only Capuan whose mind had not been saturated by wine (11.306-7), Pacuvius' son uses a break in the feast to secretly approach his father and divulge to him his plan, telling his father to return home if he cannot bear to see the death of Hannibal (11.312-29). As readers who know how the story is going to unfold, Pacuvius' son seems to us to be utterly foolish in mentioning his plan to his father, since we might think that if he had not done so, he could well have succeeded. However, in his

⁵⁹ Silius also alludes to the Capua in his day by saying that the city would eventually be able to send a consul to Rome, but not before Carthage could do so as well (11.122-9).

⁶⁰ Again *fides* is a crucial theme here, as Marks (2005a), 261 notes: "wishing to profit from Rome's weakened state in the wake of Cannae, they attempted to procure a consulship in exchange for their *fides*." See further Marks (2005a), 261 n.68 for the historical basis of the Capuans' demand.

⁶¹ Duff supplies the name "Perolla" in his translation, but Silius never actually mentions the youth's name. Spaltenstein (1990), ad 11.267 notes that Livy does not mention his name either and that "Perolla" comes from a source that predates Livy. Since Silius follows Livy closely throughout this scene, it is not surprising that Silius does not provide a name.

⁶² Livy 23.8-9.

⁶³ Bernstein (2008), 145. The episode as a whole is analyzed at Bernstein (2008), 145-50.

speech (his only one, as he does not speak again), we already see that the young Capuan holds *fides* and *pietas* in very high regard. His motive for trying to kill Hannibal is based on a sense of *fides*. He claims that he will end the war with the deed (11.318-9), and that his sword will sanctify the alliance that has been polluted by treachery (*hic erit ille, / qui polluta dolis iam foedera sanciet, ensis*, 11.320-1).⁶⁴ His apparent foolishness in alerting his father to the plan is, on the other hand, based on a sense of *pietas*. Pacuvius' son is not *pius* in the sense that he is asking for his father's approval. Indeed, there is no reason for why he would make such a request, since his words accuse his father of being complicit in polluting the alliance between Rome and Capua; he knows very well that Pacuvius would be shocked at such a deed, as he holds Hannibal to be equal to the gods (*summum quod credis et aequas / Hannibalem superis*, 11.325-6). Instead, his motive is to warn Pacuvius that, if he cannot bear such a sight (*si perferre nequit spectacula tanta senectus*, 11.322), he should leave and go home. He also suggests that Pacuvius would be safer (*securis*, 11.324) at home, implying that the Carthaginians might take their revenge on Pacuvius if he is present at the murder. The youth, despite his noticeable dislike for Pacuvius' role in the Capuan revolt, remains piously concerned for the welfare of his father, while his sense of *fides* is also uncompromised.

Pacuvius' response is extraordinary. Terrified, he throws himself to the ground and repeatedly kisses his son's feet (*tremebundus ibidem / sternitur et pedibus crebro pavida oscula figens*, 11.330-1), an action that undoubtedly brings to mind Priam's supplication of Achilles in *Iliad* 24. Yet Pacuvius' speech fundamentally differs from Priam's supplication in its intention. Whereas Priam's action was made in order to ransom back the body of his son Hector, Pacuvius is actually supplicating his son in order to save a complete stranger, and indeed a man who should be his greatest enemy. Pacuvius thus uses Priam's famous, emotional gesture for a farcical, ridiculous purpose. And this is not the only epic model of which he makes a mockery. Pacuvius does not

⁶⁴ Bernstein (2008), 146 argues that Pacuvius' son sees *fides* and *pietas* as acting in conjunction, with a retention of *fides* being glorious to both Capua on the whole and Pacuvius' family personally; he "presents familial and political motives as symmetrical".

only rely on this distorted act of supplication, but also launches into a hastily compiled list of reasons for why his son should relent from the proposed assassination, a list closely based on Livy's version of the story. He appeals to a father's rights (*iura parentis*, 11.332) and thus his son's sense of *pietas*;⁶⁵ he echoes his son's use of *polluta* by pleading that his hospitality not be polluted with blood (*sanguine... / polluta hospitium*, 11.334-5);⁶⁶ he argues that his son would not be able to finish the deed in any case, so formidable is Hannibal's aura of invincibility (11.337-48);⁶⁷ he goes on to argue that he would die even if he succeeded,⁶⁸ and urges him to remember the example of Decius, who alone opposed Hannibal's arrival (11.348-50).⁶⁹ Bernstein argues that Pacuvius' list of reasons is meant to "evoke strong emotions in his son: pity in response to his supplication and fear of Hannibal's power."⁷⁰ Pacuvius appeals briefly to his son's *pietas*, but his initial speech does not quite represent the situation as a stark choice between *pietas* and *fides*. None of these arguments, however, persuades the young man. Appropriately, Silius describes him as *surdumque timori* (11.352), which, on the one hand, means "deaf to fear", implying that he is still completely unafraid of the consequences of his intended action, but on the other, could imply that he has not heard the entreaties of his terrified (*pavida*, 11.331) father at all. Pacuvius' half-hearted appeal to *pietas* fails, and he must turn to more extreme measures to achieve his goal.

Having exhausted almost all his arguments, Pacuvius is left with one final rhetorical flourish:

'nil ultra posco, refer in convivium gressum;
 appropereamus;' ait 'non iam tibi pectora pubis
 Sidoniae fodienda manu tutantia regem.
 hoc iugulo dextram explora. namque haec tibi ferrum,

⁶⁵ = Livy 23.9.2: *per ego te... fili, quaecumque iura liberos iungunt parentibus...*

⁶⁶ = Livy 23.9.4: *ab hospitali mensa surges... ut eam ipsam mensam cruentares hospitium sanguine?* Bernstein (2008), 147 sees a similarity with Virgil's use of *pollutum hospitium* (*Aen.* 3.61) when describing Polymestor's murder of his guest Polydorus.

⁶⁷ = Livy 23.9.7: *voltum ipsius Hannibalis, quem armati exercitus sustinere nequeunt, quem horret populus Romanus, tu sustinebis?*

⁶⁸ = Livy 23.9.6-7: *unus adgressurus es Hannibalem? quid illa turba tot liberorum servorumque? quid in unum intenti omnium oculi? quid tot dextrae? torpescunt in amentia illa?*

⁶⁹ Silius reverses the sequence of events here. In Livy, the arrest of Decius takes place the day after the banquet (Livy 23.10).

⁷⁰ Bernstein (2008), 148.

si Poenum invasisse paras, per viscera ferrum
 nostra est ducendum. tardam ne sperne senectam.
 opponam membra atque ensem extorquere negatum
 mortem mea eripiam.’

‘I ask no more. Let us speedily return to the banquet,’ he said. ‘Now your hand will not stab the Carthaginians as they protect their leader. On this throat must your right hand test its blade. For if you prepare to kill the Phoenician with your steel, you must begin by running it through my heart. Do not despise my slowness and old age. I will fling my limbs against the sword that I could not seize with my words, and wrench it away with my death.’

(11.353-60)

Pacuvius’ challenge, though correlating with Livy’s version of the story,⁷¹ also recalls the speech made by Jocasta to Eteocles at *Thebaid* 11.338-42, in which she tries to stop her son from duelling with his brother:⁷²

prius haec tamen arma necesse est
 experiare domi: stabo ipso in limine portae
 auspicium infelix scelerumque immanis imago.
 haec tibi canities, haec sunt calcanda, nefande,
 ubera, perque uterum sonipes hic matris agendus.
 (*Theb.* 11.338-42)

‘But first you must test these weapons at home: I myself, as an unlucky portent and inhuman image of crimes, will stand on the threshold of the gate. Trample upon these grey hairs, these breasts, wicked one, and drive this horse over the womb of your mother.’

Jocasta’s speech closely resembles Pacuvius’ both linguistically and thematically. The linguistic parallels between the two speeches are easily identifiable (*explora*, 11.356 ~ *experiare*, *Theb.* 11.339; *haec tibi*, 11.356 ~ *haec tibi*, *Theb.* 11.341; *per viscera... ducendum*, 11.357-8 ~ *perque uterum... agendus*, *Theb.* 11.342). The speeches also rely on similar imagery: Jocasta tells Eteocles that he must tread upon her breasts and trample upon her body with his horse before he can engage Polynices in battle, much as Pacuvius tells his son that he must run him through before he can reach Hannibal; both

⁷¹ Livy 23.9.7-8: *ut alia auxilia desint: me ipsum ferire corpus meum opponentem pro corpore Hannibalis sustinebis? atqui per meum pectus petendus ille tibi transfigendusque est.*

⁷² For an analysis of Jocasta’s attempt to forestall the fratricide in the *Thebaid*, see Ganiban (2007), 159-65. He notes that Statius himself bases the speech on its Senecan counterpart in the *Phoenissae*. Jocasta’s speech operates on the premise that it “makes the *nefas* of the brother’s fratricidal strife also matricidal: fratricide will occur only if matricide happens first.” The connection between Jocasta’s speech and Pacuvius’ is also noted by Bernstein (2008), 148.

Jocasta and Pacuvius emphasize their old age and graphically offer up their bodies as a sort of first “test” for their sons. But Jocasta’s threat, as horrifying and *impius* as it may be, is intended to prevent an act of *nefas*. Conversely, Pacuvius dares his son to commit *nefas* if he wishes to go ahead with his deed of *virtus*, once again making a mockery of an epic model. Jocasta inevitably fails in her attempt to delay the Theban fratricide, but in contrast, even as Pacuvius says that he shall seize his son’s sword through his death and not through his words, his words *do* succeed in obtaining the result that he is seeking.

It is thus through an insane and *impius* challenge to his son’s *pietas* that Pacuvius achieves his objective. So demented is Pacuvius’ vision of the world that he values Hannibal’s life more than the virtue of his own family, a complete repudiation of the family ties that he had previously appealed to (11.332). It is certainly debateable whether Pacuvius would have actually done as he says, but it is enough that he says it. He dares his son to commit patricide, forcing him to choose between family and state, *pietas* and *fides*.⁷³ In this instant, these two most Roman of virtues come unstuck and end up in complete opposition. The youth’s unquestionable *pietas* becomes his fatal weakness, as he cannot contemplate the possibility of patricide, causing him to give up his assassination attempt. In the process, unlike in the mass suicide at Saguntum, *pietas* has triumphed over *fides*, but again we see a disconnect between these two virtues, with each unable to coexist with the other. *Pietas* is preserved and patricide is averted, but Pacuvius’ son is unable to also keep faith with Rome. He is unwilling to cross the “limit” that his father has set in order to stay true to *fides*, a limit that the Saguntines had previously breached. Nevertheless, he is damned no matter what he does; he becomes a parricide if he chooses *fides*, and he remains a traitor to Rome if he chooses *pietas*. He is in a situation where he cannot possibly win.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the participants in the episode have differing conceptions of the meaning of *fides* itself. Pacuvius’ son (as well

⁷³ Cf. the Statian model; Ganiban (2007), 162 notes that “Jocasta becomes an ambivalent character, who would present Eteocles with a choice either to act with *pietas* or to repeat his father’s crimes.” In Statius, one choice is clearly the correct one, but in Silius both choices are unappealing.

as the reader) thinks that *fides* means loyalty to Rome, but for Pacuvius, his *fides* is now towards Carthage and his guest Hannibal. There is a suggestion of this tug-of-war between loyalties in Pacuvius' appeal to the bond of hospitality (11.334-5), but the idea is even more apparent when we refer back to Silius' source, Livy. In his history, Pacuvius pleads to his son that the Capuans have only just sworn by the gods to keep faith with Hannibal (*paucae horae sunt, intra quas iurantes per quidquid deorum est, dextrae dextras iungentes, fidem obstrinximus*, Livy 23.9.3); their loyalty now belongs to the Carthaginians, not the Romans. Indeed, allowing the assassination to take place would be a massive breach of trust, since Pacuvius had expended much effort persuading Hannibal to allow his son to come to the banquet in the first place.⁷⁴ This double-edged meaning of *fides* in the *Punica* will become clearer later in Silius' version of the mass suicide of the Capuan aristocracy; for now, there is just a hint of it in Pacuvius' plea.

The aftermath of this aborted assassination attempt is steeped in ambiguity. Silius, instead of describing the reaction of Pacuvius' son and the subsequent abandonment of his attempt, claims that the result of Pacuvius' plea had been ordained by the gods, so that Hannibal could be saved for his defeat by Scipio at Zama (11.361-3).⁷⁵ The youth himself remains silent, without a hint of his reaction.⁷⁶ His reaction appears to be completely irrelevant: the reader assumes that he has been convinced to abandon his cause for fear of committing patricide, but Silius does not tell us what he is specifically thinking. Silius does, however, provide an editorial note, lamenting the preemptive failure of the attempted assassination. How great was the praise that the youth lost by not going through with his plan, he says, when it was a plan whose purpose was already worthy of such great glory (*amisit quantam posito conamine laudem, / cui tantum est voluisse decus!*, 11.365-6)! Silius shows clear support for the youth's desire to assassinate Hannibal and laments the fact that he abandoned his plan,

⁷⁴ Hannibal did not trust Pacuvius' son, since he was known to be a Roman sympathizer; see Livy 23.8.3-5.

⁷⁵ Marks (2005a), 83-4 argues that Silius' declaration foreshadows the fact that the war will eventually become a one-on-one conflict between Hannibal and Scipio.

⁷⁶ Silius tells us that following Pacuvius' speech, "tears poured forth" (*lacrimae tunc ore profusae*, 11.360), but it is unclear who is doing the weeping; Duff's translation has it as Pacuvius himself. Livy 23.9.9 clearly notes that it is Pacuvius' son who weeps in response to his father's words.

but the poet also remains silent on what would have been required for the successful completion of the plan. To be sure, Pacuvius' son foregoes a large amount of praise, but he would also have committed a dreadful familial crime. For this Capuan, such praise is not worth getting.

Pacuvius' son has, as it were, read Silius' Saguntine narrative. In the process of maintaining their *fides* to Rome, the Saguntines display little hesitation in butchering themselves and each other. As we have seen, Silius lavishes praise upon the Saguntines for their actions, but there is much ambiguity and contradiction lurking beneath this praise; he plainly recognizes that their acts are criminal and founded on madness. Pacuvius' son, when confronted by the same desire to uphold the righteousness of *fides*, is challenged by his father to perform a re-enactment of *Punica* 2, rejects the frenzied path taken by the Saguntines, choosing *pietas* over *fides*. The result may be different, but Silius again demonstrates the conflicting nature of these two Roman virtues.

So what have we learned from the story of Pacuvius' son? Essentially, we have witnessed two more examples of possible moral behaviour. One is represented by Pacuvius' son, who initially possesses both *fides* and *pietas*, but when forced to choose between them, prefers to reject the model provided by the Saguntines in choosing *pietas* over *fides*. The other model is provided by Pacuvius himself, who possesses neither *fides* nor *pietas*. His lack of *fides* is obvious, as he abandoned that virtue by aligning himself with the Carthaginians in the first place, and his lack of *pietas* is perhaps even more obvious, since he is the very person who thinks that challenging his son to kill his own father is an acceptable course of action. We may concede that Pacuvius possesses a small measure of *fides*, towards Hannibal rather than towards Rome, but Pacuvius' view of morality is plainly one that should not be emulated. Naturally, Pacuvius' lack of virtue will cause him to meet with ultimate failure (in the episode that I shall turn to next), but despite Pacuvius' son's moral behaviour being much more preferable, he can also only be seen as a failed hero, precisely because he, like the Saguntines, cannot claim to be an

exemplar of both *fides* and *pietas*. Thus even though Pacuvius' son rejects the model of the Saguntines, both he and the Saguntines similarly end up as failures.

Next, I will examine the suicide of the Capuan oligarchs that brings to an end the Capuan episode. Here we can find much more overt reminders of the Saguntine episode, for Fides makes a return. Tellingly, her role at the suicide is that of a Fury, a role only hinted at during the Saguntine suicide when I noted that she could be seen as sharing responsibility with Tisiphone in encouraging the Saguntines to stay true to *fides*. Yet although the Capuans obviously lack the *fides* that the Saguntines were so desperate to preserve through their suicide, I argue that their fate is in the end actually comparable to that of the Saguntines. By examining the Capuan suicide, we are led to reconsider our reading of the Saguntine episode, and reevaluate the praise heaped upon the earlier suicide by the narrator.

Fides' reprisal: the Capuan suicide

The failure of Pacuvius' son to assassinate Hannibal represents a triumph of *pietas* over *fides*, but *fides* ultimately gets its revenge over the Capuans. Taking advantage of Hannibal's absence, the Romans besiege Capua; Hannibal rushes back in an attempt to break the siege but fails to get through the Romans, whereupon he decides to attack Rome itself to try to draw away the Romans (12.449-540). In the end, though, Hannibal fails in his attempts to both take Rome and relieve Capua (12.541-13.93), and the Capuans are left to the mercy of the Romans. After a futile battle against their besiegers, the leading Capuans despair of the situation and perform a suicide, an episode which naturally, and deliberately, echoes the suicide of the Saguntines. In the Capuan suicide, Fides returns to punish the faithless Capuans, but similarities to the Saguntine suicide and the portrayal of Fides herself once again highlight the problematic aspects of *fides* as a virtue.

The Capuan suicide is provoked by Virrius, the man who had gone to Rome to demand a share of the consulship and who is thus referred to by Silius as the *perfidiae ductor* (13.261). When he sees that all hope is gone, he loses all desire to live (*pulsis vivendi e pectore curis*, 13.263) and delivers a speech to the Capuans (13.264-75). This speech recounts Virrius' achievements, namely his attempts to obtain Capuan hegemony in Italy, and urges his compatriots to join him at dinner if they wish to die as free men (*dum copia noctis, / cui cordi comes aeterna est Acherontis ad undam / libertas*, 13.270-2). His stated motive for suicide is thus comparable to the motive that Tisiphone/Tiburna gives to the Saguntines in her own speech, to escape slavery by the Carthaginians. In this case, however, the oppressors are Romans rather than Carthaginians. Furthermore, the Capuans only find themselves in this situation because they have betrayed Rome, the polar opposite to the Saguntines, who die as paragons of *fides*. Yet the Capuans who accept Virrius' exhortations come to the same conclusion as the Saguntines, to die by their own hands. After Virrius' speech, the leading Capuans withdraw to Virrius' house, where they construct a pyre (13.277-8), which brings to mind the massive pyre constructed in Saguntum.

The Saguntine suicide may have been instigated by Tisiphone, but as I have previously argued, Tisiphone is only ordered to bring down Saguntum *after* Fides enters the city, making Fides practically as culpable in their deaths as her hellish counterpart. The fate of Saguntum is, as Juno declares, punishment for its adherence to Fides. At Capua, however, the exact opposite is true: the suicide of the Capuans is described as Fides' punishment for their infidelity. This fact is emphasized in Fides' reappearance in the epic in the form of a disembodied voice that outlines the fate of those who would disrespect Fides:

foedera, mortales, ne saevo rumpite ferro,
 sed castam servate Fidem. fulgentibus ostro
 haec potior regnis. dubio qui frangere rerum
 gaudebit pacta ac tenues spes linquet amici,
 non illi domus, aut coniux, aut vita manebit
 umquam expers luctus lacrimaeque: aget, aequore semper
 ac tellure premens, aget aegrum nocte dieque

despecta ac violata Fides.

Mortals, break not treaties with savage steel, but preserve sacred Fides. Fides is stronger than the purple gleam of rulers. He who delights in breaking his word in the moment of danger and forsakes the delicate hope of a friend, neither his home, his wife, nor his life will ever remain free from mourning and tears: Fides, whom he despised and dishonoured, will pursue him, forever pressing him over land and sea, pursuing her victim all day and night.

(13.284-91)

I have argued that at Saguntum, Fides and Tisiphone practically merge into one entity; at Capua, the connection between Fides and the Furies becomes clear. The punishment advocated by Fides involves traitors being hounded forever by Fides herself, a role which is exactly that of a Fury. As if this speech were not enough to hammer home the point, what Fides has just outlined immediately comes to pass, as the Fury Erinyes partakes in everything the Capuans do, presiding over meetings and meals alike (13.291-3). Like Tisiphone, Erinyes plays a direct role in the suicide: she personally hands cups of poison to the Capuans, though in this case the Capuans are hardly unwilling participants (13.294-5). Yet unlike Tisiphone, Erinyes is not working in conjunction with a deity hostile to Jupiter and the Romans. At Capua, Fides is the deity in charge, and she is plainly a Fury.

The Capuan suicide obviously recalls the Saguntine suicide, but the relationship between these two episodes has been interpreted in two extremely different ways by McGuire and Ripoll. McGuire provides a subversive reading of the Capuan episode, which sees Silius condemning the treacherous behaviour of the Capuans but then undercutting such condemnation by portraying their suicide in a heroic light. By committing suicide, the Capuans take responsibility for their past actions and end their lives honourably, making their suicide less a punishment for treachery and more a noble act in itself which could even be seen as a brave stand against Roman imperialism.⁷⁷ Ripoll's reading is altogether more conservative. He agrees with Fides in seeing the

⁷⁷ McGuire (1997), 222-3.

suicide as punishment for a life of treachery, rather than any honourable Stoic end.⁷⁸ The Capuan suicide acts as an expiation for the deaths of the Saguntines, and their fate acts as a clear contrast to the fate of the Saguntines and thus as a deterrent against treachery.⁷⁹ Both of these readings are in line with the overall theses of both scholars. McGuire aligns the Capuans with other characters in Flavian epic who, in his view, commit suicide when faced with an oppressive ruler, which forms a trend that he applies to Flavian epic in general. His reading of the Capuan suicide, which sees the Capuans as one of the “oppressed”, thus supports his contention that the Flavian epics are deeply concerned with the negative aspects of Roman imperialism. Ripoll’s reading, on the other hand, supports his broader analysis of morality in the Flavian epics, in which Silius’ depiction of morality is read in a far more straightforward fashion; those who possess virtue are rewarded, while those who lack it are punished. I argue that neither reading is wholly acceptable.

If the Saguntine episode represents an example of loyalty rewarded with familial murder and crime, then the Capuan episode drives home the point by having the Capuans, despite the fact that they originally chose treachery rather than loyalty, arrive at much the same end as the Saguntines, and without the criminality attached to the deaths of the latter. The Capuan senators die voluntarily, with Virrius stating his intention even before the appearance of Fides’ disembodied voice, and their deaths, in comparison to those of the Saguntines, lack violence; they merely consume poison and then immolate themselves on the pyre (13.296-8). None of the crazed slaughter at Saguntum makes a reappearance here. Indeed, the narrator describes the people of Capua, who, in contrast to the senators, are not planning on committing suicide, as maddened by grief and fear (*nec vulgum cessat furiare dolorque pavorque*, 13.279). At Capua, it is not those who are involved in the suicide, but those who are intent on survival, who are gripped by *furor*. Nowhere are Virrius or his companions associated with *furor* or its cognates, and even though Erinys is present to hand out poison, the

⁷⁸ Ripoll (1998), 411-6.

⁷⁹ Ripoll (1998), 414.

actions of Virrius had been conceived long before her arrival and would have proceeded regardless of her presence.

The Capuan suicide thus appears to be a very reasoned, noble end for the conspirators, the type of end which does not seem befitting of their actions in life. Ripoll admits that there is a problem here; quite apart from the fact that the Capuan senators' fate is contrasted with that of the Saguntines, their ability to voluntarily take their own lives is also favourably contrasted with the inability of the rest of the Capuan populace to do so. Yet Ripoll goes on to assert that Virrius' suicide is in fact not a Stoic *exemplum* but a just punishment for their treachery, the fall of Capua prefiguring the fall of Carthage at the end of the epic.⁸⁰ He points to the positive eulogy granted to the Saguntines and the punitive assertions of Fides towards the Capuans as evidence for such a reading.⁸¹ There are several problems with Ripoll's view. We have already noted that the eulogy to the Saguntines, while outwardly positive, is in fact filled with questions concerning the meaning of the prophecy and the horrific circumstances surrounding the prophecy. The prophecy that Fides utters concerning those who break their faith is somewhat more straightforward, but Ripoll reads her words as being directed towards humanity in general, rather than to the Capuans specifically; the fate of the Capuans, therefore, is supposed to serve as proof to the world that treachery does not pay, rather than any direct warning made towards the Capuans.⁸² Both interpretations are possible, but both also lead to problematic results. If Fides' speech is directed towards the Capuans, then Virrius, in a way, understands her words and pre-emptively ends the torments to come by ending his life and depriving Fides of the ability to persecute him. On the other hand, if we follow Ripoll's reading and see the speech as

⁸⁰ Ripoll (1998), 415: "Néanmoins, ce suicide n'est pas l'acte glorieux du sage stoïcien, mais le châtement immanent d'un anti-sage à la *constantia* dévoyée, à l'image d'Hannibal dont il préfigure le destin, comme la chute de Capoue préfigure la défaite de Carthage."

⁸¹ Ripoll (1998), 415: "C'est en somme la postérité qui donnera sa véritable signification à cet épisode: à l'*exemplum* de *fides* représenté par les Sagontins s'opposera pour l'éternité l'image de l'échec et de la punition de la *perfidia* capouane."

⁸² Ripoll (1998), 415: "Le caractère très général du discours de Fides, qui ne fait aucune référence directe à la situation présente et s'adresse à l'ensemble des 'mortales', contribue à élargir la portée morale de l'épisode."

highlighting the Capuan suicide as a moral lesson for the rest of the world, then surely we are led to see the Capuans as getting their just deserts through their deaths.⁸³

It is entirely questionable whether this is in fact the case. Virrius and his companions avoid the justice that the Roman commander Fulvius eventually metes out to the conspirators who fail to commit suicide (13.367-8). In fact, during Fulvius' execution of these Capuans, the narrator makes a point of honouring one of the Capuans, Taurea, who confronts Fulvius and commits suicide rather than submit to execution (13.669-80), an action which is explicitly praised.⁸⁴ If we are supposed to learn a lesson from the treachery of the Capuans, then, what is it? They suffer defeat, but they largely take their defeat honourably and end their lives in noble fashion. Fides may declare that the treacherous will forever be without peace of mind, but the treacherous Capuans either peacefully take their own lives or are soon executed by the Romans; they may have refused to be faithful to Rome, but they do not violate the other virtues of *Romanitas*. In comparison, the Saguntines uphold the virtue of *fides* by thoroughly shredding through *pietas* and undertaking a *furor*-driven slaughter. Ripoll, who sees Silius as genuinely praising the Saguntines and condemning the Capuans, argues that the ultimate judgement on both parties is dependent solely on their adherence, or lack thereof, towards *fides*,⁸⁵ but such an argument forces us to ignore the actual actions taken by the Saguntines and Capuans. Silius deliberately provides the faithful Saguntines with a *furor*-driven end while doing precisely the opposite with the treacherous Capuans; such a juxtaposition is crucial in interpreting the two episodes. Just as the faith of the Saguntines is tainted by their familial butchery, the betrayal of the Capuans is tempered by their noble acceptance of death. The Capuans are "punished" with a better fate than the one "awarded" to the Saguntines. What emerges from both the Capuan and

⁸³ More controversially, McGuire (1997), 223 suggests that the Capuans actually "respect the voice's warnings about keeping their faith", since they now owe loyalty towards the Carthaginians.

⁸⁴ See McGuire (1997), 224-5.

⁸⁵ Ripoll (1998), 415-6: "Le suicide des Sagontins paraît irrationnel et infernal dans ses motivations et horrible dans ses modalités, mais il est l'objet d'une glorification; celui des Capouans ne manque pas de dignité ni de noblesse, mais il ne suffit pas à racheter moralement des coupables de haute trahison. Le critère suprême de tout jugement moral est le degré de *fides* des protagonistes à l'égard de Rome, qui détermine la récompense des uns et le châtement des autres."

Saguntine episodes is therefore a distinctly ambiguous view of the world, in which *virtus* can easily lead to *nefas*, and vice versa. Such a view may be pessimistic, but it is also realistic; McGuire notes that Silius' Capua "more than anywhere else in the entire epic, mirrors Rome of the first centuries BC and AD", from its luxurious and decadent leaders to its dinner parties and gladiatorial shows.⁸⁶ Seneca also saw his Rome as being in danger of falling into the same trap as Capua and Hannibal.⁸⁷ Silius' attitude towards the Capuans thus lies somewhere between the readings provided by McGuire and Ripoll. As Ripoll argues, Silius sees the faithless Capuans as deserving of punishment for their lack of *fides*. However, it is highly questionable whether the actual "punishment" meted out by Fides is actually appropriate for the Capuans, especially when we consider the "reward" given to the Saguntines earlier for their possession of *fides*. Despite their completely divergent attitudes towards *fides*, the Capuans and Saguntines arrive at eerily similar fates.

In this chapter, I have so far shown that Silius depicts the relationship between *fides* and *pietas* in a complex and ambiguous way. The Saguntines along with Pacuvius' son are unable to simultaneously live up to the demands of both *fides* and *pietas*, and are forced to choose one over the other. Due to the necessity of such a choice, neither the Saguntines nor Pacuvius' son can be considered as ideal models of virtue. Furthermore, even those who lack both *fides* and *pietas*, such as the Capuan oligarchs and even Hannibal himself, meet with fates that are at least somewhat admirable. In deploying such conflicting relationships between *fides* and *pietas* in his epic, Silius recalls Seneca's contemporary, Lucan. In the following sections of this chapter, I argue that Silius is largely influenced by Lucan's own depiction of virtue in the *Bellum Civile*. As comparisons between the Saguntum episode and certain episodes within the *Bellum* show, Silius shares many of the concerns of his Neronian predecessor, concerns which make their way into his own epic. However, even though Silius makes extensive use of

⁸⁶ McGuire (1997), 226-7.

⁸⁷ *Ep.* 51.

Lucan in his construction of the Saguntum episode and shares many of Lucan's attitudes towards the state of morality in the world, he clearly differentiates his position from Lucan's. I will now explore Silius' use of Lucanian episodes, particularly scenes in books 3 and 4 of the *Bellum*, and its implications for our reading of the *Punica*.

Saguntum and Massilia

Silius' Saguntum episode is one of the clearest examples of his interaction with Lucan in his epic. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the links between the Saguntines Tymbrenus, Eurymedon and Lycormas and scenes in Lucan's Massilian battle,⁸⁸ but Silius' use of the entire Massilian episode goes much farther than these simple links. Indeed, while I have previously noted that Saguntum can be considered as a new Troy,⁸⁹ it can also be considered as a new (or old?) Massilia. In this section, I wish to demonstrate how Silius bases the structure of his Saguntum episode upon Lucan's Massilian siege. From his adaptation of the Massilian model in the *Punica*, it is clear that Silius, rather than simply making piecemeal allusions to the *Bellum Civile*, is keenly interested in the thematic parallels that can be seen between the situations faced by the Saguntines and Massilians. In both epics, the poet laments the unhappy fate of those who remain loyal. Lucan's depiction of Massilia thus greatly impacts upon our reading of *Punica* 1 and 2.

Firstly, we can easily notice some general similarities between Saguntum and Massilia. Both are Greek cities caught up in wars in which they are not directly involved. Saguntum is attacked by Hannibal, while Massilia is attacked by the new Hannibal, Caesar. In a way, Saguntum acts as a bizarre, reversed prelude to Massilia; Hannibal lays siege to the city on the way to his main target of Rome, but Massilia is besieged by Caesar as he is on the way to his main campaign in Spain. But aside from these superficial similarities, it is also clear that Silius bases the structure of his Saguntum

⁸⁸ See p. 60.

⁸⁹ See p. 59.

episode on the structure of Lucan's Massilian narrative. Comparing Lucan and Silius, these structural similarities quickly become apparent:⁹⁰

<i>Lucan</i>	<i>Silius</i>
(1) The Massilians' petition to Caesar (<i>BC</i> 3.303-56)	(1) History of Saguntum (1.271-95)
(2) Caesar's reply (356-72)	(2) Hannibal calls on Saguntum to surrender at once (296-304)
(3) Caesar perceives Massilian resistance (373-4)	(3) Hannibal initiates the fighting (304-26)
(4) Caesar builds a rampart by chopping down the sacred grove, then leaves (375-455)	(4) Hannibal builds a rampart and towers (327-8)
(5) Advance of two towers along rampart (455-62)	(5) The Carthaginians advance to the walls (329-48)
(6) Superiority of Massilian artillery (463-73)	(6) Superiority of Saguntine artillery (349-64)
(7) ... succeeds against the advance of the Romans' <i>testudo</i> (474-86)	(7) ... fails against the advance of the Carthaginians' <i>testudo</i> (365-6)
(8) The Caesarians attempt to undermine the walls but are driven off by the Massilians (487-96)	(8) The Carthaginians successfully undermine the walls but cannot enter the city (366-75)
(9) The Massilians break out of the city and set fire to the rampart (497-508)	(9) Murrus and Hannibal (376-534)
(10) The Caesarians have recourse to the sea (509-16)	(10) Hannibal is wounded and the fighting stops (535-60)
(11) The Massilians recruit sailors from young and old and bring out old ships (516-20)	(11) The Saguntines call on young and old (561)
	(12) They send envoys to Rome (562-75)
	(13) Hannibal refuses to meet the Romans and resumes the siege (2.11-55)
	(14) Asbyte, Theron and Hannibal (56-269)
	(15) Ecphrasis of Hannibal's shield (395-456)
(see number 10)	(16) The Saguntines despair of help arriving from the sea (457-61)
	(17) Starvation at Saguntum (462-74)
(12) Sea battle: Massilians defeated (521-762)	(18) Fides and Tisiphone engineer the suicide

⁹⁰ I have taken the chronology for Lucan from Masters (1992), 20-1, and modified it slightly to compress Caesar's rampart construction and grove-desecration into one part. Masters himself uses this scheme to compare the sequence of events in Lucan and Caesar's commentary. For Silius, I have removed sections of the narrative that have nothing directly to do with the siege itself (the debates at Rome and Carthage).

As we can see, there are numerous similarities between the two episodes in terms of the development of the narrative, particularly in the initial phases of the siege. It was perhaps obvious for Silius to make the connection between Saguntum and Massilia; Lucan, after all, makes the same connection in the Massilians' petition to Caesar. The Massilians, after attempting to persuade Caesar not to attack the city by various arguments, end their speech by describing the extent of their determination to resist Caesar, should he attack:

nec pavet hic populus pro libertate subire
 obsessum Poeno gessit quae Marte Saguntum.
 pectoribus rapti matrum frustra trahentes
 ubera sicca fame medios mittentur in ignis,
 uxor et a caro poscet sibi fata marito,
 vulnera miscebunt fratres bellumque coacti
 hoc potius civile gerent.

This people does not fear, for the sake of liberty, what Saguntum endured when it was besieged during the Punic War. Torn from the breasts of their mothers and vainly trying to cling onto breasts that have grown dry from famine, babies will be sent amidst the flames, and the wife will ask that her fate be dealt by her dear husband, and brothers gathered together will mix their wounds and wage a more preferable civil war.

(*BC* 3.349-55)

Here we see Lucan alluding to events that Silius shall demonstrate in full, gory detail in his later epic. To be sure, by Livy's day, the Saguntines' behaviour had become proverbial,⁹¹ and central details within Livy's description of the end of the siege, such as the destruction of the defenders in a mass suicide, the setting of a fire in a central place, and the deaths of women and children,⁹² generally correlate to Silius' account, but Silius' depiction of the siege as a whole appears largely influenced by Lucan, with his inspiration perhaps coming from this particular part of the Massilians' speech and its connotations of familial strife. Also, while Livy does mention that the Saguntines committed suicide to pre-empt the capture of the city, he specifically says that it was the

⁹¹ For example, at Livy 31.17.5; see Hunink (1992), ad 350 and Edgeworth (1989), 141-2.

⁹² These details are noted as being paradigmatic by Edgeworth (1989), 141.

senatorial leaders who did this (21.14). Silius, on the other hand, has Murrus' widow Tiburna act as the driving force behind the mass suicide, but does not focus on any specific part of the Saguntine population during the actual process of suicide; rather, the whole city self-destructs. This difference may be attributed to poetic exaggeration, but the indiscriminate nature of civil war so often found in Lucan is also clearly at play here.

The relationship between Silius' Saguntum and Lucan's Massilia is thus subtly complex. Lucan alludes to the historical Saguntum in his epic; this historical (and yet, by the Flavian era, given its paradigmatic function, surely partly unhistorical) episode is adapted into epic form by Silius. Silius, in turn, alludes back to the epic Massilia in his depiction of Saguntum, both looking back (poetically) and looking ahead (chronologically) at Massilia.

Apart from structurally basing his Saguntum saga on its counterpart in the *Bellum Civile*, Silius also inserts linguistic parallels to strengthen the connection. For example, Lucan's initial description of the Massilians as "Phocaeen youth" (*Phocais... iuventus*, BC 3.301), a reference to the city's foundation by colonists from Phocaea, is brought to mind when Silius describes a ballista employed by the Saguntines as *Phocais... ballista* (1.335). J.D. Duff tries to explain the usage of *Phocais* by saying that the machine was "probably made at Marseilles",⁹³ but there is no need to make this claim at all, since in the mind of Silius, Saguntum and Massilia have become almost one and the same. Indeed, the poet may be reminding the reader of Lucan's Massilian machine, which itself fired bolts at the Caesarian invaders (BC 3.464-8).

Another example may be seen when Silius describes the Carthaginians utilizing the *testudo* to advance against artillery fire, in order to assault the base of the walls (*tandem condensis artae testudinis armis / subducti Poeni vallo caecaque latebra / pandunt prolapsam suffossis moenibus urbem*, 1.365-7). While *testudinis* may represent a more general military tactic than the *testudo* employed by the Romans, the usage of this

⁹³ Duff (1934), vol. 1, 29. Spaltenstein (1986), ad 1.335, on the other hand, suggests that the term refers to the fame of Massilian artillery production.

uniquely Roman term likely refers to the Caesarians' deployment of the *testudo* when advancing against the walls of Massilia (*ut tamen hostiles densa testudine muros / tecta subit virtus, BC 3.474-5*).⁹⁴ The meaning of Silius' words has been the matter of some debate; while Duff's translation of the passage sees the Carthaginians retreat (*subducti*) using the *testudo* before using a covered tunnel (*latebra*) to undermine the walls, Spaltenstein counters with an interpretation that sees the Carthaginians advancing upon the walls, the "cover" being the *testudo* itself.⁹⁵ He notes that the *testudo* was used solely during an attack and argues that *subducti* carries the meaning of "bringing up" rather than "retreating"; his argument is supported by none other than Lucan, who uses *subduco* in a similar sense, in a passage focused on his own *testudo* (*nun aries suspenso fortior ictu / incussus densi compagem solvere muri / temptat et impositis unum subducere saxis, BC 3.490-2*). The battering ram being utilized by the Caesarians under their shield wall attempts to dislodge a stone block (*unum subducere saxis*), just as the Carthaginians are eager to dislodge the Saguntine fortifications.

Though both the Carthaginians and Caesarians make use of the *testudo* in their assaults, the Carthaginians succeed where the Caesarians had failed. The Carthaginians, protected by their *testudo*, breach the walls (1.367). The Caesarians, on the other hand, cannot withstand the barrage of missiles from the Massilians and are forced to withdraw (3.493-6). Yet despite these different results, both attempts lead to the collapse of a huge, mountainous object. In Silius' case, this object is the Saguntine wall; in Lucan's, it is the Caesarians' siege tower. Tellingly, both wall and tower are described as an *agger* (1.373, *BC 3.508*). The destruction of both *aggeres* is told dramatically; Silius compares the sound caused by the collapse of the Saguntine walls to an avalanche of rocks in the high Alps (1.370-2),⁹⁶ while Lucan illustrates the burning and melting away not just of wood but of rocks, and paradoxically states that the collapsed tower looked even larger than it originally did (*BC 3.506-8*). Silius' description of a chunk of rock being wrenched away

⁹⁴ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 1.365 also examines the possibility of Livian influence.

⁹⁵ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 1.366.

⁹⁶ An apt image, since the fall of Saguntum can be seen as an obstacle being ripped away by Hannibal on his way to conquering the Alps.

from the mountainside (*Alpibus altis / aeriae rupes scopulorum mole revulsa*, 1.370-1) is also reminiscent of the imagery Lucan uses to describe the way in which the Massilian catapults hurl their projectiles (*qualis rupes quam vertice montis / abscidit impulsu ventorum adiuta vetustas*, BC 3.470-1). The destruction of wall and tower marks the end of the siege narrative, with both poets moving on to a new phase of the conflict: the focus at Saguntum turns to the extended single combat scenes featuring Murrus and Hannibal, while that at Massilia turns to the sea battle. From the general progression and specific linguistic references in Silius' narrative, it is clear that he chose to model much of it on the siege of Massilia. Still, the question remains: did Silius choose to do so because he lacked ideas of his own on how to write a proper siege narrative? Or is there something deeper at work here? From my analysis of some of the suicide scenes at Saguntum earlier in this chapter, it seems obvious to me that, rather than emulating Lucan for no real purpose, or for the sake of displaying his literary knowledge, Silius does so to create a distinct bond between Saguntum and Massilia, a bond that is brought up once again as the siege at Saguntum moves to its inevitable and terrible conclusion. Silius reminds the reader that history will repeat itself; a new Hannibal will arise to attack another Saguntum, and this Hannibal will be a Roman. And like Saguntum, Massilia will be punished, not rewarded, for its *fides*.

Like Saguntum, Massilia was a city famed for its *fides*.⁹⁷ This point is emphasized by the Massilian envoys in their speech to Caesar. They declare that throughout Rome's history, they have always made war on Rome's enemies (*semper in externis populo communia vestro / Massiliam bellis testatur fata tulisse / comprehensa est Latiis quaecumque annalibus aetas*, BC 3.307-9). They plead that they have no part to play in the present conflict, since they have little influence in world affairs, being a poor, exiled people famous only for their *fides* (*et post translatas exhaustae Phocidos arces / moenibus exiguis alieno in litore tuti, illustrat quos sola fides*, 3.340-2). According to the envoys,

⁹⁷ On Massilia's *fides* in the *Bellum Civile*, see Rowland (1969), 205, who states: "The only true, enduring political *fides* manifested throughout the entire poem is exhibited here by the Massilians."

the Massilians can be summed up with the four words, *illustrat quos sola fides*. Of course, such *fides* is characteristic of Rome itself, or at least of an idealized Rome. In fact, in the speech that Silius' Saguntine envoys make to the senate at the end of book 1, they begin with four words of their own that sum up the essence of Rome: *sacrata gens clara fide* (1.634). In the future, however, it will be foreigners, not Romans, who will be more famous for their *fides*, becoming more Roman than the Romans themselves.

In linking Saguntum to Massilia, then, Silius is doing more than simply mimicking Lucan. By deliberately comparing the fates of both cities, Silius emphasizes the cyclical nature of history. Saguntum can, as I have previously mentioned, be seen as another Troy; in the *Punica*, Silius portrays the city as another Massilia. This portrayal can be read as a response to Lucan. Silius appears to embrace Lucan's pessimistic view of Massilia's fate; in both situations, steadfast adherence to *fides* is punished by death and destruction rather than being rewarded. *Fides*, however, does even more harm to the Saguntines than the Massilians. Despite the fact that the Massilians are embroiled in an unwinnable conflict against the Caesarians on account of their *fides*, Lucan ends his account of Massilia after the sea battle, with the fate of the city still not fully told; furthermore, even though both sides are driven to insane and perhaps even suicidal tactics during the battle and even though the racial identity of the combatants is often deliberately ambiguous,⁹⁸ the Massilians still direct their energies against the Romans, their external foes. Silius, on the other hand, has his Saguntines massacre themselves, driven by both *fides* and *furor*.

I have shown in this section that Silius constructs his Saguntum episode with Lucan's Massilian narrative very much in mind. He does so not because of simple mimicry, but because he wishes to invoke allusions to the *Bellum Civile*. These allusions indicate that in Silius' mind, the fates of the two cities are closely linked. The Massilians' invocation of Saguntum in the *Bellum* may have inspired Silius to look ahead to Lucan's Massilia in the *Punica*. It is clear that Silius shares many of Lucan's concerns in the

⁹⁸ For the ambiguous identification of combatants in the sea battle, see Sklenář (2003), 18.

Massilian episode, particularly on the role that *fides* plays. The most defining characteristic of both cities is their *fides*, and both cities suffer deeply despite their loyalty. Silius' depiction of *fides* in the Saguntum episode, however, is influenced by much more than just Lucan's Massilia. The familial slaughter performed by the Saguntines brings up the issues of civil war and *furor*, and thus the Saguntines go beyond the example of the Massilians and invite comparison to Lucan's own *furor*-driven scene of mass suicide, that of Vulteius and his men in book 4. In the next section, I will examine the Vulteius episode and discuss how Silius' *furor*-inspired *fides* borrows much from Lucan's treatment of the subject, but also how Silius carefully differentiates the *Punica*'s world from the type of world presented in the *Bellum*.

Saguntum and Vulteius: *fides* without limit revisited

The vivid and hugely violent demise of Vulteius' men is itself a much discussed episode of the *Bellum*.⁹⁹ The setting is as follows: trapped along the shore of the Adriatic by Pompey's forces, a large contingent of Gaius Antonius' men come up with a novel plan to escape their predicament: they create makeshift rafts to sail through a strait to friendly reinforcements waiting on the other side. Initially, the plan is a success, but only because the Pompeian commander Octavius wishes the Caesarians to believe in the safety of the crossing (*BC* 4.415-44). In the meantime, he devises a counter-plan in order to entangle the rafts in the middle of the crossing; his prey eventually turns out to be a raft occupied by Gallic soldiers, commanded by one Vulteius (4.445-64). The Gauls, completely surrounded by the Pompeians on the cliffs overlooking the crossing, put up a fight which is eventually suspended by darkness (4.465-73).

⁹⁹ For discussions of the Vulteius episode, see Rutz (1960), 466-8; Ahl (1976), 117-21; Leigh (1997), 217-19 and 259-64; Rudich (1997), 130-32; Hershkowitz (1998), 212-14; Gorman (2001), 280-4; Eldred (2002); Sklenář (2003), 26-34; Hill (2004), 219-21; Edwards (2007), 40-4.

Once the Gallic cohort has found itself trapped by the Caesarians, Vulteius realizes that the situation is hopeless and exhorts his men to suicide, in a speech not unlike the one made by Tisiphone-Tiburna to the Saguntines:

tum sic attonitam venturaque fata paventem
 rexit magnanima Vulteius voce cohortem:
 'libera non ultra parva quam nocte iuventus,
 consulite extremis angusto in tempore rebus.
 vita brevis nulli superest qui tempus in illa
 quaerendae sibi mortis habet; nec gloria leti
 inferior, iuvenes, admoto occurrere fato.
 omnibus incerto venturae tempore vitae
 par animi laus est et, quos speraveris, annos
 spernere et extremae momentum abrumpere lucis,
 accersas dum fata manu: non cogitur ullus
 velle mori. fuga nulla patet, stant undique nostris
 intenti cives iugulis: decernite letum,
 et metus omnis abest. cupias quodcumque necesse est.

Though they were stunned and afraid of the fate that awaited them, Vulteius steadied the cohort with his booming voice: “Free for no longer than the small break that night provides, young men, use this narrow space to consider the most important things. No life is too short if there remains time for one to seek his own death; nor is the glory of death any less, men, if one is confronted by it by fate. Since the amount of life remaining is unknown to all, there is equal praise both in spurning these years that you had thought were yours, and breaking off the last moment of light, if you invite this fate with your own hand: no one is compelled to wish to die. No escape is possible; from every direction our fellow citizens stand, eager for our throats: resolve on death, and be free from all fear. Long for what is unavoidable.”

(BC 4.474-87)

With his speech, Vulteius attempts to justify the dreadful deeds that he is forcing his men to carry out. His insistence on the moral righteousness of mass suicide – far from being criminal, Vulteius declares that such a form of suicide is in fact what any individual *ought* to do – poses problems for the reader, who cannot be certain of Lucan’s own opinion on the situation. For a modern reader, the natural interpretation is probably, given Lucan’s obvious aversion throughout the *Bellum* to the civil war and its associated ills, to read Vulteius as an example of the moral corruption plaguing Rome at the end of the republic. So Timothy Hill notes that Lucan’s liberal usage of motifs such

as *nefas* and fratricide during the course of the mass suicide shows “beyond doubt that the scene is intended to be understood not as exemplary, but horrific.” At the same time, however, Hill points out the problem brought up by the genuine belief of Lucan’s characters in the correctness of their actions; contrary to the poet’s supposed intention, “individuals in the poem itself nevertheless view the death of Vulteius and his comrades as noble and morally praiseworthy.”¹⁰⁰ Rob Sklenář’s reading of Vulteius’ opening speech sees it as “redolent of the Stoic ideology of suicide, especially the notion, plainly alluded to in *non cogitur ullus / velle mori*, that suicide is the ultimate demonstration of freedom, since it represents the strongest possible assertion of control over one’s own destiny”, which in turn, when coupled with Vulteius’ view of death as a source for glory, provides an “unusual association between Stoic and heroic ideology”.¹⁰¹ Vulteius thus portrays suicide as the only way out of his hopeless situation, the only way his men will be able to gain heroic glory. And it seems that the narrator would entirely agree with him. For he explicitly remarks on the exemplary nature of the mass suicide engineered by Vulteius:

nullam maiore locuta est
ore ratem totum discurrens Fama per orbem.
non tamen ignavae post haec exempla virorum
percipient gentes quam sit non ardua virtus
servitum fugisse manu...

Racing through the entire world, Rumour spoke loudest for this
raft. But cowardly peoples in the future will not learn from the
example of these men that it is no difficult task to escape slavery
from one’s own hand...

(BC 4.573-7)

The narrator contrasts the heroic decision of the soldiers to die as free men, allowing them to flee from servitude, to the *ignavae gentes*, too cowardly to learn from this *exemplum* and shed their blood in exchange for freedom. Gorman sees the narrator’s words as essentially misleading; he provides the reader with heroes, but undermines their heroism by “returning to the same themes that he has used to discredit the other

¹⁰⁰ Hill (2004), 220.

¹⁰¹ Sklenář (2003), 28-9.

battle scenes in this work: non-recognition, weapon and wound, and the pollution of kindred blood.”¹⁰² While a contradictory ambiguity may naturally be seen in the narrator’s simultaneous approval and undermining of such approval, as we have previously seen in Silius’ similar treatment of the suicide of the Saguntines, Gorman argues that Lucan uses his “approval” to elicit considerations about the Stoic doctrine on suicide, which lists various conditions that must be met in order for a suicide to be truly Stoic in nature. For Gorman, none of these conditions are met, causing the entire scene to merely amount to a staged farce, a “kind of arrogant exhibitionism, to demonstrate their passion for Caesar and his cause”, something in fact completely at odds with Stoic doctrine.¹⁰³

We have seen this before. Just as Lucan’s narrator ends his section on Vulteius’ men by explicitly praising their actions, so Silius’ glorifies his Saguntines and elevates them to the stars. The same problems we have confronted in this glorification recur here in Lucan. The outward approval that the narrator expresses for the suicide of the characters is undermined by the role that madness plays in goading them towards their final fate. As previously mentioned, McGuire sees the maddened suicide of the Saguntines as incompatible with Stoic beliefs about the nature of proper suicide;¹⁰⁴ Gorman’s observations bring out a similar concern in Lucan. She similarly focuses on Seneca’s emphasis on “the theme of calm rationality”, and argues that Vulteius’ men display attributes completely at odds with such calmness. Like the Saguntines, Vulteius’ men are filled with *furor* (BC 4.450); Vulteius admits that he is entirely consumed with madness with the simple statement of *furor est* (BC 4.517). Such emotions, aroused in the heat of the moment, have no place in a dignified, tranquil suicide of the sort espoused by Seneca.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Gorman (2001), 281.

¹⁰³ Gorman (2001), 283-4.

¹⁰⁴ See p. 66 and McGuire (1997), 228.

¹⁰⁵ Edwards (2007), 41-2 argues that Vulteius’ *virtus* is “profoundly compromised firstly through its association with *furor* and secondly through Vulteius’ blind devotion to Caesar” and that this devotion means that his suicide is “incompatible with *libertas*”, the ultimate goal of a Stoic suicide. Martindale (1984), 69 describes Vulteius as being a “parody of a Stoic sage seeking *libertas* through suicide”.

It is curious, though, that Vulteius is even able to say “*furor est*”. Clearly, he is aware of just how absurdly paradoxical the situation is; Debra Hershkowitz observes that he understands “that the concept of *virtus* he expounds is grounded in the *furor* which should represent its polar opposite and from which it should be mutually exclusive”.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, *virtus* and *furor* should be exclusive, but Vulteius, by referring to suicide as a virtuous act in his earlier exhortations to his men, and then labelling it as *furor* as he participates in the act itself, binds the two together. The effect that such a bond has on the nature of both *virtus* and *furor* is debateable. In Vulteius’ acknowledgement of “*furor est*”, Sklenář sees “extraordinary self-awareness”, since “one would expect epic *furor* to drive out the rational faculty, so that the *furor* should not be able to analyze his own *furor* while he is in its throes.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, in his view, Vulteius uses rhetoric for the purpose of making an act that he knows to be ultimately irrational appear to have sprung from rationality. Vulteius has known all along that the mass suicide he calls for is simply *furor*, but begins his exhortation from the perspective of Stoicism; he, “by using rational techniques to defend the irrational, ultimately breaks down the distinction between reason and unreason.”¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, it becomes impossible to distinguish between reason and *furor*. As Vulteius and his men participate in their frenzied slaughter, it is not just their bodies that are hacked to pieces, but rationality itself. Traditional Roman virtues are taken apart, their meanings transformed beyond all recognition. Vulteius tells his men that their actions will be remembered as a monument to *fides* and *pietas* (BC 4.498-9). During the suicide, however, *pietas* is given a warped definition when Lucan states that *pietas ferientibus una / non repetisse fuit* (BC 4.565-66). As Sklenář notes, *pietas* “is here debased to a Roman soldier’s forbearance to

¹⁰⁶ Hershkowitz (1998), 213.

¹⁰⁷ Sklenář (2003), 30. It is notable that in the suicide of the Saguntines, only the mother of Lycormas and Eurymedon says the word *furor*, and this only in reference to the acts of her two sons, not her own (*quinam, Eurymedon, furor iste?*, 2.645). Moreover, as I have pointed out earlier, to call Eurymedon’s suicide *furor* is ironic considering that the alternative she seeks is matricide, an even greater horror.

¹⁰⁸ Sklenář (2003), 31. This naturally forms part of his main argument, that the *Bellum Civile* is essentially a nihilistic epic.

strike his fellow citizen a second time”,¹⁰⁹ making a mockery of what the virtue should actually stand for. An immediate parallel can be seen in Silius, where the Saguntines are described as *pios* and Tymbrenus is afflicted with a *sinistra pietas*. For both poets, *pietas* in the context of mass suicide is not any sort of *pietas* that the reader would expect. Civil war gives new definitions and standards to virtue.

Despite the problems posed by the motivations of Vulteius’ men, Gorman concludes that “Lucan feels genuine approval for the course of action depicted here.”¹¹⁰ In her view, then, Vulteius’ men do the right thing, but for the wrong reasons, and thus fail to win complete glory through their suicide. Of course, this conclusion is only possible if we take the narrator’s praise at face value. But what if we *do* take the narrator literally? Sklenář observes that the narrator accuses cowardly nations of failing to adhere to the *exemplum* created by Vulteius’ men – but just what is this *exemplum*? Vulteius’ men have just been depicted committing mass suicide, so if nations actually followed their lead, there would be mass suicide in every nation on earth, problematic to say the least.¹¹¹ The same problem confronts us when Silius’ narrator praises the Saguntines for their actions; are we to similarly see him as providing genuine approval for the actions of the Saguntines? It seems that Silius, having read his Lucan, responds to his epic predecessor in a similar way to which we react to Lucan ourselves. In the immaculately choreographed suicide of Vulteius’ men, Silius notes the paradoxical approval of the narrator and, finding it suitable for his own purposes, transports such approval into his own narrative. He asks the reader to read the Saguntines’ suicide through Lucan, to ponder the destructive role that *fides* can play, and has played in Silius’ *own* time, in the lives of men.

Although the Saguntines’ suicide is clearly meant to be read in tandem with the suicide of Vulteius’ men, it must be noted that just as there are clear parallels between the two scenes, there are differences as well. This is hardly surprising, considering the

¹⁰⁹ Sklenář (2003), 32-3.

¹¹⁰ Gorman (2001), 284.

¹¹¹ Sklenář (2003), 32.

other influences Silius has brought to bear on his Saguntine narrative. In Lucan, the narrator deliberately obscures the identities of the participants of the mass suicide; aside from Vulteius himself, none of the men are named. This is, of course, extremely ironic, considering that Vulteius himself tells his men that suicide is a way to avoid the obscurity of a nameless death (*BC* 4.491), allowing them to instead become remembered, to become monuments. Thanks to the deliberate erasure of their identities, however, they end up as merely “faceless, nameless dead... reduced to weapon and wound”.¹¹² Moreover, the narrator, in his final praise for the *exemplum* provided by Vulteius’ men, actually refers to the raft carrying the doomed soldiers (*ratem*, *BC* 4.574), not the soldiers themselves, again undermining the supposed avoidance of nameless death. Vulteius’ men have simply wound up as yet another heap of nameless corpses. The same motif of erasure of identity is, as I have previously laid out, also present in the Saguntine narrative, particularly in Tymbrenus’ mutilation of his father and the inability of the mother of Lycormas and Eurymedon to recognize her own sons.¹¹³ However, Silius’ characters are hardly nameless. On the one hand, he recognizes Lucan’s obsession with not naming the participants of *nefas* and includes elements of such an obsession in his own work, for instance by having the bodies of the Saguntines, in the end, fall into a massive heap without individual distinction, like the bodies on Vulteius’ raft (*semiambusta iacet nullo discrimine passim / infelix obitus, permixto funere, turba*, 2.681-2). On the other, though, he insists on naming certain participants, such as Tymbrenus, Eurymedon and Lycormas. Nor is this strategy of naming in any way haphazard, for as I have already pointed out, Silius’ names are often meant to evoke comparisons with similarly-named characters in other texts (including different scenes from the *Bellum*), playing a crucial role in Silius’ strategy of intertextual communication. There is at once both an obsession with anonymity and identity. Perhaps the same contradiction that lies in the Vulteius episode is also present here, albeit in a slightly different manner.

¹¹² Gorman (2001), 282.

¹¹³ See p. 60.

Another difference is the exact way in which *furor* takes effect during the act of suicide. In the *Bellum*, we do not see any external manifestation of *furor*; all we see is Vulteius, and it is only through his own words that we see *furor* actually at work. Examining the Vulteius scene in relation to the *Aeneid*, Lynette Thompson and R.T. Bruère see Vulteius as being “possessed by a *furor* comparable to that inspired in Amata by the Fury Allecto”¹¹⁴, but we do not actually see any Fury at work. Hershkowitz notes that “in a sense, Vulteius is possessed by *furor*, but this *furor* comes from within him.”¹¹⁵ This is quite understandable, given Lucan’s removal of the divine sphere from his epic, and it is also entirely predictable that Silius, whose epic unabashedly reintroduces the divine, returns to the Aeneadic model by giving Tisiphone a prominent role. *Furor* does not come naturally to the Saguntines; instead, Tisiphone must personally impersonate one of their own, and indeed must also physically imbue the unwilling Saguntines with *furor*. Vulteius spontaneously embarks on his *furor*-influenced *nefas*, while the Saguntines must be forced into it by an external agent. The result is that in Silius, it is much easier to observe a distinction between the *furor*-driven actions of the Saguntines and the Saguntines themselves. By utilizing Tisiphone, the reader may distinguish between the actions ordained by Tisiphone and the actual will of the Saguntines, making it easier to sympathize with the latter, since they are apparently not in control of their actions. In contrast, it is much harder to sympathize with Vulteius since, unlike the Saguntines, he seems to be fully in control. He even realizes that what he is doing constitutes *furor*, but he goes ahead with it anyway, and even employs dodgy rhetoric to persuade his men to go along with him, making him much more personally responsible. Of course, this makes the narrator’s praise afterwards appear all the more alarming. There are mitigating circumstances in the praise of the Saguntines since, even though they slaughter themselves and their loved ones, they are clearly unwilling to do so and have to be forced by Tisiphone. Vulteius’ men, on the other hand, are solely motivated

¹¹⁴ Thompson and Bruère (1970), 166.

¹¹⁵ Hershkowitz (1998), 213.

by their leader and themselves, and almost revel in the slaughter. As Sklenář argues, the distinction between *virtus* and *furor* is broken down through Vulteius' self-awareness, which makes the narrator's praise much more difficult to interpret. Silius' narrator's praise of the Saguntines is likewise problematic, but the introduction of Tisiphone, an obviously hostile and evil character, openly marks mass suicide as opposed to the Saguntines' natural instincts, thus making it easier for us to sympathize with them. Such is not the case for Vulteius' men, for whom mass suicide appears to be a part of their nature.

Another theme within the Vulteius episode that appears unique to Lucan is the emphasis on viewing and spectacle, an issue that particularly interests Charles Saylor, Matthew Leigh and Katherine Eldred.¹¹⁶ The role that light and darkness play in the course of events is well documented by Saylor: the Caesarians attempt to escape via the raft at twilight, but once their vessel becomes trapped, darkness ensues to thwart the coming battle. Vulteius proceeds to goad his men towards suicide during this period of darkness, a suicide which they then perform in broad daylight.¹¹⁷ For Vulteius, the presence of light is critical to the entire situation, for he desires to die conspicuously, to die while being watched. To die in darkness would be an obscure death, and only the light of day can provide a fitting stage for the event, allowing the suicide to be seen and marvelled at by their enemies upon the cliffs that surround them.¹¹⁸ Leigh goes further, as he analyzes the overt theatricality and, in particular, the amphitheatrical aspect, of the entire scene. He compares the setting to that of a *naumachia*, in which the condemned "fought" in mock sea battles under the gaze of an audience, doomed to die a type of death which Seneca comments in *Ep.* 70.25-6 is one that shows the superiority of dying over killing. However, Leigh argues that Lucan subverts the meaning of Senecan sentiment, which would appear to support the exemplary nature of such a death, by making Vulteius complicit in creating the conditions of his own death. While the

¹¹⁶ Saylor (1990), Leigh (1997) and Eldred (2002).

¹¹⁷ Saylor (1990), 292.

¹¹⁸ Saylor (1990), 294-5.

doomed barbarian mentioned in the letter has no option but to participate in his staged *naumachia*, Vulteius deliberately chooses to manipulate the setting in which he finds himself in order to “maximize the amphitheatricity of his own death”.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the fact that he and his men are actually able to fight the enemy but choose to instead suddenly turn upon themselves in order to perform their staged suicide further emphasizes the irrational and spectacular nature of their deaths, in which any potential *exemplum* offered by the situation is overshadowed by the overwhelming desire of the men involved to choreograph a “truly dramatic, magnificently staged ending”.¹²⁰ Eldred goes even further than Leigh in arguing that the aspect of spectacle is itself an essential aspect of Vulteius’ ideology; thus, the staged ending is not unnecessary but indeed a requirement, in order for him to achieve his purpose. Basing her argument on film theory, Eldred espouses the power that the gaze of the audience has on the meaning of the spectacle and suggests that through the enactment of the mutual suicide, the reader moves from a reading based on traditional epic and philosophical ideology to one based on spectacle.¹²¹ However, no matter how one interprets the visual aspect of the Vulteius episode, it is clear that the suicide is one designed to be seen – the effectiveness of the suicide depends on its being witnessed.¹²²

Returning to Silius, we find that this emphasis on spectacle is mostly absent, and that the role that light and darkness play in the episode is entirely different. There is no setting like the one afforded to the Caesarians: while the Pompeians may look down upon their opponents from the cliffs, the view of the Carthaginians is blocked by the walls that separate them from the Saguntines. To be sure, Tisiphone’s handiwork is still mentioned by Juno as one that will be watched and enjoyably consumed by the queen of the gods herself, gazing down on Saguntum from the clouds (*ipsa propinqua / effectus studiumque tuum de nube videbo*, 2.533-4), but the suicide is not portrayed by

¹¹⁹ Leigh (1997), 260-1.

¹²⁰ Leigh (1997), 264.

¹²¹ Eldred (2002), 59.

¹²² Eldred (2002), 61: “For Vulteius, death has become a performance, and spectators are a necessary part of that performance. If death is not seen distinctly, then *virtus* is lost, *perit obruta virtus* (491).”

Tisiphone/Tiburna as a spectacle put on for the Carthaginians. Instead, the argument put forth by Tisiphone to the Saguntines is that the act of mass suicide will *deny* the Carthaginians an important sight: the sight of the Saguntines becoming slaves to their conquerors in Africa (*post belli casus vastique pericula ponti / Carthago aspiciet victrix*, 2.572-3). Avoiding slavery becomes the primary cause of the suicide (*vestres servitio manibus subducite matres*, 2.577). A hint that the Carthaginians may have been witnessing the events as they unfolded is given afterwards, when the narrator remarks that even they could not have kept themselves from weeping as they told of what the Saguntines had done (*vix Punica fletu / cessassent castra ac miserescere nescius hostis*, 2.652-3). However, we are given no indication as to whether the Carthaginians were engaging in the Saguntines' slaughter at the time of the event; the only action they take is to enter the citadel once they notice that it has been left undefended (2.692). The only characters who actually treat the suicide as a spectacle appear to be the aforementioned Juno and perhaps Tisiphone herself, who stands by and observes the course of events, intervening where necessary. But they are the two instigators of the entire episode, so it is natural that they would take an interest in the results. The Saguntines, in the meantime, the actual participants in the slaughter, are not interested in performing any sort of spectacle, unlike Vulteius' men. They are not even willing to look upon their own actions, as demonstrated by the man who is unable to look directly at his mother's breast as he tries to kill her (*obliquos versat materna per ubera visus*, 2.621). Nor are friendly deities capable of witnessing the events either, for Tisiphone conceals them with an infernal darkness (*inferna superos caligine condit*, 2.611) before the killing begins. Even Hercules, who had been gazing down on Saguntum when he ordered Fides to act (*desuper haec caelo spectans Tirynthius alto*, 2.475), is no longer involved. Only when the gods are prevented from watching are the real crimes allowed to be committed.

Tisiphone's use of darkness highlights another difference between the suicide of the Saguntines and the Caesarians; while Vulteius deliberately waits until darkness passes and daylight returns before beginning the suicide in order to maximize the

effectiveness of the suicide as a spectacle, the emphasis throughout the Saguntum episode is on darkness. The city is thoroughly shadowed in darkness – both through Tisiphone’s action and through the columns of black smoke given off by the huge pyre lit in the middle of the city. The Fury and her powers are described as dark (*atri*, 2.549; *atros*, 2.626; *atris*, 2.686) and the result of her actions is simply more darkness (*turbine nigro* / ... *caligine*, 2.630-1; *atro* / *nigrantem fumo... nubem*, 2.658-9). The presence of so much darkness acts to emphasize the hellish nature of the Saguntines’ murderous deeds; rather than putting on a show, they do something that is thoroughly shrouded in blackness and hidden from view. There is really no question of their suicide being evil; the only problem is the narratorial praise given to them at the end of it all. Silius’ narrative strategy, by presenting the Saguntines as good people forced into their actions by a hellish force and having their actions occur within an overwhelmingly dark setting (indeed, within a sort of simulated underworld), much more than Lucan, marks mass suicide out as a hellish, evil deed.

The depiction of the negative effects of *fides* by Lucan is of course not only present in the Vulteius episode; indeed, the Vulteius episode is not even the only example in book 4. Immediately preceding it is the episode concerning the Pompeian commander Petreius, which itself is deeply concerned with the effects that *fides* can have during civil war. During the episode, some Caesarians and Pompeians, while camping near each other, recognize their compatriots and wander peacefully back and forth into both camps. As they mingle, their feelings of hostility vanish and are replaced by the bonds they once shared before the outbreak of civil war (BC 4.157-205). However, once Petreius learns of this, he demands an end to fraternization and orders his men to slaughter the Caesarians who have entered the camp (BC 4.212-35). His soldiers, though mindful of the consequences of such actions, eventually comply. Petreius compels his men to obey his orders through a sense of *fides* – to him as well as to Pompey, a *fides* which is “a perversion” according to David George, who points to the narrator’s own declaration that this *fides* is one which *fecit monstra* (BC 4.245) and not the *renovata*

fides that the Caesarian and Pompeian soldiers had previously displayed towards one another when they had first fraternized (BC 4.204). This distorted *fides* then induces *furor* and *rabies* into the men, “bringing with them a perverse *amor scelerum* in place of their *sacer amor*.”¹²³ For Saylor, the destructive role that *fides* plays in the slaughter serves to demonstrate the value of complete detachment from *fides*, a detachment which they finally achieve through their later surrender.¹²⁴ In any case, the Petreius episode is certainly another clear example of *nefas* done in the name of *fides*.

Matthew Roller, however, in his treatment of differing ideologies within Lucan’s portrayal of civil war, presents the Petreius episode as an example of the “alienating viewpoint”, in a sense justifying Petreius’ action on the basis that his ideology is merely different from the one which the narrator espouses within the context of the episode. He divides the views of characters during civil war within the *Bellum* into two main categories: “assimilating” and “alienating”. In the former viewpoint, which is generally held by Pompey and his forces, civil war is seen as being fought between two groups within the same community; thus, communal values such as *pietas* still apply to the other side during war, since both sides still belong to one community. In contrast, the latter viewpoint, generally represented by Caesar and his forces, holds that the enemy in civil war is no longer part of one’s community, instead assuming the identity of the enemy, the *hostes*, to whom such communal values no longer apply.¹²⁵ Petreius thus represents the alienating viewpoint, which sees the Caesarians who entered the camp as merely enemies who may be slaughtered without regard to such concerns as *pietas*. For Roller, Petreius’ line of thought is “not ‘perverse’... It is the view that one’s opponent is an alien enemy, a *hostis*, who threatens one’s own community of obligation yet is also

¹²³ George (1988), 339. Similarly, Thompson and Bruère (1970), 164 comment that the “fratricidal massacre that forms the climax of the first section of the book is the result not of sanguinary malevolence but of the perverted *fides* of the Pompeians to their commander”.

¹²⁴ Saylor (1986), 156: “Detachment is at last deliverance for them not because they have especially earned it, or because they are Pompeians, but because at the end of the essay detachment stands out as a better answer to civil violence than personal or partisan *fides*, indeed as the only answer.”

¹²⁵ For a detailed description of these alternate viewpoints, see Roller (2001), 17-63.

utterly excluded from it. Therefore making war on him is both pious and valorous.”¹²⁶ In Roller’s reading of the Petreius episode, then, Petreius does not distort the meaning of *pietas* but merely refuses to apply them to the Caesarians, an enemy to whom *pietas* is no longer due. After adopting an alienating viewpoint, killing the Caesarians cannot be considered to be *nefas*, since they are now merely *hostes* and not kinsmen. Roller’s reading, however, does not take into account the Vulteius episode that follows shortly afterwards, in which *fides* and *pietas* return again to play prominent roles.

If anything, the Vulteius episode seems to be a more extreme example of the issues that plague the Petreius episode. Petreius, emphasizing the *fides* that he and his men must keep to Pompey, commits the *impius* deed of slaughtering the camp’s guests – Caesarian but still Roman – in cold blood. Vulteius displays his desire to maintain *fides* to Caesar, but his method is to order his men to slaughter *each other*, and this time there is no question of any sort of alienating viewpoint. Even if Vulteius’ men were to adopt such a viewpoint, they would be directing their attacks upon the Pompeians on the cliffs, an option they inexplicably reject in favour of turning their swords upon each other. The narrator clearly differentiates between the slaughter committed by Petreius’ and Vulteius’ men. As previously discussed, he praises the Caesarians and portrays their mass suicide as an *exemplum* for others to follow. In stark contrast, he condemns Petreius’ men during their slaughter and laments the evils brought about by civil war.

There are some reasonable explanations that one may use to explain why the narrator provides these seemingly contradictory remarks. He condemns Petreius’ men for killing the defenceless Caesarians after portraying the fraternization of the troops as a sort of return to civility; therefore, the suicide of Vulteius’ men, since it does not involve the Pompeians on the cliffs, cannot be condemned in the same way. However, the Pompeians attacking Vulteius’ men are never described sympathetically. In the episode, they are simply the enemy, and there is never any chance of fraternization between the two sides. The narrator is at no point hostile towards Vulteius’ men doing

¹²⁶ Roller (2001), 36-7.

battle with the Pompeians on the cliffs; indeed, they turn upon each other only when they feel that they have killed enough Pompeians. It is almost as though Vulteius feels that fighting the Pompeians is not enough of a civil war, and he must enact a miniature civil war of his own.

There thus appears to be a fundamental difference between the worlds portrayed by Silius and Lucan. Lucan's suicidal fanatics revel in their self-destruction. Their take on the meaning of *fides* and *pietas* causes them to believe in the righteousness of their course of action. They carefully wait until they can be watched by others before destroying themselves, performing a show in which they proudly demonstrate to their audience what they believe *fides* ought to be. They plainly expect their audience to admire their actions, implying that their audience shares similar sentiments on *fides* and *virtus*. Such an expectation suggests that in the world of the *Bellum*, Vulteius' interpretation of *virtus* has become pandemic. No matter how perverted or illogical their actions may seem, the participants of Lucan's war take it for granted that they are the correct way to behave. Additionally, as I have pointed out, the fact that Vulteius' *furor* arises from within himself makes it seem as though inclination towards mass suicide is a part of his nature. In contrast, Silius deliberately uses darkness to cover up the Saguntines from sight, and the reaction of the Saguntines towards their own actions is one of disgust, not of revelment. The role that Tisiphone plays in forcing the Saguntines to go ahead with their mass suicide further emphasizes the fact that the Saguntines' type of *fides* is an unnatural one. The implication, therefore, is that an alternative model of morality exists in the world of the *Punica*. There are other ways to approach *fides* and *pietas* without becoming inflicted by madness, as the Saguntines are. At the end of the epic, Silius will finally show the reader how to achieve such a balance between the two virtues, but here we already notice a crucial difference between Silius' and Lucan's epics. The bleakness of Lucan's world is pervasive and offers little hope of an alternative way out; Silius, despite acknowledging that much evil in the world has come about due to a faulty understanding of virtue, offers a clear alternative, in which

fides and *pietas* are properly utilized. The *Punica*, despite its numerous passages of gloom, provides hope as well, hope that is much more difficult to find in the *Bellum*.

Regulus: a flawed *exemplum*

The influence of Lucan upon Silius can again be seen in one of the clearest instances of the opposition between *fides* and *pietas* in the epic, the story of Regulus in book 6. Marcus Atilius Regulus was a consul in the First Punic War who, after being captured by the Carthaginians, was sent back to Rome and, despite knowing the fate that awaited him if he did not do as he was told, urged the Romans to reject peace terms with Carthage. After abiding by his promise to return to Carthage, Regulus was then tortured to death, thus becoming a quintessential Roman exemplar of *fides*. It is now generally agreed that the story of Regulus' return to Rome is completely fictional; it has been suggested that the fabrication may have been intended either to overshadow Regulus' incompetent military leadership in Libya which led to his capture,¹²⁷ or to do the same to the actions of Regulus' wife, who responded to her husband's death in Carthage by torturing two Carthaginian prisoners in Rome.¹²⁸ In any case, by Silius' day the story of Regulus had become proverbial. Silius' treatment of the Regulus episode emphasizes Regulus' strict adherence to *fides* but also displays the suffering that Regulus' wife Marcia undergoes due to his intransigence. Unlike his literary predecessors, Silius gives Marcia a prominent role in the narrative, increasing the importance that the familial sphere has in the reader's evaluation of Regulus' actions. Furthermore, Marcia is also a clear literary antecedent of Lucan's Marcia, wife of the similarly intransigent Cato. The differences between Regulus and Cato also inform our interpretation of the episode. Ultimately, Regulus' actions cannot be unconditionally praised. His inability to adapt and accommodate both *fides* and *pietas* makes him yet another incomplete hero in the *Punica*.

¹²⁷ Augoustakis (2006), 145.

¹²⁸ Williams (2004), 71, and Mix (1965), 158.

Silius had a number of sources to draw on for the Regulus episode, both literary and historiographical. These can also be divided into “positive” and “negative” accounts. The accounts of Polybius and Diodorus relate Regulus’ failures in Africa; Polybius in particular shows no knowledge of Regulus’ supposed return to Rome. Arrayed against them are the later accounts of Regulus’ actions which portray him as a Stoic hero and place his death at Carthage in a most prominent position.¹²⁹ One of the most famous literary treatments of the legend is Horace, *Carm.* 3.5. As Gareth Williams has shown, Horace’s portrayal of Regulus is more subtly complex than is initially obvious. Williams places the Ode firmly in the context of the new Augustan regime. At the time, debate was raging over what should be done to recover the standards that had been lost by Crassus at Carrhae, whether to do so by force, or to negotiate with the Parthians for a peaceful resolution; Williams argues that Horace’s Regulus, rather than representing opposition to a peaceful solution (which Regulus’ adamant resistance to negotiation would suggest), reflects the poet’s attempt to reconcile the old Roman virtues, bent on resolving conflict through martial means, with the new Augustan reality, which, whether it wanted to or not, saw diplomacy as a necessary tool. Horace’s Regulus is “a metaphor, as it were, for the weight of Roman heritage that had to be balanced against the new Augustan way.”¹³⁰ Williams, who also discusses Silius’ use of Regulus, further states that “[t]he delicate balancing of tensions that we have witnessed in Horace distinguishes his Regulus from the flawed hero in Silius’ *Punica*”, but, as he acknowledges, both poets display a concern with Regulus’ actions that is not present in the more adulatory tradition.¹³¹ Like Horace, Silius sees Regulus’ adherence to *fides* as essentially praiseworthy, but his reservations on the issue are shown through the role that others, especially Marcia, play in the narrative.

¹²⁹ For the two contrasting traditions, see Augoustakis (2006), 145.

¹³⁰ Williams (2004), 97-8. Cf. the reading provided by Lowrie (1997), 243-4, which sees Regulus as representing “a moral standing that has become rare at Rome”, the sort of moral integrity that Crassus’ soldiers quite clearly lack due to their preference to be captured by the Parthians rather than to die in battle.

¹³¹ Williams (2004), 98.

In the *Punica*, the Regulus episode comes in book 6, after the Romans have just been disastrously defeated at Lake Trasimene, and occupies most of this book (6.62-551). A son of Regulus named Serranus,¹³² gravely wounded during the battle, manages to make his way to the dwelling of one Marus, who by chance was Regulus' companion during the First Punic War. There Marus tells Serranus the story of Regulus' achievements (6.118-551), including his fight against a monstrous serpent at the Bagrada, his capture and subsequent mission to Rome, and his final torture at Carthage.¹³³ Critics have generally read the Regulus episode in a positive light and interpret Regulus as a hero who is introduced into the *Punica*, despite the fact that he clearly does not belong within the epic's timeframe, in order to exemplify Roman virtue. So Wolf Liebeschuetz states that "Regulus is artificially introduced into a war that was not his to provide an impressive *exemplum* of *fides* and *patientia*."¹³⁴ In particular, Regulus has been seen as being a Herculean and, in turn, Stoic hero. For instance, Edward Bassett sees the battle between Regulus and the serpent as a Herculean struggle against monsters,¹³⁵ and Margarethe Billerbeck notes the similarity in characterisation between Regulus and Lucan's Stoic hero Cato.¹³⁶ Regulus is also seen as a hero who undergoes a profound internal change; so Ripoll argues that he goes from being a pure warrior during his campaign in Africa to an almost divine *exemplum* of virtue by the time of his death.¹³⁷ Frederick Ahl, Martha Davis and Arthur Pomeroy similarly claim that Regulus, in moving from fierce warrior to an *exemplum* of *patientia*, "is proof positive that a Roman commander can learn new ways, and that there is more to 'virtus' than bravery on the field of battle", thus serving as a model for Fabius, whose exploits in the *next* Punic War are immediately told after the Regulus episode and who steadied

¹³² No son of Regulus named Serranus is known in other sources; see Augoustakis (2006), 144.

¹³³ Williams (2004), 72 notes the "unsubtle Silian coincidence" that is used to introduce the episode. Duff (1934), 320-1 finds the setting equally improbable, since Serranus would surely have known of Regulus' story already, either from his mother or from Marus.

¹³⁴ Liebeschuetz (1979), 169.

¹³⁵ Bassett (1955); see also Liebeschuetz (1979), 170-1.

¹³⁶ Billerbeck (1985), 351-2.

¹³⁷ Ripoll (1998), 127 contrasts this progression with Fabius' moral excellence, which remains constant throughout the epic: "A la différence de celui de Fabius, cet héroïsme moral est l'aboutissement d'une progression intérieure qui fait passer Régulus de l'état de guerrier fougueux et irréfléchi à celui d'*exemplum uirtutis* approchant la divinité."

Rome by abandoning the reckless tactics of his predecessors in favour of caution and delay.¹³⁸

That Silius' telling of the Regulus legend is read in such a positive light is not surprising. Other Roman authors, after all, undoubtedly portray Regulus as a paradigm of either Roman virtue or Stoicism.¹³⁹ These include Valerius Maximus (1.1.14), Cicero (*Fin.* 2.20.65, 5.37.82, *Off.* 3.99.26-115.32),¹⁴⁰ and Seneca (*Ep.* 67.7, 71.17, 98.12). The Regulus in Horace's Ode has likewise been read as an exemplary philosopher hero; Stephen Harrison notes reminiscences within Horace's Regulus of Socrates, as "[b]oth die for principle, submitting to fates which they could have avoided", and he argues that Regulus' actions combine philosophy with patriotism, in "bringing benefit to his country as well as satisfying personal scruple, a combination of lofty morality and national interest which well suits the atmosphere of the Roman Odes."¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, just as Williams has shown how Horace's use of the Regulus legend is not as simple and straightforward as might first appear, Silius also tells the Regulus story in a way that questions the extent to which Regulus should be praised.

Drawing on Williams' analysis of both Silius and Horace's treatments of Regulus, Augoustakis has recently provided a negative reading of Silius' Regulus. In particular, he focuses on the major role that Regulus' wife Marcia plays in the narrative and argues that she, "[b]y pointing to her husband's failures... signals a departure from established norms and as a result constitutes a driving force for a new model for future Roman leadership."¹⁴² As Williams notes, the name of Regulus' wife is not given in any other source, making it likely that Silius has invented the name for the episode, most likely to evoke comparison with Marcia, the wife of Cato in the *Bellum Civile*.¹⁴³ In Silius, Marcia appears both within the analeptic narrative provided by Marus to

¹³⁸ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2522-3.

¹³⁹ On the development of Regulus' legend into an *exemplum*, see Mix (1970).

¹⁴⁰ Mix (1965) discusses Cicero's use of the Regulus legend. While Cicero argues that Regulus' *exemplum* should be emulated, he also provides counter-arguments against viewing Regulus in such a way (which he then refutes), thus suggesting the possibility of multiple interpretations of Regulus' actions.

¹⁴¹ Harrison (1986), 506-7; see also Kornhardt (1954), 121-3.

¹⁴² Augoustakis (2006), 145.

¹⁴³ Williams (2004), 82 n.54.

Serranus, as well as within the narrative proper, when Marus and Serranus return to Rome. In both instances, Marcia offers an alternative viewpoint on Regulus' behaviour which drastically differs from the heroizing viewpoint provided by Marus in his own telling of the tale. By acknowledging Marcia's perspective, Silius shows awareness of Regulus' inability to reconcile family and state and provides yet another example of the conflict between *fides* and *pietas* so readily apparent elsewhere. How Marcia's concerns should be balanced against the traditionally exemplary nature of the Regulus legend, however, remains a question that must be addressed in our analysis of this episode.

Marcia makes her first appearance in the epic upon Regulus' return to Rome. Her appearance is evocative of the typical distraught epic mother:

ecce trahens geminum natorum Marcia pignus,
infelix nimia magni virtute mariti,
squalentem crinem et tristes lacerabat amictus.

Behold, Marcia, dragging her two sons along as a symbol, unhappy from the excessive virtue of her great husband, was tearing her grimy hair and her clothes in her sorrow.

(6.403-5)

Silius' description of Marcia is evocative of Horace's description of the same scene, as Spaltenstein suggests.¹⁴⁴ Yet as we shall soon see, Silius expands upon Marcia's role in the episode by giving her both a name and extended speeches which criticize Regulus. Upon her appearance, Silius directly connects Marcia's suffering with Regulus' virtue. She is *infelix* on account of the *nimia virtus* of her *magnus maritus*.¹⁴⁵ Regulus' virtue is not merely *virtus* but *nimia virtus*, a virtue that is somehow deemed to be excessive. Already, then, we can sense implicit criticism of Regulus' behaviour. The involvement of Marcia's children and the tearing of her clothes seem more appropriate for a widow than a wife, but such is the extent of Regulus' inflexibility that he might as well already be dead in Carthage. Marcia's slightly incongruous actions thus neatly foreshadow the fate that inevitably awaits Regulus. On their own, they naturally evoke sympathy for

¹⁴⁴ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 6.403, who refers to *Carm.* 3.5.41-4 (*fertur pudicae coniugis osculum / parvosque natos ut capitis minor / ab se removisse et virilem / torvus humi posuisse vultum*).

¹⁴⁵ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 6.404 suggests a parallel with *infelix gloria* (2.613), which is used to describe the Saguntines' actions.

Marcia, but do not necessarily equate to a condemnation of Regulus. Silius, however, provides Marcia with a speech in which she fiercely criticizes her husband:

quo fers gressus? non Punicus hic est,
 Regule, quem fugias, carcer. vestigia nostri
 casta tori domus et patrium sine crimine servat
 inviolata larem. semel hic iterumque (quid, oro,
 pollutum est nobis?) prolem gratante senatu
 et patria, sum enixa tibi. tua, respice, sedes
 haec est, unde ingens umeris fulgentibus ostro
 vidisti Latios consul procedere fasces;
 unde ire in Martem, quo capta referre solebas
 et victor mecum suspendere postibus arma.
 non ego complexus et sanctae foedera taedae
 coniugiumve peto: patrios damnare penates
 absiste ac natis fas duc concedere noctem.

Where are you going? This is not a Carthaginian prison that you are fleeing from. Our home preserves the chaste traces of our bed and our household holds, unstained by crime. Here once and again (what, I ask, has been dishonoured by us?) I bore you a child, and the senate and country congratulated us. Look back, this is your house, from where as a mighty consul, shoulders gleaming with purple, you witnessed the Roman fasces advance; from here you went to war, and here you as conqueror used to bring back the captured arms and, together with me, hung them up on our doorposts. I do not ask for an embrace or the bonds of the sacred torches of marriage: just cease from condemning our family home and consider it right to allow one night here for your sons.

(6.437-49)

Marcia's initial speech focuses on Regulus' rejection of the *ius postliminii*, the rights which a captive regains when he returns to his city. As Augoustakis points out, Regulus, at numerous points within the episode, refuses to partake in these rights and acts like an outsider, by not wearing the toga (6.393-4), greeting the consul (6.396-8), or staying at his own house (6.432-3).¹⁴⁶ It is this last refusal which draws the ire of his wife. Marcia declares that their home is not a *Punicus carcer*, but ironically she once again foreshadows Regulus' fate, since he, far from fleeing from a Carthaginian prison, returns to it in preference to his own home. Throughout her speech, the Roman threshold is contrasted with its Carthaginian counterpart.

¹⁴⁶ Augoustakis (2006), 146.

When Regulus, after making his speech to the senate, abides by his promise and prepares to depart for Carthage, Marcia makes another appearance. Inevitably, her accusations against Regulus borrow heavily from Virgil's Dido. As she hurries to the shore, Silius describes her reacting as though Regulus were already dead (*ceu stans in funere*, 6.497), once again foreshadowing his unavoidable fate.¹⁴⁷ Marcia begs the Carthaginians to take her with them, and pleads for Regulus to allow her to share whatever fate awaits him (6.500-2). The paradoxical theme of fleeing towards the enemy is again expressed, as Marcia asks why Regulus is fleeing from her all the way to Carthage (*cur usque ad Poenos miseram fugis?*, 6.506). She argues that Regulus is in fact treating her as an enemy rather than an ally, by stating that she was not the one who sent Xanthippus, Regulus' conqueror, into battle (6.504). By doing so, she points out the paradoxical nature of Regulus' actions, which treat friend as foe and foe as friend, a view first expressed when she compared her home to a Carthaginian prison in her initial speech (6.437-8).

A detailed comparison between Regulus' Marcia and Lucan's Marcia, whose plea for Cato to remarry her (*BC* 2.326-49) forms a key part of book 2 of the *Bellum Civile*, has been undertaken by Augoustakis, but it would be useful to summarize his main points here, as they aid us greatly in our interpretation of the Regulus episode.¹⁴⁸ Both Marcias have had their marriages annulled; Lucan's Marcia married Hortensius in order to provide children for his family, cancelling her previous bond with Cato, while Silius' Marcia has her marriage cut short by the capture of Regulus, and by Regulus' own resistance to the *ius postliminii* upon his return to Rome. Both Marcias, when addressing their husbands, are keen to emphasize their chastity. Silius' Marcia has also, in Augoustakis' view, learned from the actions of her predecessor. Lucan's Marcia pleads to be reunited with Cato, a plea which results in more of an anti-marriage or a funeral than an actual marriage. Having seen the result of Lucan's Marcia's actions, then, Silius'

¹⁴⁷ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 6.497 suggests that Silius is inspired by Lucan's description of Cornelia and Pompey at *BC* 5.762.

¹⁴⁸ For more, see Augoustakis (2006), 148-54.

Marcia avoids taking the same path by specifically stating that she does not expect Regulus to renew the bonds of marriage with her (6.447-8). By not demanding what Lucan's Marcia fails to acquire, she hopes to gain a more favourable result.¹⁴⁹ Regulus, however, is steadfast in his refusal, not even granting her the pessimistic reunion present in the *Bellum Civile*. Regulus demonstrates that he is even more resolute than Cato; no amount of ingenuity on Marcia's part will cause him to break his oath to the Carthaginians.

It is clear, then, that Marcia raises objections to Regulus' behaviour which provide an alternative interpretation of his traditionally exemplary inflexible personality. The question remains, however, of just how much credence the reader is expected to give to Marcia's views. Is she supposed to be taken seriously? Do her accusations stand up? An answer may be found in Marus' views on the situation. Marus, the storyteller, relates Regulus' achievements to Serranus in order to provide him with an example to emulate. When the story begins, Serranus is on the brink of despair, having seen his fellow soldiers, as well as Flaminus himself, cut down at Lake Trasimene; Marus introduces his tale by urging Serranus to bear troubles just as his father used to (*patrio, fortissime, ritu, / quicquid adest duri, et rerum inclinata feramus*, 6.118-9). He therefore sets up his story as an *exemplum*. Despite his purpose, however, Marus does not unconditionally support Regulus in all that he does. He states that when he was sailing back to Rome with Regulus, he wished that Regulus would return home and have his resolve shaken by the tears of Serranus:

spes tamen una mihi, quamquam bene cognita et olim
 atrox illa fides, urbem murosque domumque
 tangere si miseris licuisset, corda moveri
 posse viri et vestro certe mitescere fletu.
 claudebam sub corde metus lacrimasque putabam
 esse viro et nostrae similem inter tristia mentem.

I still had one hope, even though I knew that fierce *fides* of his, well and for a long time, that if he were allowed to reach the city, its walls, his home and his unhappy family, that it would be surely possible to move the heart of that man and to soften it with your

¹⁴⁹ Augoustakis (2006), 151.

tears. I concealed my fear in my heart and thought that the man was capable of tears and could feel sadness just like us.

(6.377-82)

While Marus' wish could reflect a weakness on his part which merely amplifies the unshakeable resolve of Regulus, his characterisation of Regulus also suggests that Regulus is so inflexible that he borders on being inhuman. This is brought home by Marus' belief that Regulus could shed tears and feel misery like himself and other men, a belief soon shown to be completely incorrect. Regulus' almost inhuman nature is confirmed by Serranus, who recalls that his father's "appearance was greater than human" (*humana maior species erat*, 6.426), a recollection meant as a compliment, but one which contributes to Silius' exaggerated portrayal of Regulus. In order to become an *exemplum of fides*, Regulus must become incapable of emotion and a hyperbole of immovability, transcending basic human qualities. When Regulus addresses the senate, he claims that the Regulus they now see in front of them is nothing more than a name, a bloodless body (*exsanguis spectatis corpore nomen*, 6.478). While Regulus does this to contrast himself with the youthful Carthaginian prisoners for whom he might have been exchanged, the description further drives home the unnatural nature of his determination. In fact, Serranus, for whom the story is intended, has already failed to live up to his father's example, by precisely displaying the emotions that his father lacks; he groans and weeps before the narrative begins (*cum gemitu lacrimisque simul*, 6.102) and continues to weep throughout Marus' storytelling (*iamdudum vultus lacrimis atque ora rigabat*, 6.294; *hic alto iuvenis gemitu lacrimisque coortis*, 6.415).¹⁵⁰ In order to live up to his father's example, Serranus must stop weeping, as Marus indicates (*absiste, o iuvenis, lacrimis*, 6.545), but that by itself is not enough. The Regulus in Marus' narrative is devoid of emotion, a hero who tops both Cato and Aeneas in unshakeability. Regulus'

¹⁵⁰ Even in terms of living up to the actions of his father, Serranus fails; so Augoustakis (2006), 163 argues that "Regulus cannot provide exemplary behaviour for his son to follow; Serranus, especially, although he was advised not to follow the *iras animosque* of his parent, has already participated in the battle at Trasimene and run away, routed and bloodstained."

sheer lack of emotion makes him less a serious *exemplum* than a parody of his epic predecessors.

Additionally, if Regulus is indeed an *exemplum*, or an archetype, who in the *Punica* is meant to be the Regulus of the Second Punic War? Serranus fails to emulate his father, and we do not hear of him again after he and Marus make their way back to Rome. Bernstein states that “[t]hanks to Marus’ instruction, Serranus profits from the example of his father’s *patientia* and *fides*”,¹⁵¹ but there is no explicit evidence that this is in fact the case. If Serranus fails to take on Regulus’ *exemplum*, then who does? As mentioned previously, it has been suggested that Regulus serves instead as an archetype for Fabius Maximus, who displays notable *patientia* in his approach towards the fortunes of war. Williams, however, raises doubts for such an interpretation. He argues that Regulus, far from learning from his mistakes as Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy claim, displays the same inflexibility as a prisoner that had led to his downfall as a general. Fabius, on the other hand, is flexible, “a model of shrewd compromise in bending to fortune and waiting patiently for opportunity to present itself.”¹⁵² To Williams, Regulus’ approach, as shown in his embassy to Rome and his address towards the senate, is nothing more than the same approach that he took towards his African campaign, one reflective of a “blinkered obsessiveness” and a complete inability to “look back” on any of his actions.¹⁵³ Augoustakis, following Williams, argues that the model of leadership that Regulus represents is rendered suspect by Marcia’s speeches; it is Marcia, instead, who voices the need for a new type of leadership to carry Rome out of her present predicament.¹⁵⁴ He does not state who might represent this new type of leadership, but considering the construction of the narrative, in which Fabius rises to the forefront immediately following the conclusion of the Regulus episode, Fabius would be the

¹⁵¹ Bernstein (2008), 128.

¹⁵² Williams (2004), 83.

¹⁵³ Williams (2004), 82-4. Such an inability to look back is seen as being representative of “the risk-taking/reckless adventurer”, and Williams suggests an influence from Virgil, for which see Gale (2003).

¹⁵⁴ Augoustakis (2006), 163-4.

obvious choice. If such an interpretation is correct, then Fabius once again becomes a counterpoint to Regulus, rather than merely his manifestation in the Second Punic War.

Indeed, Fabius, in contrast to Regulus, demonstrates the possibilities that exist if one uses *pietas* wisely in governance of the state. Regulus, in fulfilling his pledge to Carthage, must abandon his own family, but Fabius displays *pietas* towards non-family members, earning Rome a valuable victory in the process. This occurs in book 7, when Minucius, the *magister equitum*, tired of Fabius' delaying strategy, is given equal powers with Fabius and decides to proceed with an immediate attack against Hannibal (7.515-24). Minucius, who had been the dictator's subordinate, shows a lack of both *fides* and *pietas* by demanding to be given a share of the army, since the relationship between a superior and a subordinate was often seen as one between a son and a father.¹⁵⁵ He also does not seem to have learned from the example of Regulus in the least, as he "burns with the love to destroy and to be destroyed" (*perdendi simul et pereundi ardebat amore*, 7.524) when he leads his men to battle, just as Regulus was consumed with his insane bloodlust before being captured by Xanthippus.

When confronted by Minucius' insubordination, Fabius' son tells his father that Minucius and the Romans should suffer for their betrayal of Fabius (7.539-46). Bernstein states that, at this moment "Fabius must therefore confront a simultaneous challenge to his authority from his symbolic son Minucius and actual son Fabius."¹⁵⁶ Fabius' response (7.548-65) shows that he conceives the Roman state as a family in itself; he cannot allow anger to overrule his duty as father and tells his son that it is *nefas* to be angry at one's fatherland (*succensere nefas patriae*, 7.555). Fabius then enters the field and rescues Minucius. At the moment when he reaches Minucius, Fabius displays the emotion that Regulus precisely lacks:

miserabile visu,
vulneribus fessum ac multo labente cruore
ductorem cernit suprema ac foeda precantem.
manavere genis lacrimae, clipeoque paventem

¹⁵⁵ Bernstein (2008), 142.

¹⁵⁶ Bernstein (2008), 142.

protegit et natum stimulans...

He saw a miserable sight, the commander tired from his wounds and slipping in much blood, praying to the gods for a disgraceful end. Tears poured from his eyes, and having protected the terrified man with his shield, roused his son on...

(7.706-10)

Fabius is far from the emotionless superhuman that is Regulus. Instead, upon seeing Minucius, he shows pity rather than contempt and sheds the tears that Regulus is so incapable of shedding. He then encourages his son to finish the job and rout Hannibal from the field, which his son, “rejoicing in the urging of his wise father” (*arte paterna / ac stimulis gaudens*, 7.713-4), succeeds in doing. Again, Fabius differs from Regulus; his instruction towards his son achieves tangible, positive results, and Fabius’ son is able to return to Rome as victor rather than wounded fugitive. Finally, Fabius in his victory recovers the paternal authority that he had lost from both Minucius and his own son. The rescued soldiers address Fabius as their father (*magna memorabant voce parentem*, 7.735), as does Minucius (*sancta... o genitor*, 7.737). Rather than putting *fides* above familial considerations, Fabius adopts the role of *paterfamilias* of the city of Rome and acts accordingly.¹⁵⁷ The model of action provided by Fabius is ultimately much more positive than the one provided by Regulus. The differences between the two support Williams’ contention that “the struggle in *Punica* 6 is not just between Rome and Carthage but also between different versions – Regulan and Fabian, even ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ – of Roman military virtue, strategy and heroism.”¹⁵⁸

In this section, I have argued that although Regulus’ story is ostensibly told as an *exemplum* in *Punica* 6, he can at best be considered as a flawed *exemplum*. Like the Saguntines, Regulus sacrifices his obligations towards *pietas* in favour of demonstrating his *fides*. His lack of emotion and sheer inflexibility, rather than being praiseworthy traits, contrast unfavourably with Fabius Maximus’ model of leadership, one based on humanity rather than Regulus’ cold interpretation of morality. It is not surprising that

¹⁵⁷ For more, see Bernstein (2008), 142-4.

¹⁵⁸ Williams (2004), 84.

Regulus, rather than meeting with success, fails on the battlefield and dies as a prisoner in Carthage; Fabius' leadership, on the other hand, provides the Romans with their first victories of the war, and thus it is Fabius, and not Regulus, whom Silius urges the reader to emulate.

Despite the more positive *exemplum* provided by Fabius in book 7, he does not represent a true reconciliation between *fides* and *pietas*. He may be a much improved paradigm of behaviour in comparison to complete failures such as Pacuvius and the flawed exemplar of Regulus, but Silius does not emphasize Fabius' *fides* enough to make him a model of both virtues. In addition, Bernstein finds possible hints of conflict between Fabius' familial interests and interests of the state in his reaction to Minucius' predicament, when his son argues that the Fabii's familial honour should be protected through teaching the senate a lesson, an argument rejected by Fabius.¹⁵⁹ While I see Fabius as viewing the interests of Rome as inherently equal to the interests of the Fabii, rather than him choosing one over the other, Fabius remains inadequate if we wish to find a hero in the *Punica* who exemplifies both *fides* and *pietas*. For such a hero, we must turn to Scipio Africanus and the end of this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored numerous examples of the incompatibility between *fides* and *pietas* that occurs throughout the *Punica*. The Saguntines, the Capuans and Regulus all exhibit *fides* or *pietas* to some extent, but all of them must sacrifice one for the other. Even Regulus, nominally an *exemplum* of virtue, must abandon *pietas* in favour of *fides*. As the influence of Lucan upon Silius' Saguntum episode shows, the recurring motif of a conflict between *fides* and *pietas* is reflective of a turbulent world view in which civil war is common and virtues are warped and given new meanings.

¹⁵⁹ Bernstein (2008), 143: "Fabius' argument is the product of a perspective focused on civic tradition as opposed to ancestral history and the needs of the state as opposed to the family... Fabius implies that his son's focus should be on the obligations attendant on his command, not on the glory of the Fabian gens."

This would appear to make the *Punica* a decidedly pessimistic epic, but, as I have argued previously, Silius' pessimism differs from the nihilism exhibited in the *Bellum Civile*. Although Silius laments the lack of virtue in the world, he also offers the reader a way forward, by providing the reader with positive examples of virtue. One such example is Fabius, but the most important example of the appropriate use of both *fides* and *pietas* is Scipio Africanus, the one character in the epic who is able to represent the best of both virtues. More than any other man, Scipio can claim to be the genuine hero of the *Punica*, if only for this very ability. Silius' characterization of Scipio offers a more positive appraisal of the nature of *fides* and *pietas* and shows that, despite the failures of the Saguntines, the Capuans and Regulus, harmony between the two virtues can still be achieved in this world. Furthermore, Scipio's growth into the main Roman leader at the end of the epic intensifies the sense of optimism caused by his ability to reconcile the two virtues. His assumption of this role points to a possibly brighter future for both third century and Flavian Rome. In Chapter Three, I will go into further detail about Scipio's virtue and his opponents' contrasting lack of virtue, both of which are inextricably linked with the Roman victory that takes place at Zama.

In this chapter, I have argued that Silius often shows the virtues of *fides* and *pietas* in conflict with each other. The Saguntines, Capuans and Regulus are all unable to find a reasonable balance between these virtues, and suffer greatly as a result. The inability of the Saguntines to limit their own *fides* causes them to participate in familial slaughter, while Regulus' obsession with *fides* causes him to lose sight of his own humanity, making him a failure rather than a true hero. Both the Saguntines and Regulus are praised, but closer examination of the two episodes causes the reader to question the meaning of such praise, and consequently also the condemnation of the Saguntines' antagonists, the Capuans. Through associating the Saguntines, Capuans and Regulus with failure, Silius also links their attitudes towards morality with failure. They thus provide a stern warning to the reader of the consequences one faces when unable to

reconcile both *fides* and *pietas*, a failing that Rome must avoid if it wishes to achieve future success.

Chapter Two: Cannae and paradoxical virtue

Cannae and paradox

Having examined the portrayal of virtue at Saguntum, the opening battle of the *Punica*, we continue our investigation of virtue in the epic by analyzing its role in the battle of Cannae, both structurally and thematically the midpoint of the epic. Silius spends eight books building up to Cannae, a slow and extended process that marks Cannae out as the culmination of the first half of the epic.¹ In this chapter, I argue that the atmosphere of paradox pervades the entire Cannae episode, one that also extends to Silius' treatment of virtue in the battle. In fact, the motif of paradox is closely connected to Silius' concern with morality in general. In the epilogue to Cannae at the end of book 10, Silius provides a judgment of the battle's place in Roman history. He comments on the state of morality at Rome after Cannae by saying that "that was how Rome was; and if it was fated that her character was to change afterwards, then it would have been better if you had remained, Carthage" (*haec tum Roma fuit; post te cui vertere mores / si stabat fatis, potius, Carthago, maneres*, 10.643-4). Silius' remark is a strange one, given the context in which it is made. At a time when Rome is on the verge of being sacked by the Carthaginians, Silius, rather than looking forward to Carthage's eventual defeat, focuses on the moral strength that the disaster gives to Rome and, foreseeing Rome's moral decline following the final destruction of Carthage, longs instead for Carthage's survival as an external threat capable of maintaining Roman virtue. Cannae is a disaster for Rome, but only by experiencing Cannae are the Romans able to recover the moral fibre necessary for victory.

It is a paradoxical assessment of the battle, but Silius does not limit himself to airing such conflicting sentiments in the epilogue of the battle. Indeed, he deliberately

¹ On Cannae being the "centre" of the *Punica*, see Tipping (2004), 362-3; Marks (2006), 404 and n.42 for further bibliography.

introduces paradoxical situations and portrayals of virtue throughout the Cannae narrative. In Chapter One, I discussed several episodes in which *fides* and *pietas* are observed to be in clear conflict with each other. In this chapter, such conflict is once again present, but even more noticeable is the paradoxical and ambiguous way in which virtue behaves on the battlefield of Cannae. I argue that through describing such behaviour, Silius encourages us to read Cannae as an emphatically paradoxical battle. Furthermore, I argue that the elements of paradox and ambiguity found at Cannae are not merely isolated within this episode, but can be found elsewhere as well, especially in Silius' portrayal of deities throughout the epic.

In this chapter I begin by examining an episode that acts as a prelude to the battle, the accidental patricide performed by the Roman soldier Solimus on the eve of the battle (9.66-177). The relationship between *fides* and *pietas* in this episode is reminiscent of the conflict we have previously witnessed at Saguntum. Both Solimus and his father Satricus act from a sense of *fides*; Satricus escapes from the Carthaginian camp where he had been kept as a prisoner because he has not forgotten his loyalty towards Rome, while Solimus correctly performs his duties as a Roman soldier by killing an unidentified man heading towards his post. In doing so, however, Solimus commits the sin of patricide, as the unidentified man is actually his father. As in the Saguntum episode, *fides* and *pietas* once again conspire against one other, causing failure and death; both Satricus and Solimus lie dead by the end of the episode, while the patricide itself is presented as an omen for Rome's disastrous defeat in the coming battle. Unlike the Saguntines, the Capuans and Regulus in the previous chapter, however, Solimus does not consciously make a choice between *fides* and *pietas*. His patricide is an entirely accidental one, and in fact one that seems fated and utterly unpreventable. Such fate and human helplessness is, I argue, also central to Silius' depiction of Cannae, and it is even noticeable in the poet's portrayal of the man nominally responsible for the disaster, the consul Varro.

Silius' treatment of Varro and his consular colleague Paulus in books 9 and 10 is another crucial aspect of Cannae, in which virtue once again operates in paradoxical ways. Varro is described as devoid of virtue, in contrast to Paulus, who behaves like an exemplary Roman hero. This is nowhere more apparent than in the way that the two men react to the catastrophe of Cannae; Varro runs away in shame, while Paulus remains to die heroically on the battlefield. However, the ultimate significance of Varro and Paulus' actions is not as clear as it first seems. In analyzing their behaviour on the battlefield, I argue that Paulus' death and Varro's inability to die contain allusions to the Roman ritual of *devotio*, and these allusions affect the way in which we should interpret the episode. Paulus' death is presented as a *devotio*, and such a presentation creates the expectation that his death is associated with Roman victory. However, this is far from the case, as Paulus' death is linked directly with the Romans' comprehensive defeat instead. We are thus led to question just how useful Paulus' display of virtue is to Rome. Similarly, I argue that Silius also problematizes our interpretation of Varro's lack of virtue. In contrast to Paulus' *devotio*, Varro's departure from the battlefield is portrayed as a *devotio* not taken. Despite lacking virtue, however, Varro's eventual return to Rome after the battle performs a crucial role in the turnaround of Rome's fortunes. It is only through Varro's ignominious return that Fabius Maximus is able to reunite the Roman people and direct their energies not against each other but against the Carthaginians. Thus I argue that Varro, through his lack of virtue, plays a bigger role in Rome's final victory than Paulus, despite his exemplary display of virtue.

I continue by arguing that the elements of paradox and ambiguity present in both the Satricus episode and the *devotiones* of Paulus and Varro are symptomatic of a broader atmosphere of confusion, which can be noticed in Silius' treatment of the gods, both throughout the epic as a whole and at Cannae in particular. The role performed by the gods in the epic is laden with ambiguity, particularly in the cases of Jupiter and Minerva, two deities who are also closely linked with the emperor Domitian. I argue that

a byproduct of the ambiguous portrayal of these deities is that Silius' attitude towards Domitian himself cannot easily be deciphered.

Finally, I conclude the chapter by analyzing the Anna episode, which opens book 8 and acts as an introduction to the Cannae narrative. In this episode, the nymph Anna is ordered by Juno to go to Hannibal and urge him to march his troops to Cannae, thus beginning the chain of events that leads to Rome's defeat in book 10. Anna, as a deity who is worshipped by the Romans but was once the sister of Dido, is representative of the paradox and ambiguity that I discuss throughout this chapter, as she owes loyalty to both Rome and Carthage. She is thus a most appropriate deity to set the battle into motion. The paradoxical behaviour of virtue at Cannae, as seen in Silius' treatment of Satricus, Varro, Paulus and Anna, emphasizes the paradoxical place that Cannae occupies in the *Punica*. As the greatest disaster suffered by Rome in the Second Punic War, Cannae is a lamentable part of Rome's past, and yet Rome must also experience Cannae in order to regain the moral character that is required to win the war.

Patricide as prelude

I begin my analysis of Cannae with the story of Satricus, which acts a prelude to the battle itself. The treatment of virtue in this prelude sums up many of the issues concerning the display of virtue that become apparent later in the battle. On the surface, the Satricus episode is a digression, but Silius' description of the events which occur in this episode echoes themes of paradox that become central to his depiction of Cannae. In particular, the issue of patricide, along with its implications for *fides* and *pietas*, directly confronts the reader. This issue will form a definite base on which an interpretation of Cannae can be built, while also echoing the broader themes of familial violence, confusion and paradox, which constantly assert themselves in the Cannae books, and indeed elsewhere in the epic. I argue in this section that the Satricus episode displays a deep concern with civil war, and the role that virtue plays in times of civil

strife. The contradictory relationship between *fides* and *pietas* in the Satricus episode coincides with the poet's treatment of these virtues in the Saguntum and Regulus episodes, but I argue that the themes of paradox and inevitability may be seen more clearly in the Satricus episode and that these themes are also dominant at Cannae in general.

The story of Satricus is introduced on the eve of Cannae in book 9.² Satricus, a native of Sulmo (Ovid's birthplace)³ was taken prisoner by Xanthippus in the First Punic War and enslaved in Libya; his two sons, Mancinus and Solimus, were too young to be involved in that conflict and thus remained in Italy (9.66-76). Satricus returns to Italy along with the Carthaginians, employed as an interpreter, but takes advantage of the cover of night to escape from his captors (9.77-82). Unarmed as he is, Satricus strips the first corpse he finds on the battlefield in order to arm himself, but little does he know that the corpse is that of his own son, Mancinus (9.83-9), slain only a few hours before in a pre-battle skirmish— in fact, the first Roman to be killed at Cannae (9.13-4).⁴ His other son, Solimus, happens to be on watch at this time and is himself searching for Mancinus' body; in the darkness he spots an armed man coming his way, and hides behind a tomb to get a better look. Upon noticing that the stranger is alone, he hurls his javelin into the man's back, but this man is in fact his father (9.90-105). Solimus runs up to his wounded victim and notices that he is wearing the arms of Mancinus, and becomes enraged; he makes a speech vowing to take back the arms from the enemy,

² For discussions of the Satricus episode, see Bruère (1959), 229-32; Mezzanotte (1995), 362-3; McGuire (1997), 134-5; Wilson (2004), 243-6; Dominik (2006), 124-5; and esp. Fucecchi (1999), 305-22 and 332-6.

³ In fact all three names given by Silius seem to have allusive qualities. Solimus' name is evocative, naturally, of Sulmo (as the poet himself makes clear at 9.75-6). Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.66 suggests that Satricus' name may be a reference to Satricum, a Volscian town, but the significance of such an allusion is unknown.

⁴ For the significance of Mancinus' name, Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.11 and Fucecchi (1999), 313 n.21 cite the possibility of L. Hostilius Mancinus, who was killed after Lake Trasimene (Livy 22.15.4-10), but Spaltenstein thinks that such an association is doubtful. A more probable allusion, I think, is to the more famous L. Hostilius Mancinus, who gained notoriety for his actions in the Third Punic War; he was known for his rash personality (Appian, *Pun.* 113) and displayed a map of conquered Carthage in the Forum, in which he himself was depicted as being the first to scale the walls (Pliny, *NH* 35.23); see Feldherr (1998), 23. Silius' Mancinus displays a similar eagerness, but ironically he only succeeds in being the first to be killed; for his suicidal zeal see Marks (2005a), 20.

invoking the name of his father in the process (9.106-19). Upon hearing his son's words, Satricus is struck dumb and is barely able to reveal his identity to Solimus. The entire tragic truth is revealed by Satricus, who gives Solimus the task of urging Varro against battle while also attempting to absolve him from blame for the murder (9.120-51). Solimus, himself stunned by this turn of events, makes a final speech and commits suicide, but not before using his blood to write a warning to Varro (9.152-77). The tale is thus concluded.

Silius presents to us a story that, while tragic, relies so much on coincidence that it threatens to enter into the realm of the preposterous and the tragicomic. J.D. Duff, in his Loeb translation, remarks that Silius "could hardly have expected his readers to believe a story so monstrously improbable."⁵ The implausibility of the story, however, should not make its meaning any less valid; the implausibility itself is an integral aspect of the episode. After all, implausibility is not just solely confined to the work of Silius. For instance, Lucan, it has been argued, contains elements of the absurd and the grotesque, particularly in the snake episode of book 9. In that case, Shadi Bartsch believes that the grotesque nature of many scenes in Lucan is deliberately engineered in order to alienate the reader, causing the reader to feel entrenched within the visceral violence he is being presented with, while also feeling somehow detached from the same imagery due to its over-the-top presentation.⁶ Thus while some may see Lucan's implausibility as detracting from the overall quality of the poem, most now agree that it is this very implausibility that characterizes the text. Why, then, should we lambast Silius when he does much the same? Indeed, the "silly" nature of the Satricus episode may not have seemed so laughable to the Romans.

⁵ Duff (1934), vol. 2, 6. McGuire (1997), 134 agrees: "...with his invention Silius stretches the reader's credulity to the limit, piling coincidence upon coincidence." Matier (1989b), 8 uses the episode as an example of what he sees as Silius' occasional overuse of contrived plots: "When I discussed this episode with Professor Nisbet of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, his only comment was: 'this is an example of Silius at his silliest!'"

⁶ Bartsch (1997), 39.

To place the episode in context, then, let us take a brief look at the possible sources that Silius may have drawn on. Nothing resembling the story appears in the historiographical tradition, so we may safely assume that the episode comes from Silius' invention as well as his poetic influences. The Ovidian influence has been seen by Richard Bruère and Marcus Wilson as playing a crucial part in the emotional nature of the tale,⁷ but a distinct Virgilian influence is also readily apparent. Marco Fucecchi, discussing the moment at which Solimus sees his brother's armour being worn by (the unrecognized) Satricus, remarks that Solimus' reaction resembles the reaction of Virgil's Nisus when he witnesses the death of Euryalus, and of Aeneas when he sees Pallas' baldrick being worn by Turnus.⁸ Silius appears to have had the story of Nisus and Euryalus in *Aeneid* 9 particularly in mind when he composed his Satricus episode, as there are a number of parallels between the two. Fucecchi argues that the decision to escape unarmed from the Carthaginian camp marks Satricus' plan out as a reckless enterprise, as reckless as Euryalus' plan to raid the Rutulian camp.⁹ The way in which Satricus is exposed also recalls the fate of Euryalus; the gleaming of the moon off Satricus is noticed by Solimus, just as the gleaming of the moon off the helmet of Messapus gives Euryalus away to Volcens' men (*Aen.* 9.365-74). Furthermore, when Nisus begins his attempt to rescue Euryalus, the first man he kills is named Sulmo, who takes a spear in his back (*Aen.* 9.412-15); Silius, on the other hand, has Solimus (whose name is the original form of "Sulmo", according to the poet) throw his spear into Satricus' back. Silius is thus consciously invoking the Virgilian antecedent as he describes his own "nocturnal tragedy". Yet it is also a parody of the Nisus and Euryalus story, as the deliberate inversion of the identity of the spear thrower demonstrates.

⁷ The general influence of Ovid on Silius is discussed in Bruère (1958) and Bruère (1959), expanded upon by Wilson (2004). Bruère (1959), 229-32 explores the Ovidian aspects of the Satricus episode; Wilson (2004), 243-4 acts as a follow-up. They note that the entire episode has many Ovidian influences from similar tragic tales in the *Metamorphoses* (Bruère gives examples such as the tales of Pyramus and Thisbe, Cephalus and Procris, and Ceyx and Alcyone), with Satricus' birthplace an example of Silius' use of geopoetics.

⁸ Fucecchi (1999), 309.

⁹ Fucecchi (1999), 306 n.4 compares *Aen.* 9.363-4 to *Pun.* 9.83-4 as well. In addition, he places the Satricus episode in the tradition of previous "night raids", such as that of Nisus and Euryalus, and Odysseus and Diomedes in *Iliad* 10. Intriguingly, he also connects the characterization of Satricus as a "night fugitive" to Lucan's Caesar in *BC* 5.508-9, when Caesar uses the cover of night to "escape" from his men.

While Silius draws on Virgil for inspiration for the episode and invites the reader to read the episode through Virgil, the Satricus episode is much more than just Silius trying to rework Nisus and Euryalus in the context of the Second Punic War.¹⁰

Fucecchi suggests another source of inspiration for Silius: two Senecan epigrams (Riese, *Anthol. Lat.* 462 and 463)¹¹ that tell the tragic story of one Maeivius, who, fighting for Octavian at Actium, boards one of Antony's vessels and kills an enemy soldier he encounters there.¹² As he is about to strip the corpse and celebrate his heroic accomplishment, he realizes that the soldier he has just killed is in fact his own brother. Maeivius reacts by committing suicide with his brother's sword, but not before lamenting what he has just done. The similarities between Maeivius and Solimus are easy to spot. They both do the correct and virtuous thing by killing the enemy, but this virtuous action becomes impious when the "enemy" turns out to be a family member. Both Maeivius and Solimus also end up killing themselves after long monologues on the criminality of their actions. Fucecchi points out that at the outset of the first epigram, the war between Antony and Octavian is described as a foreign war, with the Parthian Antony joining forces with the Egyptian Cleopatra (462.1-5). Only at verses 9-10 does the author comment that this is in fact a civil war, a war fought between brothers (*fratribus heu fratres, patribus concurrere natos / impia sors belli fataque saeva iubent*).¹³ The rest of the epigram vividly describes the brotherly nature of this conflict through the fate of Maeivius. Similarly, the subject of Silius' epic is a conflict against the foreign invaders of Carthage, but the Satricus episode features no Carthaginians; instead, we see Roman killing Roman in a very civil war,¹⁴ as we will soon examine in more detail.

The tales of Maeivius and Satricus both describe a private tragedy set against the background of a very public conflict. This theme is also apparent in another possible

¹⁰ The Nisus and Euryalus episode could also have been used in the Crista episode later on in the Cannae narrative, when Crista and his sons are drawn towards Hannibal (and consequently their own deaths) by the gleaming of his helmet; see Marks (2006), 398-9.

¹¹ = 69 and 70 in Prato (1964).

¹² See Fucecchi (1999), 316-8 and 321-2.

¹³ Fucecchi (1999), 316.

¹⁴ Tipping (2004), 365 lists the Satricus story as an example of Lucanian civil war foreshadowing in the Cannae narrative.

influence of Silius: the civil war anecdote of Julius Mansuetus as told by Tacitus in his *Histories* (3.25).¹⁵ Marcus Wilson, for instance, has shown that the story of Satricus plays into the traditional Roman reaction towards the killing of one's own family in battle, that of unmitigated horror: "Such a crime, even if unintentional, was a violation of *pietas* of the worst imaginable sort."¹⁶ This horror, Wilson argues, is borne out by the story of Mansuetus, who, fighting on one side in the civil war of 69, is accidentally killed by his son, fighting on the other side; the latter tries to deflect the blame for the crime onto the state and gives his father a proper burial. His deed becomes a spectacle to the other soldiers on the field: "the closest ones drew their attention to it, then more; then soon the entire battle line wondered, lamented, and cursed this most savage warfare" (*advertere proximi, deinde plures; hinc per omnem aciem miraculum et questus et saevissimi belli execratio*, Tac. *Hist.* 3.25.8). It is so unbelievable that it draws in more and more spectators until the entire battle line is filled with amazement. The soldiers' reactions, however, are limited to thought and speech and do not extend to action, as, paradoxically, the soldiers continue with their criminal work despite their lamentations: "they say that what is done is criminal and yet they do it" (*factum esse scelus loquuntur faciuntque*, Tac. *Hist.* 3.25.9). Wilson argues that it is almost certain that Silius, as well as his readers, would have been aware of Mansuetus' story.¹⁷ The soldiers who come across the corpses of Satricus and Solimus have much the same reaction as the ones in Tacitus' story – disgust and fear, but also the inability to prevent themselves from carrying on with their unsavoury tasks. A clear link exists between the private tragedy of Mansuetus and the civil war as a whole, but in Tacitus' story there is also a very clear divide between the two.

¹⁵ The link to the story of Mansuetus is widely acknowledged; so Bruère (1959), 230; Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.66; Mezzanotte (1995), 363; Fucecchi (1999), 319-21; Wilson (2004), 245-6; Dominik (2006), 124. In terms of historical influences, Spaltenstein, Mezzanotte and Fucecchi point out that Livy's anecdote about two Roman prisoners who manage to escape back to the Roman encampment (Livy 22.42.11) may have also inspired Silius.

¹⁶ Wilson (2004), 244. He also notes rightly that the Satricus episode does not merely include patricide, but also the desecration of an unburied corpse and the suicide of the last remaining family member.

¹⁷ Wilson (2004), 246 argues that "if [Silius] had not heard [Tacitus'] story independently, he almost certainly would have read of it in one of the historical accounts written during his lifetime." To Wilson, the gist of the Satricus story would have been extremely familiar to Silius' readers.

For Tacitus, the notion of others witnessing the familial crime is crucial to the understanding of the Mansuetus episode. This fixation on witnessing the crime is also apparent in Silius. Satricus is quick to point out to his son that nobody could have seen the accident: “Who was witness to, who was present to know our deed? Did night not hide the mistake with its dark shadows?” (*quis testis nostris, quis conscius affuit actis? / non nox errorem nigranti condidit umbra?*, 9.147-8) It would appear to be so, but his initial question of *quis testis* is soon answered when Solimus, before committing suicide, addresses the moon as *Titania testis* (9.169), who alone was privy to the crime. In fact, Satricus’ other question is then answered, as Solimus attests that it was the Moon “who guided my spear into my father’s body with your nocturnal light” (*quae nocturno mea lumine tela / derigis in patrium corpus*, 9.170-1). Solimus’ emphasis on the brightness of the Moon, instead of the darkness of night as emphasized by his father, further exemplifies the paradoxical way in which light and darkness operate in the episode. Satricus had specifically chosen the night time to make his escape as it would provide cover: “he summoned night for support and secretly escaped the enemy camp” (*ad conamina noctem / advocat ac furtim castris evadit iniquis*, 9.81-2). However, instead of providing the looked-for support, night illuminates him and facilitates his murder.

Here we come to another of Silius’ possible influences, as he may have chosen his language deliberately to bring attention to the reversal of night and day in Seneca’s *Thyestes*; he writes “*nocturno...lumine*” (9.170), echoing “*nocturna...lumina*” (*Thy.* 795).¹⁸ In the tragedy, Atreus has just killed the sons of Thyestes, and the line is placed in the Chorus’ speech that laments the deed. As Thyestes eats his sons’ remains, the sun (*Titan*, *Thy.* 785) disappears and the messenger prays that the darkness of night may hide the deed (*tenebrisque facinus obruat taetrum novis / nox missa ab ortu tempore alieno gravis*, *Thy.* 786-7). The Satricus story is Seneca’s turned upside down; in Silius, light is shining in the middle of the night, while in Seneca, darkness envelopes the light of day. Satricus’ despoiling of his son’s body is also similar to Thyestes’ consuming of his

¹⁸ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.169 notices the parallel, but does not elaborate.

sons, although Thyestes' action is much more violent and graphic. Satricus, Solimus, Thyestes, the messenger and the Chorus all wish that the terrible crimes would be veiled by darkness (note Thyestes' plea: *aeterna nox permaneat et tenebris tegat / immensa longis scelera*, *Thy.* 1094-5), but in both play and epic their hopes are dashed.¹⁹ An allusion to the *Thyestes* would be apt, as in addition to the reversal of the role of light and darkness, the sin committed is reversed as well. Instead of Thyestes unknowingly eating his sons, here it is Solimus unknowingly killing his father. In both cases a dreadful familial crime is committed, and the presence, or lack of, light is used to draw attention to the horrific nature of this crime. Furthermore, whether Silius is deliberately making a connection with the *Thyestes* or not, he is clearly drawing on motifs that would have been familiar to his audience, an audience well versed in a tradition of incredulity. Thus as ridiculous as the Satricus episode might seem, its "theatrical" nature would not have been all that jarring for the Roman reader. Perhaps we may even envisage the Satricus episode as being performed on stage, like the *Thyestes*, rather than merely being read.²⁰ Silius does not need (or indeed, expect) his readers to believe in the story; it is enough that they see it, and react to it.

A son killing his father – who has himself desecrated the body of his other son – unavoidably brings to mind civil war imagery such as that described by Tacitus. In most of the influences we have discussed so far (Tacitus, the Senecan epigrams, and the *Thyestes*), the theme of civil strife looms large. It is not surprising, then, that critics have

¹⁹ The reaction that Seneca's characters show towards the unnatural darkness is integral to the interpretation of the *Thyestes*, as Tarrant (1985), 204 argues. The Chorus shows a sort of fatalistic attitude towards what is happening: "it cries out in anguish at being born in such an age... then steels itself to embrace death amid the all-encompassing doom." Tarrant also sees the handling of the Chorus as contrived and strangely detached, much like the over-the-top nature of the Satricus episode: "even the ruin of the cosmos emerges as a grandiose pageant rather than an immediate threat." Also, the overturning of night and day brings out the theme of gigantomachy: "the Chorus wonders if some renewal of primeval conflict between the gods and Giants has annulled the regular sequence of night and day." The threat of gigantomachy is often noticeable in Silius, so the presence of this motif before Cannae, in which the gods themselves descend to fight, is unsurprising.

²⁰ In fact, the *Punica* was not simply read, as Pliny notes that Silius often held recitations of his poetry to test people's reactions (*Ep.* 3.7.5). The material he delivered in the readings may well have been designed to provoke reactions, in addition to stimulating thought. On the relationship between epic and recital, see Markus (2000). Nauta (2002), 356-64 analyzes the possibility that Statius' *Silvae* could have been delivered orally to Domitian; while Silius' audience would probably have not included the emperor, the poet could reasonably have been invited to an imperial banquet and recited part of his epic at one of these occasions.

also turned to Lucan and examined how the shadow of his *Bellum Civile* appears at Silius' Cannae.²¹ Allusions to civil war, however, are nevertheless disconcerting in an epic that deals with a conflict between two quintessentially different nations, a struggle between the Roman and the foreigner.²² In Wilson's view, the story of Satricus shows the personal loss suffered by the participants of war, and its "disruptive" intrusion before the Cannae narrative "problematizes the belief in the patriotic virtue of killing for your country that motivates the Romans" by reminding the reader of the personal cost of warfare, so vividly illustrated by the self-annihilation of a family.²³

If Wilson is correct, then Silius could be saying nothing that we have not heard before, nothing that has not been said by Lucan, that great master of anti-war venom. But Silius is no Lucan. While he certainly portrays the battle of Cannae as much more than just a glorious last stand for the Romans, "patriotic virtue" could be shown by the Romans, and indeed celebrated. The celebration of such heroism is most apparent in the character of Paulus, who is granted the most emotional death scene of any Roman general in the epic.²⁴ I argue, however, that such celebration is not as straightforward as it first appears. Silius praises Paulus' virtue, but the ultimate significance of such virtue is questioned through the way in which it is praised. It is Silius' insistence on both questioning and celebrating *virtus* that is, I believe, key to our understanding of Cannae, and thus the *Punica*. Just as the Satricus story problematizes the display of patriotism in battle, we are led to question Paulus' patriotism and his *aristeia* during the course of the battle itself. I will expand upon my reading of Paulus' virtue later in this chapter. For now, however, let us return to the Satricus episode and look more closely at the role it plays in the Cannae narrative.

As I argued in Chapter One, Silius often problematizes virtue in the *Punica* by describing cases of incorrect understanding of virtue. This incorrect understanding is

²¹ Fucecchi (1999) uses the Satricus episode as a base on which he builds his comparison between Silius' Cannae and various passages in Lucan's *Bellum*.

²² To McGuire (1997), 92, Silius' allusions to civil war are less surprising than the sheer quantity of such allusions.

²³ Wilson (2004), 246.

²⁴ See Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2535.

demonstrated most clearly through an incompatibility between *fides* and *pietas*. The Saguntines and Regulus prioritize *fides* over *pietas*, while Pacuvius' son chooses the opposite. I have argued that all of these characters are examples of failed virtue, precisely because they cannot claim to represent both *fides* and *pietas*. In the Satricus episode, we can once again notice a clear conflict between *fides* and *pietas*. Both Satricus and Solimus display ample *fides* through their actions. Satricus, despite being a prisoner in Carthage for many years, has not forgotten his duty to Rome, and seizes upon his first opportunity to escape from captivity. Meanwhile, Solimus performs his duty as a proper Roman soldier by being vigilant on watch; ironically, as he hurls his spear at his father, he also believes he is acting piously, by regaining the arms lost by his brother Mancinus. Solimus thus believes that he is acting out of proper *fides* and *pietas*, but in doing so he commits a disastrously impious crime. Again, *fides* and *pietas* fail to coexist, and in an even more paradoxical twist, *pietas* results in *impietas*, as Solimus manages to turn his devotion towards his brother into the murder of his own father. Like the Saguntines, Solimus becomes a model of failed virtue.

There is, however, a difference between Solimus' failure and that of the Saguntines. The Saguntines consciously choose to slay themselves, and are always aware of the significance of their own actions. Solimus' killing of Satricus is, on the other hand, purely accidental. Therefore, in contrast to the Saguntines, Solimus' failure to become an exemplar of virtue is not entirely of his own doing. The paradoxical role that light performs in Satricus' death is, as previously noted, another indicator of the fated nature of the murder. Thus while the Satricus story certainly plays into the conflict between *fides* and *pietas* found elsewhere in the *Punica*, there is an added sense of inevitability surrounding the episode as well. This sense of unavoidability is symptomatic of Silius' overall treatment of Cannae. In the next section, I will argue that the incredible nature of the Satricus episode, when placed into the larger context of the build-up to Cannae, removes the initiative from humans and places them under the control of an

unstoppable, unchangeable sequence of events. As such, the Satricus episode displays Silius' engagement with ideas about the inability of humans to decide their own fate.

The futility of prophecy

In Tacitus' account of Julius Mansuetus, the notion of blame is at the forefront. Mansuetus' son quickly attempts to remove the blame of patricide from his shoulders: "the crime is the state's; how large a part can one soldier play in civil war?" (*publicum id facinus; et unum militem quotam civilium armorum partem?*, *Hist.* 3.25.6). According to him, the murder is a public crime; he has merely done what the state has asked him to do. Without the civil war, the crime would not have had a chance to occur, and thus the ultimate responsibility lies with the state, the engineer of the conflict. Blame is also a crucial theme in the story of Satricus,²⁵ but who is to blame is far less certain. When Satricus discovers the truth, the very first thing he does after revealing his identity is to clear his son from blame: "It is not your offence at all, son; when you threw your spear into me in the heat of the moment, I was Carthaginian" (*Haud tua, nate, fraus ulla est. / iaceres in me cum fervidus hastam, / Poenus eram*, 9.128-30).²⁶ In Satricus' view, Solimus did no wrong in aiming his spear at an unknown enemy; like Mansuetus' son, he was only doing his duty and acting according to *fides*. Solimus, however, unlike his Tacitean counterpart, is unwilling to absolve himself from blame, and instead of giving his father a proper burial, follows the example of the Pseudo-Senecan Maevius by turning his sword upon himself. We are perhaps reminded of Scipio Africanus at the Ticinus, who attempts to kill himself when he sees his father wounded, only to be thwarted by Mars' intervention; his despair is turned to positive action when he rescues his father from the

²⁵ In discussing the idea of blame, we might also think of declamatory exercises practised by students of Roman oratory. See Beard (1993), 51-2 for some examples of similarly improbable scenarios. As a former prosecutor, Silius would have been intimately familiar with such declamations, making them a possible influence for his invention. In declamations, cleverly inserting lines from poetry was done to highlight one's wit and creativity; inserting declamatory elements in poetry might be a witty reversal of this practice.

²⁶ Dominik (2006), 124: "Romans too assume the role of Carthaginians." The confusion between Roman and Carthaginian is also reflected earlier in Silius' pre-Cannae narrative, in the form of Anna Perenna, for which see later in this chapter.

battlefield (4.454-79). There both son and father survive; here both son and father perish. In both instances the son is directly responsible for the survival, or death, of the father. Although Solimus sees himself as polluted, his invocation of Titania, as previously discussed, suggests that the lunar divinity is at least in some way responsible, as Mars was for the rescue of the elder Scipio. Silius refuses to provide the reader with a conclusive object on which the crime can be blamed, heightening the sense of unavoidability surrounding the murder.²⁷

This ambiguity ties in with the unbelievable aspect of the Satricus story which we have previously discussed. As sickening as the act of patricide is, the bizarre circumstances surrounding it make the reader feel unable to read the passage with only disgust. Rather, a general feeling of helplessness emanates from the entire scene; we *know* that Satricus is doomed the moment he steps from the Carthaginian camp. In fact, his fate might have been sealed when he was captured by the enemy so many years ago. The paradoxically illuminative nature of night and the involvement of Titania underline the determination of the gods to enact Satricus' doom as well as the contrasting helplessness of humans to prevent it. The theme of human helplessness is not dissimilar to themes that appear in Statius' *Thebaid*, where the gods regularly intervene in order to stir up conflict, rebuffing efforts by humans to stop it.²⁸ The gods are totally in control in the *Thebaid*, and nothing humans can do will reverse what they have ordained.²⁹ Although this pessimistic theme is less pervasive in Silius, it nevertheless appears with regularity, as it does in the Satricus story. And it is not just Satricus' fate that we are helpless to prevent; it is the disaster of Cannae as well.

²⁷ This is again consistent with the nature of declamations (see note 25). Beard (1993), 59: "The declamatory scenarios were not only *traditional*, but also crucially *open-ended*. They did not come already resolved, with winners and losers, right and wrong neatly decided... no interpretation was ever final, but always admitted re-negotiation and reversal the next time the case was argued – and the next time, and the next time." Similarly, Langlands (2008) argues that Valerius Maximus encourages his readers to read his *exempla* in multiple ways that may be contradictory or unfamiliar. Silius provides no conclusive figure on whom Satricus' death can be blamed; on some level Satricus, Solimus and the Moon can all be found guilty.

²⁸ Dominik (1994), 111-29 discusses this issue in the *Thebaid* in depth. Efforts made by peacemakers such as Adrastus are regularly frustrated by the destructive deities, especially Furies.

²⁹ Feeney (1991), 362-3 argues that the *removal* of divine participation from the end of the *Thebaid* also highlights human weakness.

The Satricus episode, after all, does not stand on its own in Silius' narrative. It is only one part of a long list of ominous events that lead up to Cannae. Book 8 ends with a litany of such omens: javelins suddenly catch fire in the hands of soldiers and battlements collapse along the ramparts (8.626-7); forests topple over, rivers roar from their depths, flames shine from the tops of mountains, and light turns to darkness in an instant, plunging sailors into confusion (8.628-33); the camp becomes beset with owls, bees swarm around the Romans' standards, comets are sighted, wild animals break through the rampart and dismember one of the sentries (8.634-40); the soldiers are distracted by dreams in which Gallic ghosts burst out from their graves (8.641-2). The omens are not confined to the immediate location of the battle: the Tarpeian rock shakes furiously, a dark river of blood flows in Jupiter's temple, and the image of Quirinus is seen to shed tears (8.643-6); the perspective then moves even further back so that we see significant parts of the Roman world in chaos – the Allia's waters flood its banks, the Alps and the Apennines constantly tremble, meteors shoot towards Italy from Libya, the heavens "break with a terrible clamor" (*ruptusque fragore / horrisono*, 8.651-2), and even Jupiter's face is revealed, while Vesuvius shows its own fury, hurling fiery rocks that reach even the stars (8.647-55).³⁰ No wonder then that the night would conspire to illuminate Satricus. The imagery in Silius' omens involves much trembling, from the Tarpeian rock which shakes (*tremuere*, 8.643) to the Alps which cannot remain still (*non Alpes sedere loco*, 8.648), to the stars themselves which are panicking (*trepidantia*, 8.655). The elements seem to be almost anthropomorphic here, shaking anxiously in anticipation of the coming disaster.

The closing scene of book 8 involves a maddened soldier who fills the camp with his prophetic cries (8.656-76). What the soldier tells us is a description of what the coming battle will hold: horrific scenes of destruction in which fields are heaped with

³⁰ Fucecchi (1999), 324 draws numerous parallels between this list of omens and corresponding ominous scenes in Lucan. For example, the javelins that catch fire = *BC* 7.159; the standards that are swarmed by bees = *BC* 7.161-4; the sighting of = *BC* 1.528-9; the rampage of wild animals into the camp = *BC* 1.559-60; and the scene in which Gallic ghosts burst out from their graves is similar to Lucan's description of the corpses of Sulla and Marius rising from the dead at *BC* 1.580-3.

the dead; Hannibal driving his chariot through the ranks, crushing armour, limbs and standards alike; Servilius and Paulus falling in battle as Varro flees; and finally the Carthaginians bearing the consular rods back to Libya for their own triumphal procession.³¹ The soldier's crazed prophecy will immediately remind the reader of Lucan's Phoebus-inspired Maenad, whose foretelling of the terrible battles of the civil war (*BC* 1.673-95) also closes Lucan's first book.³² But even Lucan's Maenad is confused by what she sees and is unable to put specific names to the scenes that she speaks of, while Silius' soldier is able to make frighteningly accurate descriptions of the battle ahead; the future that he describes is much closer at hand. Aside from Lucan, the soldier-prophet also brings to mind Statius' seer hero Amphiaraus, who learns through augury what result conflict between Argos and Thebes will truly bring, and thus tries to persuade his fellow humans to refrain from war (*Theb.* 3.620-45). He finally realizes, however, that he has no power to ward off what the gods have intended (*Theb.* 3.646-7).³³ Similarly, Silius' soldier is but a messenger whose words offer nothing to his Roman compatriots but fear and uncertainty.³⁴ "Spare us, cruel gods" (*parcite, crudeles superi*, 8.659) are the soldier's first words, but his feeble plea is the most that man can do, and the gods' refusal to accept it seals the fate of Cannae.

As Lucan's second book acts as a sort of continuation of the end of his first, so Silius begins his ninth book with the two Roman commanders' reactions to the omens from the previous book. Varro reveals his contempt for what he sees as Paulus' cowardice (9.25-36), while his fellow consul almost steps right into the shoes of Statius' Amphiaraus,³⁵ as Silius tells us that he "was not himself in either mind or appearance,

³¹ As McGuire (1997), 133-4 and Dominik (2006), 124 point out, Hannibal's victory celebration will include lictors, fasces, and all the trappings of a Roman triumph. Dominik: "the Carthaginians are portrayed here entirely in Roman terms."

³² Fucecchi (1999), 324.

³³ Dominik (1994), 121-2. Amphiaraus' resignation to his fate is reminiscent of the attitude of Lucan's astrologer Figulus, who declares that it is useless to beg the gods to prevent the war (*BC* 1.669).

³⁴ Dominik (1994), 122 notes that in Statius, Amphiaraus' knowledge of the future only leads "generally to much anxiety and fear on his part", and man's ability to discern "limited knowledge of the future is counterbalanced by his corresponding inability to use or act upon that knowledge for his own benefit." In other words, the advantage of prophecy only serves to highlight the helpless nature of humanity.

³⁵ The similarities between Paulus and Amphiaraus appear to be more than just coincidence, considering that Varro's reaction here also resembles that of Statius' god-hater Capaneus, who assails Amphiaraus

but as though he were standing on the field after the battle, with his soldiers' corpses strewn all around, the coming evil appearing right before his eyes and face" (*at Paulus, iam non idem nec mente nec ore, / sed qualis stratis deleto milite campis / post pugnam stetit, ante oculos atque ora futuro / obversante malo*, 9.38-41). He has now taken on the role of a prophet, as he tells Varro: "And now I turn to you face-to-face, as a prophet I sing of fate with no perplexing verse" (*iamque alter tibi, nec perplexo carmine, coram / fata cano vates*, 9.60-1). Like Amphiarus, however, we are given the impression that Paulus is not expecting his prophecy to be of any use. At the moment of his transformation, Silius compares Paulus to a mother who, upon seeing that all hope for her child's life has been lost, stands shocked and numbed, vainly cherishing the still-warm limbs (*ceu iam spe lucis adempta, / cum stupet exanimata parens nati que tepentes / nequiquam fovet extremis amplexibus artus*, 9.41-3).³⁶ Paulus' prophecy is doomed to failure even before it begins; indeed, Varro gives no reply. Perhaps he has not even been listening. Only after the battle will the Romans realize the accuracy of Paulus' prophecy.³⁷

Additionally, we must not forget that the term *vates* had, since Virgil, come to mean more than just a prophet; it could also represent the poet himself.³⁸ In rendering Paulus as a *vates*, then, Silius could be inserting himself into the narrative, as he tries to

and the very notion of prophecy; see Fantham (2006), 158-9. Moreover, Varro's arrogance is clearly being embellished by Silius, since Livy tells us that when Varro was confronted by the sacred chickens refusing their feed, even he was struck by a superstitious fear, which, when coupled with real military intelligence, delayed the attack (Livy 22.42). Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.134 believes that Paulus' words constitute a simple warning rather than a prophecy, but he does not account for Silius' deliberate use of prophetic language.

³⁶ We see in this passage glimpses of Lucan's Cato, who compares himself to a father at the funeral of his children (*BC* 2.297-304). See Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2533-4 for a comparison of the two scenes: they argue that the "images of the great warrior and the mother are antithetical and paradoxical rather than mutually complementary as are those of the sage and the father whose children represent allegorically the state." Varro strangely anticipates the simile somewhat, as his later proclamation *'ferte haec,' ait, 'omina Paulo. / namque illum, cui femineo stant corde timores, / moverit ista manus...'* (9.262-4) shows. Varro has typically misinterpreted, of course; he sees Paulus' effeminacy as a sign of cowardice, but in reality it shows Paulus' love for the state, which has greater priority than concern for his own dignity. As we shall later see, however, such concern for personal dignity will actually become a bigger motivation for Paulus when he decides to die heroically at Cannae.

³⁷ The surviving Roman soldiers mourn Paulus' death with language that once again places him in the guise of a *vates*: *ut verba mali praenuntia numquam / cessarit canere et Varronis sistere mentem* (10.406-7).

³⁸ For the concept of *vates* as poet in Statius, see Lovatt (2005), 37 and Masterson (2005), 298-301. For the same idea in Lucan, see O'Higgins (1988); Masters (1992), 138-9 and 205-15, and Leigh (1997), 16-9.

come to terms with the difficulties of describing the carnage of Cannae. Silius' apprehension is clear, as he apostrophizes early in the battle: "Can we hope, goddesses whom I worship, to reveal all that happened this day for the ages with mortal voice? Can you make me confident enough that I can sing of Cannae with one voice?" (*Speramusne, deae, quarum mihi sacra coluntur, / mortali totum hunc aperire in saecula voce / posse diem? tantumne datis confidere linguae, / ut Cannas uno ore sonem?*, 9.340-2). His focus on *uno ore* could naturally imply that the events of Cannae are too important and extensive to be entrusted to just one man. It could, however, also imply that Silius is a conflicted poet, unable to describe the history of Cannae with a single unified viewpoint. To borrow Masters' term which he applies to Lucan, Silius anticipates, and explicitly fears, his "fractured voice".³⁹ On the one hand, what he will describe are grievous Roman losses, meant to be lamented; but on the other, they also form the essence that defines Roman greatness, deserving of celebration. In the same apostrophe, Silius declares that there will be no moment of greater glory for Rome than Cannae (*nam tempore, Roma, / nullo maior eris*, 9.351-2), and that soon Rome would decline in such a way that her fame would only be preserved by this disaster (*mox sic labere secundis, / ut sola cladum tuearis nomina fama*, 9.352-3). On another level, he also recognizes the difficulties that he faces in writing a historical epic: like Lucan (and like the prophetic Paulus), he cannot change history; the basic events that define the war must conform to recorded history, and only events that do not affect the eventual outcome may be improvised or re-interpreted.⁴⁰ The poet, like his characters, is caught up in the feeling of inevitability.

It is thus in this long, built up sequence of omens and prophecies that the Satricus story resides. In fact, it occupies the space immediately following Paulus' fruitless speech. It is also by far the longest scene in this sequence, acting as a sort of finale for all of the previous scenes, incorporating all of their elements. The cruel gods to whom the maddened soldier pleads in vain in book 8 are referred to again by Solimus,

³⁹ Masters (1992), 87. Cf. Dominik (2006), 114: "The Cannae narrative, as the Saguntum episode and the *Punica* do as a whole, invites a polysemous reading."

⁴⁰ Masters (1992), 208-9.

who laments the “unjust gods who will no longer be able to desist from hiding our sufferings.” (*verum linquetur iniquis / non ultra superis nostros celare labores*, 9.164-5)⁴¹ The trembling imagery in 8.643-55 is now reflected in both Satricus and Solimus; Satricus embraces his son with “trembling arms” (*tremebundis...lacertis*, 9.144)⁴² and asks him why he trembles (*cur trepidas?*, 9.149). Solimus’ plight is extremely similar to that of the mother in Paulus’ simile, as like her, he stands helpless, holding his father’s still-warm limbs, unable to prevent his death even as he breathes his last. Satricus and Solimus also combine to play the role of prophet, as Solimus uses his own blood to write his father’s message *FUGE PROELIA VARRO* on his shield (9.175), recalling the maddened soldier’s cry of “*quo, Varro, fugis?*” (8.666).⁴³ The message, while outwardly appearing to be a warning, has clear prophetic overtones. When the Roman soldiers come across the bodies of Satricus and Solimus, they are struck dumb by the omen that appears before them (*defixique omine torpent*, 9.253) and the sorrowful portent moves them (*triste movebat augurium*, 9.259).⁴⁴ Like Paulus’ attempts at prophecy, though, this too will fail to prevent Cannae. Just as the soldiers in Tacitus’ account of Julius Mansuetus react in horror at Mansuetus’ misfortune but nevertheless proceed to engage in their civil conflict, Silius’ men cannot avoid their participation at Cannae. Upon being notified by the soldiers, Varro dismisses the prophecy at once, ironically noting that it would be more appropriate for Paulus (*‘ferte haec,’ ait, ‘omina Paulo’*, 9.262) and

⁴¹ This phrase is rather ambiguous. Solimus is implying that when night ends and day begins, his deed will be exposed for all to see. However, why exactly are the gods *iniquis*? Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.164 believes that it is the unjust gods who are responsible for the sufferings, thus their desire to conceal them (i.e. the gods are *iniquis* because they caused the crime). This explanation is still not quite satisfactory. Why would they wish to conceal such sufferings, even if they were responsible? Whatever the reason, the gods at best appear to be uncaring of human suffering, if not downright malevolent.

⁴² Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.142 thinks that the trembling reflects Satricus’ age and that Silius is only making use of literary conventions in describing the old father, but within a few lines we see that Solimus is also trembling.

⁴³ The obsessive use of the motif of “fleeing” in relation to Varro is noted by Fucecchi (1999), 334-5. Cf. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2535: when Varro later flees the battlefield “he has, in an ironic way, obeyed the warning written in blood and the vision of the anonymous soldier”. Dominik (2006), 125 sees parallels with Lucan’s warning “*fuge proelia dira*” (BC 7.689) to Pompey, also noted by Fucecchi (1999), 335, and Palaemon’s warning “*verte gradum, fuge rector*” (*Theb.* 8.138) to Adrastus. For more on the significance of the action of fleeing from the battlefield, see the section beginning on p. 151.

⁴⁴ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.253 sees *omine* as referring to the written warning which takes on the air of prophecy “dans ce moment”, and *augurium* as the parricidal Solimus who is seen as a sign of misfortune. But surely the warning has held prophetic value all along, not just in this context.

curiously suggesting that Solimus may have been possessed by the avenging Furies when he wrote his message (9.265-6).⁴⁵ Varro then immediately leads his men into battle. As Silius comments after the Satricus episode, “the gods sent the Ausonians such omens for the coming battle” (*Talia venturae mittebant omina pugnae / Ausoniis superi*, 9.178-9), but they have not a chance of preventing it.⁴⁶

I have argued in this section that the aura of inevitability which Silius uses to portray the Satricus episode fits in well with its role as an ineffectual omen of the coming battle. Just as the episode explicitly looks forward to the disaster that the Romans will face at Cannae, the paradoxical role that *fides* and *pietas* play within the episode act as an omen for similarly paradoxical treatment of the virtues at Cannae. I will argue that such a paradoxical treatment may be most clearly seen in the poet’s treatment of Paulus and Varro, the two Romans at Cannae who most clearly exemplify virtue and the lack of virtue. I will first analyze Silius’ portrayal of Varro. In ignoring the various omens that lead up to Cannae, Varro may be seen as the man to blame for Rome’s eventual disaster. If he had only heeded Paulus’ and Satricus’ prophecies, would history not have been altered? Is he not therefore the key figure to blame for Cannae? I argue in the following sections that Silius’ treatment of Varro is highly nuanced. Once we analyze Varro’s character and behaviour at Cannae in conjunction with Silius’ portrayal of Paulus’ actions on the battlefield, it becomes much less clear whether we should hold Varro responsible for leading Rome to disaster, or credit him for leading Rome onto the road to recovery and victory. As paradoxical as it may seem, Varro’s lack of virtue may actually be worthy of praise, rather than blame.

⁴⁵ Varro’s statement is strange as it is not entirely sure what he means. Certainly he is referring to the role that Furies play in avenging parental slaughter (as in Orestes), but he also implies that the Furies are trying to prevent him from fighting, which is entirely opposite from the role Furies usually play in epic, especially in the *Thebaid*. It appears that Varro has once again misjudged.

⁴⁶ Cf. Silius’ frustration at the fruitlessness of the omens that precede Lake Trasimene: *heu vani monitus frustraue morantia Parcas / prodigial!* (5.75-6)

Varro as charioteer

I begin my analysis of Varro and Paulus by taking a closer look at the way in which Silius shapes Varro's character. In particular, I would like to analyze a specific simile Silius makes which compares him to a charioteer, as the implications from this simile show that Varro, despite his perceived role as the consul who leads Rome to disaster, is merely caught up in the unstoppable chain of events that lead to Cannae, just as Satricus and Solimus are helpless to prevent their own deaths. Before then, let us see how Varro is generally perceived. It is, first of all, obvious that Silius habitually treats Varro with contempt, as he does with most Roman generals who carried popular support, such as Flaminius and Minucius.⁴⁷ Alone among the Roman generals, he displays a complete lack of *virtus* on the battlefield.⁴⁸ Like Flaminius and Staius' Capaneus, he despises and dismisses omens and prophecies.⁴⁹ Silius introduces him by attacking his lack of high birth and the way through which he took office – sensational speeches and bribery of the voters (8.243-57). Varro would become so influential that he became “the sole overseer of all things including fate, though Latium would be ashamed even if it were saved by him” (*momentum ut rerum et fati foret arbiter unus, / quo conservari Latium victore puderet*, 8.251-2). Varro's description as *arbiter fati* is especially ironic, since soon we shall see which is really in control of the other. After making a speech to urge the people to war (8.264-77), Varro is seen leading the army out of the gates. It is at this point that Silius compares him to a charioteer:

haec postquam increpuit, portis arma incitus effert
 impellitque moras, veluti cum carcere rupto
 auriga indocilis totas effundit habenas
 et praeceps trepida pendens in verbera planta
 impar fertur equis; fumat male concitus axis,
 ac frena incerto fluitant discordia curru.

⁴⁷ See Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2531-6 for an analysis of Varro in comparison to Paulus; they see Varro as being partially modelled on Lucan's Curio. Pomeroy (2000), 161-2 argues that Silius was part of, and wrote for, an upper-class audience and thus was following tradition in blaming disaster on the plebs. Dominik (2006), 120-2 sees the demagogues routinely portrayed as fomenters of civil discord.

⁴⁸ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2536.

⁴⁹ See note 35 above.

Having thus ranted, he rushed his forces outside the gates and brushed aside all delay: just as when the starting gates are broken down, the unskilled charioteer loosens all his reins and lashes his team with no certain balance; he is not a match for his horses and they carry him off. The wheels speed along reeking with smoke, and the tangled reins of the chariot swing randomly about.

(8.278-83)

It has been noted that this passage is modelled after a corresponding simile at the end of Virgil's *Georgics* 1, where a driver being carried along by his horses is likened to war being unleashed all over the world.⁵⁰

saevit toto Mars impius orbe;
ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,
addunt in spatia et frustra retinacula tendens
fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.

Impious Mars rages over the entire world; just as when chariots burst out of the starting gates and accelerate lap by lap, the charioteer, pulling vainly at his reins, is carried on by his horses, the car not heeding the reins.

(*Georgics* 1.511-4)

The parallel is clear enough, but there is much more to this simile than allusion to Virgil. Silius' emphasis on the lack of skill on the part of the charioteer, through *auriga indocilis* and *impar equis*, suggests that Varro is specifically not qualified to drive the chariot.⁵¹ Through this suggestion, Silius links Varro to Statius' Polynices, and by extension to Ovid's Phaethon.⁵²

Polynices and Phaethon both seek to prove their worth (and inheritance) through driving the chariot, as Varro is eager to prove his own greatness by leading Rome to victory over Carthage. The issue of heritage is at the very heart of Polynices'

⁵⁰ Spaltenstein (1986), ad 8.279; McGuire (1997), 131-2; Dominik (2006), 121. McGuire focuses on the emphasis on civil conflict in the simile, and uses *frena discordia* as evidence for Silius' intent. Also see Marks (2005a), 19 n.18, 42-3 and n.78, who contrasts Varro's ineptitude at driving the chariot with a simile at 15.210-3 comparing Scipio to a racehorse who races to victory without any help from the driver or the rest of the horses.

⁵¹ Cf. Virgil's simile, where the chariot seems to be almost driving itself, without any input from the charioteer (*sese effudere quadrigae*). McGuire (1997), 132 sees *auriga indocilis* but chooses to focus on *frena discordia* instead.

⁵² For the chariot race in the *Thebaid*, and the connection between Polynices and Phaethon, see Nagel (1999) and Lovatt (2005), 23-54, esp. 32-40. On Silius' use of Phaethon, see Wilson (2004), 230, who notes that "the story of Phaethon seems to have been a favourite with Silius"; he lists Pacuvius' speech to his son at Capua and Vulcan's scorching of the Trebia as two examples of his liking for the myth. Marks (2006), 394-5 also explores the usage of the Phaethon myth in the story of Crista and his sons at Cannae.

and Phaethon's motivation: Phaethon wishes to prove that he is the true son of Apollo, while Polynices, by wanting to drive Adrastus' chariot, seeks to overthrow the burden of being the son of Oedipus and assume the role of Adrastus' adopted son.⁵³ While there is no question of Varro proving his paternity, Silius mocks him for his low birth and compares him to Paulus, who is descended from the gods.⁵⁴ By driving the chariot, then, Varro attempts to break through the barriers of being a *novus homo*, as Marius succeeds in doing two centuries later.⁵⁵ Varro's unwillingness to break off his reckless rush to battle despite the tearful pleas of Paulus recalls Phaethon's refusal to rethink his request for the chariot following Apollo's agonizing speech (*Met.* 2.50-102). Just as Apollo is bound by the Stygian oath to provide the chariot to Phaethon, so Paulus is forced by the Roman system of alternate command to hand the army over to Varro.⁵⁶

Varro, Polynices and Phaethon are all *impar equis*. Polynices is given the divine steed Arion, who overpowers his rider right out of the starting gate as he senses Polynices' true identity to be the terrible *Oedipodionidem* (*Theb.* 6.425-6); he races forward faster than any other horse, but he is urged on not by the whip of Polynices, but his own frantic desire to escape his rider (*Theb.* 6.428-31). Like Silius' out-of-control chariot, Arion carries his car about in haphazard fashion (*Theb.* 6.443-4), as does Phaethon, whose chariot veers in every direction, leaving fiery destruction in its wake (*Met.* 2.201-71).⁵⁷ Despite galloping outside the track, Arion is still faster than any of the other horses, a fact proven when he returns and passes the rest of the competitors (*Theb.* 6.446-8). In anticipation of the climax of the race, Statius describes a great roar going up to the stars, and the sky trembling (*subit astra fragor, caelumque tremescit*, *Theb.* 6.448),

⁵³ On the relevance of Polynices' lineage to the chariot race, see Nagel (1999), 386-91 and Lovatt (2005), 33.

⁵⁴ Varro's lineage is attacked at 8.246-7, Paulus' praised at 8.293-7. Cf. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2532.

⁵⁵ Cf. the Sibyl's vision of Marius in the underworld (13.854-5): *veniet tibi origine parva / in longum imperium consul*.

⁵⁶ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2532 say that "sadly for Rome, Silius laments, each consul holds supreme military authority every other day." Yet it is probably more correct that Varro's incompetence is the issue here, not the consular system. Power held in the hands of one at best saves the state (as with Fabius), at other times is questionable (as with Claudius Nero and Scipio) and at worst is disastrous (as with Flaminius).

⁵⁷ See Lovatt (2005), 35 for a discussion of Polynices being, like Phaethon, a passively destructive entity.

just as Silius has his heavens trembling in the omens preceding Cannae (8.643-55). Once Varro sets the battle in motion, it will, like Arion, gain its own momentum, increasing its own destructive power. And like Polynices, Varro will be left by the wayside.

When Polynices realizes that he cannot control Arion, he grows pale with fear and does not even dare to make use of his whip and reins (*Theb.* 6.450-1).⁵⁸ Statius compares him to a weary helmsman who gives up his attempts to control his ship and mindlessly runs onto waves and rocks, defeated as he is by fate (*Theb.* 6.451-3). When the humiliated Varro returns to Rome after the disaster, he is likewise compared to the helmsman of a shipwrecked vessel:⁵⁹

haud secus ac, fractae rector si forte carinae
 litoribus solus vacuis ex aequore sospes
 adnatet, incerti trepidant, tendantne negentne
 iactato dextras, ipsamque odere salutem
 unius amissa superantis puppe magistri.

So when the helmsman of a wrecked vessel safely swims up to the empty shore and happens to be alone, men are uncertain whether to welcome the sea-tossed man or attack him, as they loathe the fact that only the captain himself might survive when his ship has been lost.

(10.608-12)

During the battle itself, Varro makes a brief appearance early on as he is noticed by Hannibal, but only for the purpose of introducing Scipio, who intervenes and demands Hannibal's attention instead (9.419-30). The consul then disappears from the narrative until the very end of the book, when it becomes obvious that the situation is beyond anyone's control. Paulus taunts his colleague before rushing back into the thick of the fighting, whereupon Varro is given a long monologue to conclude the book:

tum vero excussus mentem, in certamina Paulo
 avia diducto, convertit Varro manumque
 cornipedem inflectens 'das,' inquit 'patria, poenas,
 quae Fabio incolumi Varronem ad bella vocasti.
 quanam autem mentis vel quae discordia fati?
 Parcarumque latens fraus est? abrumpere cuncta
 iam dudum cum luce libet. sed comprimit ensem

⁵⁸ As does Phaethon at *Met.* 2.178-81. For Polynices' fear and helplessness, see Nagel (1999), 388.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2529, where this simile is discussed in relation to Silius' descriptions of Flaminius as an inept sailor and Fabius as the *grandaevus magister*.

nescio qui deus et meme ad graviora reservat.
 vivamne et fractos sparsosque cruore meorum
 hos referam populo fasces atque ora per urbes
 iratas spectanda dabo et, quo saevius ipse
 Hannibal haud poscat, fugiam et te, Roma, videbo?⁶⁰
 plura indignantem telis propioribus hostes
 egere et sonipes rapuit laxatus habenas.

But then with his reason cast off, and with Paulus drawn far away into the fighting, Varro turned back and, guiding his horse around, said: ‘This is your punishment, fatherland, for summoning Varro to the war, with Fabius still alive and well. But what is this division in my mind, or this division of destiny? Is it a trick concealed by the Fates? I would put an end to everything immediately by taking my life; but some god suppresses my sword and reserves me for something even worse. Can I live and bring back to the people these fasces, broken and spattered with blood? Can I show my face as I pass through furious cities? Can I flee like this and see you again, Rome? Savage Hannibal himself could not ask for more.’ Spears hurled by the approaching enemy cut short further indignation, and his horse took him away with loosened reins.

(9.644-57)

Varro’s monologue comes just before he flees from the battlefield, an action which emphatically sums up his lack of virtue. The full significance of Varro’s flight only becomes apparent once his colleague Paulus has performed his own virtue-defining *aristeia* in book 10, which I will soon discuss, but Varro’s depiction of his own decision to flee already confirms that he has become helpless, swept up in a larger conflict over which he has no control. Varro has now realized that the war has overtaken him, and like Polynices he has become a passive spectator. Silius says that he is *excussus mentem*, a description he also uses to describe Flaminius at Lake Trasimene (5.54). In fact Varro is constantly compared to Flaminius: the nymph Anna tells Hannibal that he shall fight a second Flaminius (8.218), Fabius, echoing her words, warns Paulus that Hannibal is eager to do just this (8.308-10), Paulus’ prophetic speech half-invokes the fate of Flaminius’ soldiers (*at, quos Flaminius – sed dira avertite, divi!*, 9.55),⁶⁰ and Hannibal recognizes Varro because his consular tunic reminds him of the one Flaminius wore (9.421-3). Flaminius and Varro are both impious and foolhardy, but at least Flaminius is

⁶⁰ Paulus is trying to say that the soldiers Fabius led are all safe and sound, while Flaminius’ are dead, but he cannot bring himself to say it out loud. His plea to the gods, too, is just as useless as the crazed soldier’s cry of *parcite, crudeles superi*.

able to redeem himself somewhat through a heroic death.⁶¹ In contrast, Varro appears to be completely unable to control his own thoughts or actions as he deliberates on what to do. He refers to himself in the third person in a line that sounds more Paulus-like than anything Varro would say. His instinctive thought is to kill himself, but significantly, a god (*nescio qui deus*) prevents him from doing so. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy suggest that he is making an excuse,⁶² but Silius' depiction of Varro here conforms to his portrayal as the *auriga indocilis*. At Rome he was *arbiter fati*; now he is not even able to decide the manner of his own death. Earlier during the battle, when Hannibal is about to kill him but is distracted by Scipio, the same notion of divine control is present:

heu miser! aequari potuisti funere Paulo,
 si tibi non ira superum tunc esset ademptum
 Hannibalis cecidisse manu. quam saepe querere,
 Varro, deis, quod Sidonium defugeris ensem!

Alas, unhappy one! You could have become the equal of Paulus through death, if the anger of the gods had not rescued you from being slain by the hand of Hannibal then and there. How often would you protest against the gods, Varro, that you escaped the Carthaginian's sword!

(9.424-27)

Polynices too is addressed by Statius himself when he is thrown off his chariot (*Theb.* 6.513-17). Statius states that only the Fury Tisiphone prevented Polynices from dying, and wonders at what a war would have been avoided if she had not intervened. In fact, he says that even Eteocles would have grieved for his death, much as Varro would have been as renowned as Paulus if *he* had died.⁶³ Instead, the gods will not allow Varro to be killed; he is doomed to return to Rome as the battered helmsman, reserved for other things. Modelled as he is after Phaethon, Capaneus and Flaminius, he will not be granted the release of death. There will be no thunderbolt from Jupiter to finish him

⁶¹ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2534. The link between Varro and Flaminius is also present in the exemplary tradition, for which see Chaplin (2000), 55; the Romans (and indeed Varro himself) attempt to avoid the same mistakes as Flaminius, but cannot avoid meeting a similar outcome to Flaminius'.

⁶² Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2534: "Unlike Flaminius, however, his own confusion – or, to give him the benefit of the doubt, *nescio qui deus* – prevents him from taking his own life or dying grandly in battle."

⁶³ Cf. McGuire (1997), 116-7 where he discusses Statius' lament for Polynices' non-death. Also interesting is his remark that "Statius here implies his own wish that the material of his epic had never come to pass." As I have remarked earlier, Silius also feels conflicted towards his recounting of Cannae.

off.⁶⁴ At the end of his speech he is taken off by his horse (*sonipes rapuit*), language that again shows his passive nature.⁶⁵ The description of *laxatus habenas* too recalls *totas effundit habenas* in the charioteer simile.

The fact that Varro is not allowed to die, however, is crucial to our understanding of Cannae, especially when it is contrasted with Paulus' display of heroic death in the following book. But what is Varro being reserved *for*? Duff translates *ad graviora* as "that I may suffer even worse", anticipating Varro's humiliation. The Budé has it as "pour un rôle plus noble",⁶⁶ which views the situation from a different perspective by anticipating Fabius' magnanimous treatment of Varro, which in turn will bring out all that is good about Rome. The term *gravis* itself possesses multiple definitions which promote a sense of ambiguity. *Gravis* may be interpreted in a bad sense, in which case it can mean "hard to bear, grievous", or "painful" (*OLD* 10b), but also in a good sense, in which it can mean "requiring earnest thought or attention" (*OLD* 12b), or "having weight or authority" (*OLD* 13). Furthermore, in addition to the ambiguity provoked by Varro's use of *graviora*, Juno later provides her own opinion on Varro's escape which introduces even more ambiguity. When the goddess (in the guise of the cowardly Metellus) attempts to persuade Paulus to give up the fight, Silius appears to reverse Varro's *meme ad graviora reservat* with *evasit Varro ac sese ad meliora reservat* (10.56),⁶⁷ implying that Varro is actually saving himself for better things. Despite the contrast between the two seemingly incompatible terms *graviora* and *meliora*, *melior* itself also invites multiple interpretations. While *melior* is best translated here as "more commendable or desirable" (*OLD* 6), it can either refer to Varro's personal benefit, or to the benefit of the state as a whole. Each interpretation alters the ultimate significance of Varro's flight. The former meaning would imply that Varro has fled the field for the sole purpose of saving himself, where saving one's own life is

⁶⁴ Capaneus' death by thunderbolt at *Theb.* 10.927-31; Phaethon's at *Met.* 2.311-13.

⁶⁵ Thus I disagree with Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.657: "*Rapuit* ne dit pas que le cheval le fait de lui-même... on n'y verra donc pas une intention particulière de la part de Sil." For more, see p. 154.

⁶⁶ "ce qui semble fantaisiste", remarks Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.648.

⁶⁷ Duff translates this as "[Varro] made off, reserving himself for better times."

construed as being “desirable”. This interpretation would allow us to read *graviora* in a negative sense. If, on the other hand, we interpret *meliora* by seeing his action as “commendable” rather than personally beneficial, the meaning of *graviora* shifts to being positive, since if it is implied that Varro’s flight is beneficial to the state, then his flight actually carries great importance. The multiple possible interpretations for Silius’ use of *graviora* and *meliora* point towards multiple ways to read Varro’s ignominious flight, a theme that is also applicable to Paulus’ contrasting decision to stay and fight; I will discuss Paulus’ heroic death in conjunction with Varro’s flight in full detail in the next section.

In the context of the current situation, however, Juno’s words to Paulus emphasize the powerlessness of Varro. Regardless of the ambiguous meaning of both *graviora* and *meliora*, Juno’s use of *meliora* directly contrasts with Varro’s earlier use of *graviora*, and such contrast suggests that *she* is the *nescio qui deus* to whom Varro refers. Flaminius is explicitly described by Silius as being selected to be Juno’s destructive tool;⁶⁸ even though Juno is not mentioned once by name in connection with Varro, Silius has implied, through his subtle use of the two speeches, to confirm what the reader has been suspecting all along: that Varro has also been the pawn of Juno.⁶⁹

So too are the participants in Staius’ chariot race the pawns of gods.⁷⁰ Polynices, as we have seen, loses all sense of control, yet still remains in the chariot; Apollo must deliver the coup de grâce by sending a Fury-like apparition onto the course; it frightens Arion, who throws Polynices (*Theb.* 6.491-507). Incidentally, the second favourite to win the race is none other than Amphiaraus (*Theb.* 6.326), who, as we have seen, has close links with Paulus. Once Polynices has been thrown off his chariot, Amphiaraus technically assumes the leading position in the race, but is still running behind the

⁶⁸ See 4.708-10, and cf. Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2521-2 for an analysis of Flaminius’ character. Even though they state that “there is no danger of confusing, say, Marcellus with Scipio Africanus, Flaminius with Varro...” (2519), Silius consistently tries to do just that.

⁶⁹ Paulus’ taunt is also a hint: *haud umquam expedies tam dura sorte malorum, / quem tibi non nasci fuerit vota petendum, / Varronem Hannibalemne magis* (9.637-9). Hannibal is also, of course, Juno’s pawn (1.38-9), and Hannibal is likewise led away from Zama by Juno.

⁷⁰ Lovatt (2005), 35: “...in the *Thebaid* [Jupiter] is the source of destruction, and Polynices, like Phaethon, is his tool.”

empty chariot; he burns in his desire to win, but can do nothing to overtake the driverless Arion, who ultimately finishes ahead of the prophet.⁷¹ Similarly, after Varro leaves the field at the end of book 9, Paulus takes centre stage as he attempts to hold off the inevitable defeat with a display of heroic prowess, but try as he might, he cannot alter the final result. It may also not be coincidence that, in the maddened soldier's vision before the battle, Hannibal is seen "flying" swiftly on his chariot through the packed ranks of the Romans, trampling everything in his path ("I see the Libyan general and his swift chariot flying through the crowd of soldiers, over the arms of men and dragging their limbs and standards along", *video per densa volantem / agmina ductorem Libyae currusque citatos / arma virum super atque artus et signa trahentem*, 8.660-2); here is a man who masters his vehicle with deadly efficiency.⁷² Silius had introduced the metaphor of war as racing chariot; now we see Hannibal upon a war chariot, and the destruction caused by war is vividly illustrated by the gruesome and painful fate of those caught under his wheels.

Varro, in contrast, possesses no such power in his own person. Instead, the battle that he unleashes on behalf of Juno will only allow Hannibal to flaunt his own destructive ability. In Statius, after being thrown off, the humiliated and injured Polynices picks himself up and "returns unhoped-for to Adrastus his father-in-law" (*socero redit haud speratus Adrasto*, *Theb.* 6.512).⁷³ Varro too will return unhoped-for to Rome, and to Fabius, the ultimate *pater patriae*.⁷⁴ Adrastus consoles Polynices with the prize of a handmaiden (*Theb.* 6.549), but Fabius offers Varro something far greater in value: forgiveness.⁷⁵ While even Silius himself heaps scorn on Varro for daring to return to Rome (10.613-4), Fabius calms the people's protests through an indirect speech (615-

⁷¹ Lovatt (2005), 36-7.

⁷² Amphiaraus too utilizes his chariot to deadly purpose in war. See Dominik (1994), 104-6 for Amphiaraus' gruesome *androktasia* where he, like Hannibal, literally grinds fallen men to death with his wheels; also see Lovatt (2005), 271 and Masterson (2005), 293-4.

⁷³ *Haud speratus* may mean that Adrastus fears that Polynices is dead, or that Polynices returns not as hoped (i.e. without the prize).

⁷⁴ The Romans hope that he will not even dare to return; and he returns not as a victor as he had hoped.

⁷⁵ Lovatt (2005), 293 argues that Adrastus' decision reeks of nepotism and shows his ineffective rule. In contrast, Fabius' decision shows his effective leadership and clearheaded thinking.

22), urging them to put up a steely resolve in the face of adversity, instead of taking out their frustrations on an already beaten man. The mood of the city undertakes a sudden shift, as the Romans begin to pity Varro's fate and rejoice in the fact that Hannibal has not been able to kill both consuls; in fact, they form a long procession to thank him for not having given up hope for the city (10.624-29). He is transformed from being a dreadful omen (*dirum omen*, 10.614) to a sign of persistence (10.629). Despite Fabius' forgiveness, however, Varro has become a shattered man. Abandoned by the gods, Varro is incapable of even assuming the proper *gravitas* of a consul. The man who wagged his tongue so fiercely at Rome can no longer say a word. As he enters the city, his lictors conspicuously keep silent (10.638); when the Capuans come to demand a share of the consulship, Marcellus cannot believe that Varro keeps quiet and does not drive them out from the senate (11.100-6). The contrast between the arrogant, obnoxious pre-Cannae Varro and the timid, toothless post-Cannae Varro could not be more striking. Could such a man truly be responsible for the catastrophe of Cannae? Varro is, in the end, merely a spectator – seemingly all on his own, he gazes upon the result of his failure, unable to supply any positive input, before hurrying from the scene. In the next section, I will argue that the shift in Varro's character after Cannae also bears wider implications of his decision to flee the battlefield at the end of book 9. In order to understand the significance of Varro's flight, we must also analyze the behaviour of his colleague Paulus, who takes full control of his own destiny by standing firm and meeting with a heroic death.

Varro, Paulus and the problem of *devotio*

Varro's role as spectator, as well as his subsequent flight from the battlefield, shows clear links with two scenes: Hannibal at Zama gazing down from a hillock at the lost battle before making his escape (17.597-617), and Pompey at Pharsalus, perched atop a hillock, observing the carnage before also fleeing from the battle (Lucan, *BC*

7.647-711). The episode of Hannibal at Zama deserves a fuller treatment on its own,⁷⁶ so I will focus here on the relationship between Varro and Pompey.⁷⁷ I argue that just as Pompey's flight at Pharsalus has been interpreted by critics as a *devotio*, Varro's flight at Cannae can be read as one as well. Additionally, I argue that Paulus' refusal to flee is presented as a *devotio*, one that is meant as a clear contrast to Varro's. In doing so, I disagree with the argument presented by Raymond Marks in his recent article on allusions to *devotio* in the *Punica*.⁷⁸ Marks argues that Paulus' death is set up as a *devotio* in order to link it with the upturn in Rome's fortunes following Cannae. I argue on the other hand that despite the outward praise afforded to Paulus and the condemnation given to Varro, the ultimate significance of the consuls' respective actions is deliberately ambiguous. In the end, we are led to question the usefulness of Paulus' sacrifice, and moreover to interpret Varro's inability to die as playing a necessary role in Rome's recovery. Paradoxically, the virtue displayed by Paulus may actually be less useful than the lack of virtue shown by Varro. Silius' treatment of the behaviour of the two consuls at Cannae thus reinforces my reading of Cannae as an emphatically paradoxical battle.

It is not surprising that links can be found between Silius' Cannae and Lucan's Pharsalus. Cannae itself is a foreshadowing of Pharsalus: it pits Hannibal, the Caesar archetype, against the republic, and the republic is dealt a crushing defeat at the end of both battles. Crucially, the republican leadership at Cannae is shared by two men, while it is held solely by Pompey at Pharsalus. Lucan's Pompey, therefore, is not just reflected in Varro; the multiple facets of his character cannot be shown through this one association. Indeed, we might expect Pompey to have closer ties to Paulus, since like Paulus, he is goaded into battle by the impatient senators, forced to fight a battle he does not wish to fight.⁷⁹ Elements of Pompey thus make their way into both Varro and

⁷⁶ See Chapter Three.

⁷⁷ Leigh (1997), 110-57 devotes a chapter, entitled "Pompey – The View from the Hill", to the problems attached to Pompey's spectatorship and flight from Pharsalus. For other perspectives, see Hardie (1993), 54-5 and Bartsch (1997), 79-80; for further bibliography, see Leigh (1997), 118 n.4.

⁷⁸ Marks (2005b).

⁷⁹ Leigh (1997), 116 notes that Pompey's predicament and response to it "merit comparison with a Livian paradigm... the basic narrative formula apparent here recurs often in the course of Livy's work: an experienced general who wisely delays engagement with the enemy but who is driven to precipitate an

Paulus. Moreover, I will argue that Varro and Paulus represent two versions of Pompey; Varro is the Pompey that *is*, while Paulus is the Pompey that *could have been*.

An initial analysis of Lucan's representation of Pompey reveals many similarities between Lucan's Pharsalus and Silius' Cannae. Pompey's prayer of "refrain from striking down every nation, you gods" (*'parcite,' ait 'superi, cunctas prosternere gentes'*, BC 7.659) is repeated in Silius' crazed soldier's *parcite, crudeles superi* (8.659). The narrator orders Pompey to quit the dire battle (*fuge proelia dira*, BC 7.689), echoed by Silius in the crazed soldier's vision of the fleeing Varro (8.666) and Solimus' dying, ominous warning (9.175).⁸⁰ When Pompey finally flees from the field, Lucan has Pompey taken away by his horse (*tum Magnum concitus aufert / a bello sonipes*, BC 7.677-8), in the same way Varro is taken away (*sonipes rapuit*, 9.657).⁸¹ As Pompey is fleeing, he slips through cities, keen to remain unknown (*obscuro tutus transire per urbes / nomine*, BC 8.20-1), just as Varro anticipates the uncomfortable journey ahead of him (*ora per urbes / iratas spectanda dabo*, 9.653-4). When Pompey reaches Larissa, its inhabitants flock out to welcome him as though he were triumphant (*omnibus illa / civibus effudit totas per moenia vires / obvia ceu laeto*, BC 7.712-4); Rome's populace flocks out to thank Varro when he eventually returns (*omne effundit longo iam se agmine vulgus / gratantum*, 10.626-7). Thus it may not be a mere echoing of Livy⁸² when, in excusing Varro's flight, the people of Rome say that he has acted *magnaue... mente* (10.627). He has literally acted like Magnus.

often disastrous action by the impatience of his subordinates or of the common soldiers." This model is exactly the model on which Silius' Paulus is based.

⁸⁰ See note 43.

⁸¹ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 9.657 cites these lines in Lucan as evidence that Silius' *sonipes rapuit* does not imply passiveness on the part of Varro; see note 65. However, he makes nothing of the wider implications of this parallel. Also note Mago's report to the Carthaginian senate, in which he too uses the passive to describe Varro leaving the field (*Varro citato / auferretur equo*, 11.523-4). Leigh (1997), 129 contrasts the spurred horse of Pompey to the spurred horses of Brutus and Hasdrubal, who charge themselves into the fray. In addition, we might consider that Pompey and Varro are both portrayed passively as they charge *away*, while the charges of Brutus and Hasdrubal *into* the fighting are described actively. On the theme of charging on a horse as it relates to the *devotio*, see Marks (2005b), 137.

⁸² Livy writes *magno animo* (22.61.15), but there it is the people who are great-hearted, not Varro.

Matthew Leigh, in his treatment of Pompey at Pharsalus, discusses at length the Roman attitude towards defeat, the general, and *devotio*.⁸³ The first example he offers is particularly apt for our purposes, since it involves Livy's account of the battle fought by the consuls L. Junius Brutus and P. Valerius Publicola against the Tarquins (Livy 2.6.5-11). In this account, Brutus slays Arruns while he himself is gloriously slain, while his colleague Valerius survives and consequently suffers the resentment of the people.⁸⁴ Silius' Paulus plays the role of Brutus almost to perfection, only failing to kill his target Hannibal, while Varro is the Valerius to his Brutus. Another example given by Leigh, a rather more problematic one as far as the *Punica* is concerned, is that of the Carthaginian general Hasdrubal at the Metaurus, whose manner of death is admired by Livy as well as Polybius.⁸⁵ As a good general, Pompey is expected to do the same: to engage in self-sacrificial heroism, to die like Brutus dies, to uphold the example shown by his *own* follower Domitius, whose refusal to live on sharply contrasts with the inability of his leader to choose death over life.⁸⁶

As heroic as the deaths of Brutus and Hasdrubal are, they are not literally examples of *devotio*, which is a rather more elaborate ritual that requires a specific set of circumstances and methods. In fact, there are only three cases of *devotio* present in the exemplary tradition, all of which were performed by the same family, the Decii. From these cases, we know that the *devotio* was a religious ritual requiring the approval and aid of the Pontifex Maximus, who personally gave the relevant instructions to the

⁸³ Leigh (1997), 125-43.

⁸⁴ Leigh (1997), 125-6, esp. n.17, also notices the similarity between this account and the situation faced by Varro in the *Punica*: "both [Valerius and Varro] are resented for living on when a consular colleague is killed." The difference, of course, is that the Romans supposedly won the earlier battle, albeit indecisively (but cf. Leigh, who suggests that a hostile tradition existed in which the Romans lost). Livy also paints a highly sympathetic picture of a wrongly accused Valerius. Like Varro as he enters Rome, Valerius, as he prepares to defend himself, orders his lictors to lower the *fascēs* as a sign of deference (Livy 2.7.6), which pleases the people. Valerius' later policies earn him the name *Publicola*, friend of the people, certainly a compliment (Livy 2.8.1). Varro is also allied with the people, but in Silius this alliance has a decidedly negative connotation.

⁸⁵ Leigh (1997), 126-7 and 129, on Livy 27.49.4 and Polyb. 11.2.7. Cf. Silius' version of Hasdrubal's final moments at 15.740-807.

⁸⁶ Leigh (1997), 142-3: "Domitius dies to the last the loyal Pompeian, but his general does not have it in him to reciprocate the devotion he is shown."

devotus, always a high ranking Roman general.⁸⁷ The *devotio* was not a simple matter of fighting and dying nobly in battle, but was a very religious affair, as it required an invocation of the gods, who would then proceed to transfer their wrath from the Romans onto the enemy.⁸⁸ Raymond Marks, in his own discussion of allusions to *devotio* in the *Punica*,⁸⁹ concentrates on how Silius establishes allusions to the Decii in his battle descriptions of books 4-10. In particular, he focuses on the deaths of Paulus and Flaminius, both of whom “stand out” among all the Roman generals as bearing the attributes of a *devotus*.⁹⁰ Most of Marks’ discussion is based on proving how Silius makes his allusions to *devotio*, with the implications of these allusions given comparatively little space. Marks’ basic argument is that, through successfully dying in the manner of a *devotus*, Flaminius and Paulus achieve the intended results of the *devotio*; that is, appeasing the wrath of the gods and turning the tide in Rome’s favour.⁹¹ My reading of Silius’ usage of the *devotio* disagrees with Marks’ in that I see Paulus’ *devotio* as not presented in an unambiguously positive light. Marks’ argument, clearly shows how Silius recalls the Decii through his textual references, but one of its main weaknesses is that he fails to take into account the presence of Varro at Cannae when analyzing Paulus’ role as a *devotus*. It would be wrong to ignore the role that Varro plays in this dynamic, as his failure to die heroically at Cannae is just as important to what happens after the battle as Paulus’ successful death. The meaning that *devotio* has in the *Punica*, is, therefore, rather less clear cut than the one Marks portrays. This becomes apparent when we consider the Pompeyque character of Varro at the moment of his flight.

At the critical juncture of Pharsalus, Pompey prays to the gods as he stands on the mound, setting up the religious aspect of the *devotio*. The reader, whose expectations of sacrifice are thus lifted, is then confounded by the action that follows the prayer, Pompey’s flight. Yet Lucan also portrays the very act of fleeing as a form of *devotio*, thus

⁸⁷ For a general overview of the practice of *devotio*, see Versnel (1976), Feldherr (1998), 85-92, and Edwards (2007), 25-8.

⁸⁸ Leigh (1997), 130-4 focuses on the religious aspect of the *devotio* as it relates to Pompey.

⁸⁹ Marks (2005b).

⁹⁰ Marks (2005b), 138.

⁹¹ Marks (2005b), 142-3.

introducing a potentially paradoxical situation, as well as an awfully tricky problem for the reader, who is presented with the unflattering flight of a man whose actions are nevertheless rabidly supported by the narrator.⁹² Silius shows a keen understanding of this paradox in his treatment of Varro. I have previously discussed his contrasting use of *graviora* and *meliora* in Varro's speech and Juno's later speech to Paulus, in the context of Varro's passive nature as charioteer.⁹³ Here I must point out that the juxtaposition of the two words creates its own paradox, since the reader is forced to contemplate both options and must decide whether Varro's flight is actually *graviora* or *meliora*. It is in the end clear, I think, where Silius' sympathies lie. Nevertheless, he is acutely aware of the paradoxical nature of Varro's flight, and despite himself, leaves the ultimate interpretation of his non-*devotio* open for the reader.

Let us return to Varro's speech in order to analyze the implications of his flight. Unlike Pompey, Varro does not explicitly offer himself up as sacrifice, thus depriving the scene of the important religious element of the *devotio*. However, even though Varro is understood to be considering suicide when he says *abrumpere cuncta / iam dudum cum luce libet* (9.649-50), his wish to put an end to "everything" (*abrumpere cuncta*) suggests that his death will perhaps serve to put an end to the slaughter at Cannae, thus adding a sacrificial element to his speech; when *cuncta* appears in Pompey's speech, Pompey uses it to refer to everything that the gods seem to be intent on destroying (*quid perdere cuncta laboras?*, BC 7.665), especially people (*cunctas... gentes*, BC 7.659). Moreover, this suggestion of self-sacrifice is immediately thwarted by Juno, the *nescio qui deus*, who arrests Varro's sword (9.650-1), and thus Varro's decision is divinely inspired, just as a *devotus* is when he goes to his death.⁹⁴ There is no such god present in

⁹² The paradoxical nature of Pompey's supposed sacrifice is pointed out by Bartsch (1997), 80, who calls it a "strange *devotio* that saves the sacrifice and offers up the beneficiaries". Leigh (1997), 139 lays out the problem at hand: "The effect of Lucan's construction of the retreat of Pompey as a form of *devotio* is to highlight the distortion of the trope. The reader holds present the ideal form of the self-sacrificial charge and uses it as a measure by which to assess the inadequacies of the actions of the general. Pompey's deeds are put into sharper focus when matched against the nexus of expectations implicit in the myth-historical ideal of the Decii. This is how they become meaningful."

⁹³ See p. 149.

⁹⁴ Feldherr (1998), 91 discusses the importance of divine interaction in the course of the *devotio*.

Lucan to thwart Pompey, so the narrator strangely provides two reasons for Pompey's decision. First, he explains that he fears that the battle will *never* stop if he dies (*BC* 7.671-2), and as an alternative, he suggests that Pompey did not want to give Caesar the pleasure of seeing him die; a wish, he then bitterly states, made in vain (*BC* 7.673-5).⁹⁵ The latter explanation and its focus on the watching enemy is also present in Varro's speech when he comments that Hannibal himself could not think of a better sight than Varro fleeing back to Rome (9.655). The explanations that the narrator in Lucan gives for Pompey's flight, however, clearly attempt to persuade the reader that his choice is noble, and seek to overturn the reader's conventional notion of *devotio*; at Pharsalus, to flee is *meliora*. In Silius, on the other hand, Varro makes no attempt to portray his inability to commit suicide as noble; the traditional meanings of *fas* and *nefas* remain intact on the surface. In Varro's own words, to flee is *graviora*. Only divine intervention prevents him from doing the right thing.

To Leigh, Pompey's decision to flee is symptomatic of a fundamental break in Lucan's narrative between the republican cause and the Pompeian cause. This break, Leigh argues, is always present deep within the narrative, but is finally thrust into the spotlight when the reader confronts the reality of Pompey's flight from Pharsalus.⁹⁶ When Pompey flees, he is no longer connected with the battle, his fate now severed from the fates of those still involved in the fighting; the fighting still goes on, but the participants are now free to fight for themselves, and not for Pompey.⁹⁷ I would argue that, by modelling Varro's flight on that of Pompey, Silius creates a similar tension in his own poem. There is a key difference, however. Both Varro and Pompey flee in the middle of the battle, with much of the fighting still to go.⁹⁸ But at Pharsalus, the

⁹⁵ For the ambiguity of these two reasons, see Leigh (1997), 137.

⁹⁶ Leigh (1997), 143-57.

⁹⁷ So Lucan says "quit the dire battle, Magnus, and know that by the gods, no one who now remains to fight dies for you" (*fuge proelia dira / ac testare deos nullum, qui perstet in armis, / iam tibi, Magne, mori, BC* 7.689-91) and "you having been put to flight, the senate shows by dying that it has fought for itself" (*teque inde fugato / ostendit moriens sibi se pugnasse senatus, BC* 7.696-7).

⁹⁸ Lucan suggests that most of the battle has yet to be fought with *pars maxima pugnae* (*BC* 7.693); so Dilke (1978), 152: "By *pars maxima pugnae* Lucan seems to imply, unhistorically, that the part of the fighting which followed Pompey's departure lasted longer than the part at which he was present."

exemplum for Pompey has already come and gone in the figure of Domitius, who dies shortly before Pompey's monologue (BC 7.597-616). At Cannae, the *exemplum* comes afterwards, as there still remains a Roman commander on the field. Varro's flight comes at the end of book 9, separating Cannae into two distinct sections: the fighting before Varro's flight, and the fighting following it. In effect, the Cannae presented in book 9 is Varro's battle, which ends with his disappearance from the field; the Cannae presented in book 10, which begins with the word *Paulus* (10.1), is Paulus' battle. And Paulus is relentlessly hostile to the idea of flight. In this way, he is an anti-Varro and anti-Pompey, but also a would-be Pompey.

At numerous occasions in this book, Paulus condemns the idea of fleeing and embraces death in battle, establishing his role as a *devotus*.⁹⁹ His initial action, to rush into the thick of the battle and to risk death from every sword (*in medios fert arma globos seseque periculis / ingerit atque omni letum molitur ab ense*, 10.4-5) recalls Pompey's vision on top of the hill, where he sees every weapon seeking him and himself dying in every body laid out on the field (*tot telis sua fata peti, tot corpora fusa / ac se tam multo pereuntem sanguine vidit*, BC 7.652-3), but unlike Pompey, Paulus transforms the vision into action. He urges his men to stand firm and go down to the underworld with unwounded backs, telling them that he will lead them down there personally:

increpat horrendum: 'perstate et fortiter, oro,
pectoribus ferrum accipite ac sine vulnere terga
ad manes deferte, viri. nisi gloria mortis
nil superest. idem sedes adeuntibus imas
hic vobis dux Paulus erit.'

He rebuked them with a terrible voice: 'Stand firm, I beg you.
Bravely take the steel in your breasts and take unwounded backs
down to the shades, men. Nothing remains but a glorious death.
Paulus shall still be your leader as you make your last stand.'

(10.6-10)

"*nisi gloria mortis / nil superest*", Paulus declares, a stark contrast to Pompey's pathetic plea of "*iam nihil est, Fortuna, meum*" (BC 7.666). Paulus' sole *raison d'être* could even

⁹⁹ Paulus' desire for death is noted by Marks (2005b), 138.

be considered to be to die at Cannae, as the language used to describe him suggests.¹⁰⁰ He revels in the frenzy of battle and is made famous by his labours (*furere ac decorare labores / et saevire iuvat*, 10.27-8), he despises the love of life (*proiecto lucis amore*, 10.42), his deeds on the field are portrayed as though he were making sacrifices for his own death (*Paulus numerosa caede futuram / ultus iam mortem*, 10.171-2), he is driven on solely by his wish for death (*pereundi Martius ardor / atque animos iam sola dabat fiducia mortis*, 10.217-8), his last few words repeat his initial words in the book, that nothing remains but to show that he knows how to die (*quid superest vita, nisi caecae ostendere plebi / Paulum scire mori?*, 10.284-5), and Silius comments that his death added glory to Rome and was what allowed his fame to ascend to heaven (*mors addidit urbi / pulchra decus misitque viri inter sidera nomen*, 10.307-8). Immediately after his death, the Roman army, whose identity is inextricably tied to Paulus', falls, Silius says, like a trunk without a head (*ceu truncus capitis*, 10.310); famously, Pompey too ended life as a headless trunk on the shores of Egypt. The fate of Paulus, then, like Varro's, offers numerous parallels to that of Pompey.¹⁰¹ He plays the part of an alternate Pompey, a Pompey who remains to fight and die. And from the attitude of the narrator, it is clear that Silius sees his course of action as the more righteous.

In addition to Pompey, we may recall that Paulus has an epic parallel in Statius' Amphiaraus, the warrior prophet who fails to prevent war from breaking out. Here too Paulus displays his role of *devotus*, since as Andrew Feldherr notes, it is the *devotus'* responsibility to act as an intermediary between his troops and the gods.¹⁰² But another, more obvious, Statian parallel exists: Menoeceus, the Theban *devotus* who, like

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Marks (2005a), 74: "Paulus' contribution to the war-effort thus begins and ends at Cannae."

¹⁰¹ Another possible reference to Pompey occurs earlier in book 10, in the episode of Crista and his sons (10.92-169); for a full analysis of this episode, see Marks (2006). Crista, like Pompey, is an old man with a fine reputation in arms (10.95-6), but whose strength has now grown feeble with old age (10.114-7). In the end, Crista is slain along with all his sons by Hannibal. Silius uses a simile of a thunderbolt striking down a revered oak tree to describe their defeat (10.164-9), surely bringing to mind Lucan's images of Caesar as thunderbolt (*BC* 1.151) and Pompey as oak (*BC* 1.136); the Lucanian connection is noted by Marks (2006), 402.

¹⁰² Feldherr (1998), 91: "Thus the consul is not just obeying the orders of the gods; in his own person, he 'broadcasts' the miraculous sight he has seen in the dream, rendering it visible to both armies... it is always the role of the general to represent the divine realm to his troops."

Amphiaraus, acts as a foil for the Varro-like Capaneus. Menoeceus' act of *devotio* comes when the Argive siege is at its most relentless,¹⁰³ and has been described by Vessey as “the highest example of *pietas* in the *Thebaid*”.¹⁰⁴ Like Menoeceus, Paulus' death comes just as Rome is facing imminent defeat. Both Paulus and Menoeceus have the glory of their deaths amplified by the contrasting impiety of their antagonists.¹⁰⁵ Silius and Statius explicitly state that through the act of sacrifice Paulus and Menoeceus ascend to heaven.¹⁰⁶ Menoeceus' sacrifice is also deliberately portrayed by Statius as a *devotio*.¹⁰⁷ As Vessey observes, both Paulus and Meneoceus are highly praised for their noble deaths, but as we shall see, both deaths are also problematic.

Paulus is not the only figure that acts as a direct contrast to Varro. As we have seen before, Varro is often described as a second Flaminius,¹⁰⁸ but a Flaminius who lacks even the courage to die. The phrase *excussus mentem* (9.644) just before Varro's speech, a repeat of *excussus... mentem* (5.44), clearly signals Silius' wish for the reader to read Varro's speech while keeping Flaminius in mind. But Flaminius is not just a model for Varro but also for Paulus, for when he sees that the battle is lost, he is given a speech of his own, an angry invective against the fleeing Romans, one that has much in common with Paulus' rallying cry:¹⁰⁹

‘quid deinde, quid, oro,
restat, io, profugis? vos en ad moenia Romae
ducitis Hannibalem, vos in Tarpeia Tonantis
tectata faces ferrumque datis. sta, miles, et acres
disce ex me pugnare, vel si pugnare negatum,
disce mori. dabit exemplum non vile futuris

¹⁰³ Vessey (1973b), 117: “By placing the *devotio* at a time when Thebes is facing its greatest crisis, when it is threatened by defeat by the Argives under the furious direction of Capaneus, Statius has chosen an appropriate and effective moment.”

¹⁰⁴ Vessey (1973b), 117.

¹⁰⁵ Vessey (1973b), 118: “Menoeceus also presents a counterbalance to Capaneus, the ‘superum contemptor’ whose crazy challenge to Jupiter brings about his destruction on the walls of Thebes at the end of book 10. The contrast between *pietas* and madness (*furor*) is perhaps nowhere more forcibly expressed in the *Thebaid* than at this climax.”

¹⁰⁶ Paulus: *mors addidit urbi / pulchra decus misitque viri inter sidera nomen* (10.307-8). Menoeceus: *ast illum amplexae Pietas Virtusque ferebant / leniter ad terras corpus; nam spiritus olim / ante Iovem et summis apicem sibi poscit in astris* (*Theb.* 10.780-2).

¹⁰⁷ Vessey (1973b), 121-2.

¹⁰⁸ See p. 148.

¹⁰⁹ It is notable that Decius also asks his men to stand their ground at Sentinum while also seeking to physically block their route of escape (Livy 10.28.10-12); Marks (2005b), 136 compares Decius' actions to those of Flaminius and Scipio at the Ticinus.

Flaminius, ne terga Libys, ne Cantaber umquam
 consulis adspiciat. solus, si tanta libido
 est vobis rabiesque fugae, tela omnia solus
 pectore consumo et moriens fugiente per auras
 hac anima vestras revocabo ad proelia dextras.’

‘What then, what, I ask, remains if you flee? *You* are leading Hannibal to the walls of Rome; *you* are giving him fire and sword to use against the Tarpeian rock of the Thunderer. Stand, soldiers, and learn from me how to fight like men; or, if fighting is impossible, learn how to die. Flaminius will set a fine example for our descendants; no Libyan or Cantabrian will ever see the back of a consul. But if you are so mad with desire for flight, I alone will take every spear in my breast and, dying, even as my soul rises to the sky, shall call your sword-arms back to the battle.’

(5. 633-43)

There is much in the final fate of Flaminius that parallels that of Paulus. He focuses on what remains at a lost battle (*quid... / restat*, 5.633-4), with Paulus’ answer to the question being “death” (*nisi gloria mortis / nil superest*, 10.8-9). Flaminius declares that he will teach his soldiers how to die (*disce mori*, 5.638), while Paulus claims that he will show the people that he *knows* how to die (*scire mori*, 10.285). The act of dying in battle is literally an *exemplum* (5.638) for all to follow, and Flaminius, like Paulus, emphasizes his leadership at the bitter end. The sacrificial element is also present in Flaminius’ speech, as he tells his soldiers that he alone will intercept all the enemies’ spears in his breast even as they flee, clearly invoking the “one for all” aspect of the *devotio* (*solus... / omnia solus*, 5.640-1).¹¹⁰ The death of Paulus also recalls that of Flaminius, since neither of them die at the hand of a single enemy; Paulus dies with spears hurled from every side and from every people (10.303-4), just as Flaminius is slain by spears coming from every direction, leaving nobody the distinction of having killed him (5.655-8).¹¹¹ From these

¹¹⁰ Marks (2005b), 132, in noting that none of the historical sources depict Flaminius taking on this persona, remarks that it is fitting that Flaminius, who had begun the disastrous battle himself, is so self-destructive in his end.

¹¹¹ The manner of Flaminius’ death is a departure from Livy 22.6.3, who has the Gallic chieftain Ducarius alone kill Flaminius. Ducarius is present in Silius, but he does not take any part in the actual killing of Flaminius. Spaltenstein (1986), ad 5.652 attributes the discrepancy to poetic license and a patriotic desire to strip Ducarius of his glory. He admits, however, that Polybius 3.84.6 says that Flaminius was killed by several Gauls. Marks (2005b), 139 argues that no matter how Silius arrived at his own description of Flaminius’ death, he deliberately has Flaminius killed by (and even buried under) a hail of missiles to make his death correspond to that of Decius, as described by Livy 8.10 and Val. Max. 5.6.5. Meanwhile, Paulus’ death is true to Livy’s account, although Livy says that the Numidians who killed him did not even know of his identity (22.49.12). Further, Marks (2005b), 139-40 notes that

treatments of Flaminius and Paulus, we can quite easily notice a narratorial approval for their self-sacrifice. However, despite Silius' favour for this course of action, there exists an underlying tension in the narrative that still questions the value of *devotio*. Already we see hints of this in the treatment of Flaminius' death. Immediately after the general invokes the sacrificial aspect of his desire for death, the Gallic leader Ducarius approaches and, in his own speech, demands that his compatriots not shirk from sacrificing Flaminius to the brave shades of their dead (*nec vos paeniteat, populares, fortibus umbris / hoc mactare caput*, 5.652-3).¹¹² The meaning of sacrifice thus goes both ways.¹¹³ Furthermore, Flaminius' words carry a trace of irony, since even as he verbally assaults his soldiers for being possessed with a desire for flight (*tanta libido / ... fugae*, 5.640-1), he envisions his own dying soul "fleeing" to the sky (*fugiente per auras*, 5.642). The act of self-sacrifice can itself be considered as flight, albeit flight of a different sort.

Hints of paradox also exist in the case of Paulus. Twice, he is approached by others who attempt to persuade him to retreat. The first to approach Paulus is Juno in the guise of Metellus, the other Lentulus. There are considerable similarities between these two attempts. Juno and Lentulus both offer Paulus the same basic reason for flight: Rome cannot afford to lose him in battle.¹¹⁴ They both invoke the name of Varro; Juno suggests that Paulus should follow Varro's example and save his life *ad meliora* (10.55-8), and Lentulus even argues that Paulus would commit a greater crime than Varro if he

Paulus is, like Flaminius, buried under weapons and corpses, an image not explicitly found in the sources. In their deaths, Flaminius and Paulus reprise their role as sacrificial victims by being the one slain by the many. See Hardie (1993), 27-32 for the theme of "one for all" in relation to sacrifice in epic. For the theme of "one and many" in Silius, see Marks (2005a), 78-81.

¹¹² Hardie (1993), 51.

¹¹³ Cf. Marks (2005b), 140-1, who argues that since a *devotus* cannot actually kill himself, he requires the co-operation of his enemies to achieve his self-sacrificial goal. To Marks, then, Ducarius' willingness to sacrifice Flaminius plays right into the general's hands; as does Hannibal's own eagerness to sacrifice the Romans.

¹¹⁴ So Juno says: "If Paulus remains, so does the reign of the Aeneadae; if not, you drag down Ausonia with you. Do you think to go against that raging youth and deprive us of your leadership in these troubled times, Paulus?" (*si superest Paulus, restant Aeneia regna; / sin secus, Ausoniam tecum trahis. ire tumentem / tu contra iuvenem et caput hoc abscidere rebus / turbatis, o Paule, paras?*, 10.50-3) And Lentulus: "What then remains to stop the Tyrians from advancing to the city tomorrow, Paulus, if you desert the ship in such a storm?" (*quid deinde relictum, / crastina cur Tyrios lux non deducat ad urbem, / deseris in tantis puppim si, Paule, procellis?*, 10.267-9)

sacrificed himself (10.270-3).¹¹⁵ The two arguments mirror each other in such a way that we expect that Paulus will react in the same way to both, but he does not. He rejects the overtures of both Juno and Lentulus, but the tone of his responses differs greatly. He tells both to flee, but his words to the Metellus figure are laden with sarcasm as he prays to the gods that no enemy spear wounds the mad Metellus in the back (*i, demens, i, carpe fugam. non hostica tela / excipias tergo, superos precor*, 10.62-3), an echo of Lucan's ironic description of Pompey, "not fearing a spear in his back" (*non tergo tela paventem*, BC 7.678).¹¹⁶ In contrast, Paulus praises Lentulus' virtue and states that all is not lost when people like Lentulus remain (*macte o virtute paterna! / nec vero spes angustae, cum talia restent / pectora Romuleo regno*, 10.277-9). He finishes his speech by urging Lentulus to get back to Rome as quickly as possible in order to tell the people to return the command to Fabius (10.279-82, 290-1). On the one hand, Paulus rejects the thought of flight for himself and treats the Pompeian "courage" of showing his back to a spear with contempt, but on the other, he genuinely endorses the flight of Lentulus. Fleeing is thus both unimaginable and necessary, depending on the fugitive in question. Why the contradiction?

It is important to note that Lentulus' speech to Paulus is historical and Metellus' is a creative addition by Silius, since it does not appear in the historical record.¹¹⁷ Silius thus deliberately adds an additional, imaginary argument which nevertheless uses rhetorical devices very similar to the speech which he has found in his source. By doing this, Silius further draws our attention to Paulus' divergent reactions. The most obvious reason for Paulus' contradictory responses is that he takes his interlocutor into account when formulating his response. Metellus and Lentulus were far from mere soldiers, with Metellus being a patrician and Lentulus being a military tribune. Thus, Paulus' awareness of their reputations would not come as a surprise. Metellus, as the reader later discovers, is a coward who tries to convince his fellow survivors to flee overseas, away

¹¹⁵ These arguments reverse the act of *devotio*, a selfless act of "one for all", into a selfish act in which the one is actually abandoning the all.

¹¹⁶ For the problems attached to this description of Pompey, see Leigh (1997), 137-9.

¹¹⁷ The Lentulus scene is told by Livy 22.49.6.

from the war entirely.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, Lentulus is explicitly introduced by the poet as possessing noble virtue. Paulus, presumably aware of the character of both Metellus and Lentulus, thus naturally interprets Lentulus' arguments as coming from a genuine care for the state and Metellus' as derived from cowardice. It is already problematic to assume that Silius must have followed Livy, but the contrast also reveals a deeper unease on the part of Silius, who questions just how useful the righteous *devotio* of Paulus is to Rome. Marks argues that the successful death of Paulus plays a crucial role in appeasing the wrath of the gods, accomplishing the expected role of the *devotio*, something that does not happen when Rome's generals do not die, as in the cases of Scipio and Sempronius at the Trebia.¹¹⁹ Yet is it really Paulus' death that fundamentally shifts the momentum of the war irrevocably into Rome's favour, as Marks suggests? In the speeches of Metellus and Lentulus, we can sense a tension on the part of Silius as he grapples with the very meaning of the *devotio*.

This tension is especially reflected in Juno's comment that fleeing is *meliora* (10.56), which, as we have already seen, contrasts with Varro's earlier claim that it is *graviora*. As I have already discussed, how one should interpret the terms *meliora* and *graviora* is not a straightforward affair. Added to the difficulty of interpreting Silius' use of *meliora* and *graviora* is that Juno's description of Varro's action as *meliora* is made in order to deceive Paulus, and we therefore believe that her *meliora* is not genuine. However, the very mention of an alternative interpretation alerts us to the fact that there *can* be such an alternative, that running away can in fact be "better" than dying, not just for Varro himself, but for Rome as well. If we believe that Paulus' sacrifice played a vital role in Rome's recovery, we might expect that the poet will make some comment to this effect following his death. Yet when Scipio later speaks to Paulus in his *nekyia*, he says

¹¹⁸ He makes a return at 10.420 when he tries to persuade the Romans at Canusium to abandon Italy, and his plans are foiled by Scipio.

¹¹⁹ Marks (2005b), 142-3: "Whenever one of Rome's self-destructive leaders dies at the hands of the enemy, the city subsequently enjoys divine favour and experiences success; this happens twice, after Flaminius' death at the end of the Trasimene battle in Book 5 and after Paulus' at the end of the Cannae battle in Book 10. But when they do not, nothing improves; after Scipio and Sempronius survive in Book 4, the gods' *ira* persists and Rome is defeated at Trasimene; after Minucius survives in Book 7, the gods turn against Rome again, and the city is soundly defeated at Cannae."

“How nearly did you drag Oenotria to ruin with you as you fell to the Stygian darkness!” (*quam paene ruentia tecum / traxisti ad Stygias Oenotria tecta tenebras!*, 13.712-3) Rather surprisingly, Scipio’s words do not appear to celebrate Paulus’ sacrifice. In fact, they seem to be an indictment of it and a startling semi-vindication of Juno’s earlier argument, “if you fall, you drag down Ausonia with you” (*Ausoniam tecum trahis*, 10.51). Scipio says not a word about Rome’s recovery after Cannae. In contrast, he makes sure to tell his father and uncle, just a few lines earlier, that Rome had managed to maintain a foothold in Spain despite their deaths (13.696-702). He does not give Paulus any such comfort, as all he says is that Paulus’ *devotio* allowed Hannibal to show his generosity by giving him a grand burial (10.558-77, told by Scipio at 13.714-5). Upon hearing this, Paulus sheds tears (13.716).¹²⁰ This is the last we hear of Paulus, and so his role in the *Punica* ends on an ambiguous note. From his reaction, it is plausible that he regrets giving his enemy the chance to gain a glorious reputation.¹²¹ Would he have committed *devotio* again if he had known this would happen? Silius does not tell us. Nor is there anything in Scipio’s speech to suggest that Paulus’ death had any real benefit for Rome.

If we return to Statius and the death of Menoeceus, we are confronted with the same concern. Randall Ganiban, in his recent analysis of the Menoeceus episode, argues that “within the terms of the narrative itself, Menoeceus’ death does not achieve its larger aim. Though his self-sacrifice is immediately celebrated, it is not understood as saving his city, as is the case in Euripides and Livy.”¹²² The problematic result of his *devotio* is noted by Adam Heinrich as well, who sees Menoeceus’ death as accomplishing nothing more than acting as a catalyst by which Creon later goads Eteocles into his duel and refuses to bury the Argive dead, thus inviting the second assault on Thebes;¹²³ in

¹²⁰ Compare his reaction to that of the elder Scipios after hearing from Africanus, who are described as *laeti* (13.703).

¹²¹ Cf. Spaltenstein (1990), ad 13.716, who argues that Paulus could not have regretted being buried by his enemy.

¹²² Ganiban (2007), 139.

¹²³ Heinrich (1999), 190.

Heinrich's view, "Meneceus performs a failed *devotio*".¹²⁴ His death only gives the Thebans a temporary respite, which ends once the Argives resume the siege under Capaneus. Similarly, Paulus' death does not in any way prevent the Romans from being thoroughly routed at Cannae.¹²⁵ Marks' favourable interpretation of Paulus' *devotio* claims that his death appeases the gods and allows the Romans to gain the upper hand *after* the battle, in the grand scheme of the war.¹²⁶ But even if we are to accept this interpretation, Paulus' death is essentially symbolic; he does not accomplish anything tangible by dying. Even Paulus himself appears to know this when he sends Lentulus back to Rome. If there is anything practical that his death *does* accomplish, it is the immediate demoralization and defeat of the entire Roman army at Cannae (10.309-11). Such an effect is entirely opposite to that achieved by an actual *devotio*, the demoralization and rout of the enemy. If Paulus does hope to perform a *devotio*, he does it quite badly.

Apart from the result of their actions, the motivations of Paulus and Meneceus can also be questioned. Ganiban declares that Meneceus, by specifically demanding a place in heaven from Jupiter after his death, shows that he is more interested in his own glorification than the wellbeing of Thebes.¹²⁷ Meanwhile, Paulus tells Lentulus that he cannot flee because he does not wish to be laughed at by Hannibal (*quantine emptum velit Hannibal, ut nos / vertentes terga aspiciat? nec talia Paulo / pectora, nec manes tam parva intramus imago*, 10.285-7). Paulus fears to be seen as someone with *pectora tam parva*. Instead, he hopes to become a Magnus; clearly motivated by his own desire to maintain his honour, this remade Magnus remains to fight and die. He fails to refute Lentulus' accusation that he would be even guiltier than Varro if he died, suggesting that

¹²⁴ Heinrich (1999), 189.

¹²⁵ The supposed *devotio* of the third Decius against Pyrrhus at Asculum poses a similar problem, since the Romans, despite dealing heavy losses to Pyrrhus' army, lost that battle; see Feldherr (1998), 86.

¹²⁶ Marks (2005b), 142-3.

¹²⁷ Ganiban (2007), 142: "Meneceus' soul appears before Jupiter and, instead of appealing for Thebes' safety (the purported reason for his self-sacrifice), he demands immortality for himself... Meneceus' self-interested actions significantly undermine the positive sense of *pietas* that his intertextual models in Euripides and Livy might have provided him." Cf. Vessey (1973b), 123: "Meneceus died to save Thebes: his death was unselfish, glorious, sacred."

perhaps Lentulus is indeed correct. Paulus dies without dishonour, but leaves his leaderless men to be butchered by the Carthaginians.

The questionable value of Paulus' *devotio* is further pushed to the fore when we consider that while Paulus may have died at Cannae, Varro fled to return to Rome. This is a fact that Marks ignores in his argument. He claims that "when a Roman leader is not slain, the *ira deum* toward Rome persists",¹²⁸ but what would we then make of Varro's survival? To be sure, one could argue that it is not necessary for both generals to be killed for a *devotio* to work; after all, when the Decii devoted themselves, the other consuls survived as well. But in none of the historical examples of *devotio* is the surviving consul treated with contempt for his conduct during the battle. Meanwhile, in the *Punica*, Varro's act of flight is purposely set against Paulus' act of self-sacrifice; both are, however, also purposely ambiguous. As we have previously discussed, Silius' narrator attacks Varro for even daring to think of coming back to Rome (10.613-4). His words maintain our perception of the shamefulness of Varro's flight, but immediately Fabius enters the narrative and contradicts the narrator by declaring that it is in fact shameful to be angry at the defeated general (*hos mulcens questus Fabius deforme docebat / cladibus irasci vulgumque arcebat ab ira*, 10.615-6).

After his rallying speech, the people's thoughts take a sudden shift (*conversa repente / pectora*, 10.623-4). Now they are moved to pity and joy (*nunc miseret... nunc gaudia*, 10.624) rather than anger, leading to the procession of thanksgiving. And thus we are given two judgements of Varro's flight: the righteously indignant one offered by the narrator, and Fabius' contradictory reaction to this earlier judgment.¹²⁹ Of course, Fabius' reaction does not necessarily mean that the narrator is *wrong*. One may argue that Varro's decision turned out for the better in the end, but that would only be because of Fabius' intervention; for Silius, the decision itself is still fundamentally wrong, as we

¹²⁸ Marks (2005b), 143.

¹²⁹ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2529-30 see Fabius' speech as transcending even the petty protests of the narrator, thus subtly highlighting his superior moral qualities. The thanks bestowed on Varro is historical and recounted by Livy (22.61.15), who ends book 22 by contrasting the Romans' actions with what the Carthaginians would have done in the same situation: prosecute the general for his misconduct.

have seen many times already. Similarly, Paulus' *devotio* is not necessarily wrong. Paulus is consistently portrayed sympathetically, and as readers we are not led to view him as a villain of any sort. Nevertheless, Silius is keen to point out the uncomfortable paradox that Varro's cowardly decision, in the end, brought out Rome's best qualities and contributed to her survival. Even though the Romans' reaction following Cannae is influenced by the intervention of Fabius, Varro's return still plays a direct role in inspiring the Romans to put aside their anger and unite in resisting against Hannibal, a result that Paulus' death fails to accomplish.

The complex relationship between Paulus and Varro can also be seen in the case of Menoeceus, whose death is inextricably tied with that of Capaneus. As we have seen earlier, Varro is very much made in the mould of Capaneus; just as he plays the Capaneus to Paulus' Amphiarus, so he plays the Capaneus to Paulus' Menoeceus. Once Menoeceus dies, the Argives temporarily retreat, but soon return, led by Capaneus. In his ascent of the Theban walls, Capaneus explicitly refers to Menoeceus by declaring that he will climb the wall at the point that has been stained by Menoeceus' blood (*Theb.* 10.845-7). Through this declaration, Heinrich notes that Capaneus is himself questioning the value of Menoeceus' *devotio*; the Argive hopes to demonstrate the futility of the Theban's self-sacrifice.¹³⁰ Of course, Capaneus is ultimately struck down by Jupiter, but Jupiter's action has entirely no relation to Menoeceus' earlier death; Capaneus is killed only because his impious challenge to the gods is too much for Jupiter to ignore. To Heinrich, this is a Jupiter "who doesn't seem to have noticed Menoeceus' heroics in the least."¹³¹ Furthermore, the demoralization of the Argives, which was supposed to have been effected by Menoeceus' *devotio*, actually occurs through Capaneus' death.¹³² It is through the impious actions of Capaneus that the Argives are finally routed, not through Menoeceus' pious *devotio*. In the same way,

¹³⁰ Heinrich (1999), 187.

¹³¹ Heinrich (1999), 188.

¹³² Therefore, for Heinrich (1999), 189, Capaneus' death is actually "a reverse *devotio*", which succeeds only in transferring the gods' wrath on his own people rather than the enemy. Similarly, Paulus' death can be seen as a reverse *devotio*.

Varro's cowardly flight accomplishes a much more tangible and favourable result than Paulus' heroic death.

Moreover, if Paulus' death is to be praised, then should we not expect that other heroic self-sacrifices would be praised as well? In one episode of such sacrifice, a Roman commander named Curio displays great courage by standing in the way of a mass of fleeing Romans, trying to force them back into the fight, but is swept along by them and driven into the river, drowning him (10.208-14). By placing his body in the way of his men, Curio clearly invokes the image of Decius, who does the same at Sentinum (Liv. 10.28.12), and consequently the act of *devotio*. Even though we expect that his action deserves celebration, Silius says that he ends up lying without glory on the sand (*iacuit sine nomine mortis harena*, 10.214). Silius seems to be recalling the cocky Curio of Lucan, who dies on the sands of Africa and refuses to flee from a lost cause (BC 4.794-9), and whose bravery in death is said by Lucan to have been tempered by the fact that it was forced upon him.¹³³ Silius' Curio is ultimately mourned by his men (10.403-4), but his death is nevertheless not at all befitting his heroic attempt to stop his men from fleeing. For all his bravery and heroism, Curio ends up as a nameless corpse.

Silius' depiction of the failed *devotio* of Varro and the successful *devotio* of Paulus shows a clear awareness of the paradoxical nature of this episode and communicates throughout with Lucan's problematic portrayal of Pompey on the hill as well as Statius' depiction of Menoecus' sacrifice. The confusion of the situation is perhaps best expressed in Varro's helmsman simile: "the uncertain people are unsure of whether to welcome or disown the sea-tossed man" (*incerti trepidant, tendantne negentne / iactato dextras*, 10.610-1). We as readers are left similarly unsure of the ultimate significance of cowardly flight and heroic death.

In this section, I have argued that through his presentation of Paulus and Varro at Cannae, Silius depicts a sort of virtue that is highly ambiguous and paradoxical. Paulus displays exemplary virtue by dying like a hero, while Varro's lack of virtue is

¹³³ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 10.209 is not very convincing when he says that the choice of name probably has no particular significance.

clear through his shameful flight, but Silius suggests that at Cannae, Varro's cowardly nature was more beneficial to Rome than Paulus' bravery. In the Satricus episode I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Solimus' virtue is similarly paradoxical; he kills his father despite acting according to *fides* and *pietas*. At Cannae, the same motif recurs, as despite behaving as a virtuous Roman should, Paulus does less for Rome than Varro, a man completely devoid of virtue. Next, I will argue that this atmosphere of ambiguity and paradox even extends to Silius' treatment of the gods, including their participation at Cannae.

The ambiguity of the divine

This far in this chapter I have argued that an atmosphere of paradox and ambiguity dominates Silius' depiction of Cannae, and such an atmosphere is particularly noticeable in the way he approaches virtue in the books of Cannae. In this section I wish to show that such a focus on ambiguity is not confined to Cannae, but is also present in the poet's characterization of the gods in the epic, both in the epic in general and at Cannae specifically. As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Silius' treatment of the divine has been compared unfavourably by critics to Lucan's approach in the *Bellum Civile*. The noticeable presence of the pantheon in the *Punica*, contrasted with the complete absence of such deities in the *Bellum*, invites the assumption that Silius eschewed Lucan's bold move to rid his epic of deities, preferring to return to the traditional Virgilian cosmic order. And in doing so, most critics have attacked Silius for what seems to them to be an entirely conservative, and lame, approach. So Denis Feeney writes: "It becomes irresistible to applaud Lucan for discarding the divine apparatus, and to blame Silius for retaining it against his example."¹³⁴ Although Feeney avoids

¹³⁴ Feeney (1991), 251. Another example is Vessey (1982b), who states that "Juno, Venus and the Sibyl find an acceptable habitation in the world of Aeneas. In the era of Hannibal and Scipio their presence is obtrusive. The disciple of Virgil was compelled to site the Punic War in heaven as well as on earth, to mingle gods and men in a bizarre setting." His opinion is attacked by Matier (1989b), 6, who has a low opinion of Vessey in general: "This is yet another example of modern prejudice which fails to recognize that to a Roman of Silius' own day, the events of the Second Punic War were sufficiently remote (three

basing his argument on the modern reader's reception towards the presence of the divine in history, his scathing judgement on Silius' gods nevertheless represents the consensus of critics: "Silius' gods are a failure, and a strikingly comprehensive failure; but they fail on their and his own terms, not ours, victims of the large-scale enervation which dooms the work as a whole."¹³⁵ His argument is based on the idea that Silius attempted to imitate Virgil and Homer, but could not build a consistent conceptual framework on which to place his gods, thus rendering them ineffectual; we will necessarily have to explore his points in greater detail.¹³⁶

The beginning of Silius' epic, in which he outlines the cause of the war (Juno's wrath), appears to confirm the reader's suspicions: that Silius' gods are the same ones as those who inhabit the world of the *Aeneid*, and that Silius is but writing a sequel to Virgil. Thus Gossage reads Silius' Juno as the same hostile Juno in Virgil, who, instead of unleashing a storm to wreck Aeneas, unleashes Hannibal on the Romans.¹³⁷ Hardie too sees Hannibal as the successor of Virgil's Dido, Hannibal's oath to Dido as Silius' own aim to remain faithful to Virgil,¹³⁸ and the theme of the *Punica* as Virgil's "moral and theological dualism... presented in a stark and schematic form: Roman *fides* versus Carthaginian *perfidia*, the heavenly Jupiter and his representatives against the Hellish Juno and her representatives."¹³⁹ To Hardie, the *Punica* is a clear tale of good against evil, and even though there might be some doubts along the way as to which side is more deserving of triumph, "finally there is no real doubt about the victory of light over dark."¹⁴⁰ Hardie's reading thus forces us to consider Juno as "dark", "hellish", "evil" and "Carthaginian", and Jupiter as "light", "heavenly", "good" and "Roman". Yet while much of the *Punica* is certainly based on an opposition between the two deities, hints exist that suggest a more ambiguous relationship.

centuries earlier) to make the device of divine machinery seem the most natural thing in the world in an epic poem. If the gods are quite all right in Virgil, why should they be ludicrous in Silius?"

¹³⁵ Feeney (1991), 302.

¹³⁶ For Feeney's argument, see Feeney (1991), 301-12.

¹³⁷ Gossage (1969), 77.

¹³⁸ Hardie (1993), 64-5; also see Wilson (1993), 219-20.

¹³⁹ Hardie (1993), 80.

¹⁴⁰ Hardie (1993), 81.

Let us firstly look at the “dark” side of this oppositional dynamic. Juno instigates the action of the *Punica* right from the start of book 1, much as Virgil’s Juno conjures up the storm in *Aeneid* 1. She is described, like her Virgilian counterpart, as favouring Carthage above all other cities; the rise of Rome threatens the supremacy of Carthage (1.26-31, cf. *Aen.* 1.12-8). It is in fact she who stirs up the First Punic War, even before Hannibal’s time (1.32-3). After the Carthaginian defeat in that war, we are told that Juno chooses Hannibal to be her instrument of destruction; he is to help her in her bid to contend against fate, much as the Virgilian Juno attempts to stave off the fated sack of Carthage by the Romans (1.38-9, cf. *Aen.* 1.21-2). So far so good - Juno is exactly as we expect her if we assume that she is the successor of Virgil’s Juno.¹⁴¹ She drives the plot forward throughout by intervening at almost every turn. It is at her instigation that Tisiphone arises from Erebus to drive the Saguntines to suicide (2.526-42). She disguises herself as the lake deity of Trasimene and awakens the sleeping Hannibal, urging him to hasten over the Apennines to do battle (4.722-38); to ensure that the battle goes ahead as planned, she also gets Flaminius elected beforehand (4.708-10). Later, she stirs up jealousy in the hearts of Roman senators in order to give Minucius, the *magister equitum*, equal power with Fabius (7.511-4). On the eve of Cannae, she does practically the same, as she sends the nymph Anna Perenna to urge Hannibal to proceed to the fatal field of Diomedes (8.25-38), while also, as I have argued earlier, controlling the commander of the opposite side, Varro.

As we have seen, both poets declare Juno’s special affection for Carthage in the opening lines of their epics. Juno’s role as the protectress of Carthage extends back beyond Virgil to Ennius and perhaps Naevius.¹⁴² However, in the *Aeneid*, Juno is much

¹⁴¹ For Virgilian aspects of Silius’ Juno, see Gossage (1969), 75-8; Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2494-6; Feeney (1991), 303-4; Santini (1991), 27-32; Hardie (1993), 64; Wilson (1993), 219-20; Dominik (2003), 472-3.

¹⁴² Feeney (1991), 130-1 on Juno in the opening of the *Aeneid*: “As in Ennius (and possibly Naevius), Juno here is to be viewed under the aspect of the Carthaginian Tanit.” See Feeney (1991), 116-7 and 126-8 for Juno’s role in Naevius and Ennius; and also Santini (1991), 24-6 for a discussion of the distinction between Juno Regina, the Juno of Homeric tradition, and Juno Caelestis, the Roman interpretation of Tanit. Santini concludes that while Virgil’s Juno is a fusion of Juno Regina and Juno Caelestis, Silius’ Juno carries only the characteristics of Juno Caelestis, despite his professed loyalty to Virgil. For a historical and archaeological discussion of the cult of Caelestis at Rome, see Rives (1995), 65-71.

more than just a Carthage-lover – her anger extends back to the Trojan War and her grievances towards the Trojans (*Aen.* 1.23-8). The Dido interlude in the *Aeneid* occupies only a short section of the entire epic, and Juno's motivations following the suicide of Dido and the departure of Aeneas have more to do with her hatred towards the Trojans than with her affection for Carthage. In contrast, the *Punica*, as the epic's very title suggests, has everything to do with Carthage. Thus Juno's motivation throughout the war is based on her futile attempt to maintain an eternal dwelling place for her people (*optavit profugis aeternam condere gentem*, 1.28). Ironically, even though she ostensibly fears Roman expansion and feels threatened by their imperial ambitions, it is Juno herself who, by her own actions, begins the series of wars that will ultimately annihilate her favourite city.

Silius' Juno is especially "Carthaginian" in her care for her protégé, Hannibal. Virgil's Juno is careless to the point of callousness in her treatment of Dido and Turnus; they are there to be used and discarded. The only real concern shown by the Virgilian Juno towards Dido comes as she lies fatally wounded; by then it is too late and the only thing Juno can do is to cut short Dido's death throes. Juno shows rather more affection towards Turnus, but in the end Turnus is still slain by Aeneas, thus consigning both of Juno's unfortunate human agents to the underworld. Silius' Juno, on the other hand, actively watches over Hannibal and shows concern towards his wellbeing. At Saguntum, she removes a spear that has wounded Hannibal (1.548-52). At Cannae, fearing for Hannibal's safety, she disguises herself as the cowardly Metellus in an attempt to persuade Paulus to retreat from battle (10.45-7), and when that fails to make an impression, she takes matters into her own hands by disguising herself as a Moor, Gelesta,¹⁴³ then leading Hannibal into another section of the battlefield (10.83-91). Indeed, Juno's concern for Hannibal seems even to take precedence over her hatred towards Rome: in the aftermath of Cannae, she orders the god Somnus to deliver a dream to Hannibal in order to deter him from immediately marching on Rome (10.337-

¹⁴³ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 10.85 says this name only appears here and is of no significance. However, it seems plausible that Gelesta is a reference to Juno Caelestis (see note 142).

50).¹⁴⁴ Later, she diverts Hannibal from duelling with Marcellus (12.201-2), and when Hannibal eventually marches on Rome, Jupiter remonstrates with Juno, which causes her to dispense with her disguises and reveal herself (along with the assorted gods arrayed on the hills of Rome) to Hannibal, persuading him to give up his attempt to challenge the gods (12.701-28).¹⁴⁵ After this ultimate intervention, Juno disappears from the narrative until the battle of Zama, hardly surprising since the narrative also temporarily ceases to focus on Hannibal.

Juno finally reappears at Zama in a passage closely modelled on *Aeneid* 12.791-842. In the Virgilian episode, Jupiter spots Juno sitting in a cloud and watching the final battle unfold; he demands that Juno cease her machinations against Aeneas. In response, Juno submits to her husband's order, but not before she extracts from Jupiter a promise to erase the Trojan name from Rome. Although this Virgilian reconciliation is still not complete,¹⁴⁶ at the end of the conversation Juno is rejoicing (*laetata*, *Aen.* 12.841). Compare the Virgilian scene to Silius' at *Pun.* 17.341-84.¹⁴⁷ Jupiter again notices Juno looking down at the battle, and demands that the time has come to end the conflict. Juno's request, unlike the one made by Virgil's Juno, does not focus on Rome, but instead on Hannibal. The first and most important request that Juno makes is for Hannibal's life to be spared (17.364-7), reinforcing her concern throughout the epic for his safety.¹⁴⁸ Her only other request is for Carthage's walls to remain standing even after the city perishes (17.368-9). After being granted her wishes, Juno draws Hannibal away

¹⁴⁴ It is unclear why she does so; Silius says she is motivated by the knowledge of Jupiter's anger and the fated failure of such a venture (*irarumque Iovis Latiiue haud inscia fati*, 10.338) – she probably fears the consequences of Jovian anger on Hannibal rather than on herself.

¹⁴⁵ Hannibal is threatened with a fate like that of Statius' *contemptor divum*, Capaneus. He has just made a speech asking why Jupiter is unwilling to strike him down with his thunderbolt, thus directly challenging his authority (12.674-7). The passage also parallels (and reverses) the Virgilian scene at *Aen.* 2.589-623, where Venus allows Aeneas to see the Olympians destroying Troy; see Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2500.

¹⁴⁶ On this episode, see Feeney (1991), 147-9, and Feeney (1984). In particular he notes that the issue of Carthage is not dealt with at all, thus causing Juno's grievances to be unresolved.

¹⁴⁷ Marks (2003), 140-3 acknowledges the link between these two scenes, but argues that there is a further link to be made between Silius' divine dialogue and the conversation between Venus and Jupiter at *Aen.* 1.223-96. Marks believes that this link is only part of a greater connection that Silius makes between Hannibal at Zama and Aeneas at Carthage.

¹⁴⁸ Santini (1991), 25 describes Juno here as "still the Tanit of Carthage, bodyguard of her protégé Hannibal".

from the battle by fashioning a likeness of Scipio (17.522-33).¹⁴⁹ When Hannibal tries to ride back into the thick of the fighting after realizing that he has been tricked, Juno strikes down his horse (17.553-7). Finally, as Hannibal contemplates suicide, Juno appears in disguise as a shepherd and offers to lead him back to the battle, but instead leads him even further away (17.567-80). As she leaves Hannibal on top of a hillock to observe the outcome of the battle, she returns, still troubled (*turbata*, 17.604), to heaven (17.597-604). If the final reconciliation in Virgil is qualified, then there is hardly any reconciliation in Silius. As Feeney points out, Juno is in the same state as she was in books 10 and 12 (10.337, 12.701); nothing has really changed.¹⁵⁰ But is true reconciliation even possible in the *Punica*? Ennius placed Juno's reconciliation in the middle of the Second Punic War, but Silius diverges from his model by reminding us at other points in the epic that this is not the end.¹⁵¹ Through prolepsis, he tells us that there will be a *third* Punic war, which will be even more disastrous for Carthage (1.8-11, 7.492-3). And even then, there may still be no end to the conflict. Horace, for instance, depicts a Juno who avenges her nation's losses in the civil war (*Odes* 2.1.25-8). Lucan shows Marius nursing Libyan hatred (*BC* 2.92-3), describes the defeat of Curio in Libya as an avenging sacrifice for Hannibal and the Carthaginian dead (*BC* 4.788-90),¹⁵² and of course portrays Caesar as a new Hannibal (*BC* 1.303-5).¹⁵³ As Dido is avenged by Hannibal, so too is Hannibal avenged; only it will be the Romans accomplishing it by themselves. Vengeance begets vengeance, which only begets further vengeance – Silius is fully conscious that the shameful world of Lucan lies ahead, as he demonstrates through

¹⁴⁹ A passage modelled on *Aen.* 10.633-53, where Juno fashions a likeness of Aeneas to draw Turnus away from the battle.

¹⁵⁰ Feeney (1991), 303.

¹⁵¹ For speculation on exactly when the Ennian reconciliation took place, see Feeney (1984), 193.

¹⁵² Sklenář (2003), 41-2 argues that "*Poeni manes* (4.790) is inclusive enough to suggest that Curio's defeat is Dido's revenge as much as Hannibal's. To put it another way, Juba has succeeded in the role of Dido's avenger where Hannibal has failed." It is difficult to see Juba as a success and Hannibal as a failure, considering that Juba's victory ultimately plays no decisive role in the civil war as a whole. Rather, Juba can be seen as continuing the legacy of Hannibal, wreaking vengeance on behalf of the Africans, while inviting Roman vengeance in return.

¹⁵³ For Caesar as Hannibal, see Ahl (1976), 107-12 and Masters (1992), 1 n.1.

the revelations of the Sibyl (13.853-67). In such a world, can reconciliation really be reached?¹⁵⁴

So far, then, we have looked at one half of the oppositional dynamic, and it only reinforces the schematic notion of the epic, since Juno is so clearly a Carthaginian deity. Let us leave her for now and turn to her antagonist, Jupiter, the “Roman” half. Feeney argues that the Jupiter of the *Punica* “is more closely and exclusively linked with the supreme god of the Roman state than any other epic Jupiter” – the providential Jupiter Optimus Maximus, protector of Rome.¹⁵⁵ However, he also argues that the character of Jupiter is inconsistent to the point of incoherence: “Throughout the poem, Jupiter’s motives oscillate meaninglessly between purgative zeal and protective concern.”¹⁵⁶ Feeney believes that such inconsistency is directly due to Silius’ inability to create a meaningful divine framework. But what if we view such inconsistency as deliberate on the part of the poet, rather than mere ineptitude? Before I make my case, however, we shall first explore *how* Jupiter’s character is inconsistent.¹⁵⁷

The ambiguity of Jupiter’s role is thrust into the open at his very first appearance in the epic. Jupiter, introduced as *pater omnipotens* (3.163), dispatches Mercury, who appears in a dream to Hannibal and urges him to hasten over the Alps. Mercury then shows a brief prophecy of what the future holds, in the form of a snake (representing Hannibal) that rampages all over the land (3.163-213).¹⁵⁸ Feeney notes that “the story of this vision comes originally from Hannibal’s historian Silenus, and was available to Silius from the versions of Coelius Antipater and Livy.”¹⁵⁹ In Livy, the figure in Hannibal’s dream is an unnamed, but divine-looking, young man (*iuvenem divina specie*) who says that he has been sent by Jupiter to guide him to Italy (Livy 21.22.6).

¹⁵⁴ Ahl (1976), 112 has this to say on the repetition of vengeance in Lucan: “With Thapsus the ghosts of Carthage have been avenged. But Cato’s suicide marks a new phase in the struggle... Africa has avenged her defeats by Rome; now the republic must avenge its annihilation by Caesar.” And see Hardie (1993), 29-30 for the theme of “sacrifice calling forth further sacrifice”.

¹⁵⁵ Feeney (1991), 305.

¹⁵⁶ Feeney (1991), 307.

¹⁵⁷ On Silius’ Jupiter, see Feeney (1991), 304-7; Gossage (1969), 79-81;

¹⁵⁸ This dream is analyzed by Vessey (1982a), 329-31 and Feeney (1991), 305-6.

¹⁵⁹ Feeney (1991), 305.

Silius has the obvious choice of Mercury for this divine guide, as he had the well known example of Mercury's appearance to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4.219-78 to draw upon.¹⁶⁰ The very decision to make use of this Virgilian scene, however, unmistakably draws a connection between Aeneas and Hannibal, as well as between the two Jupiters. Mercury urges Aeneas to shake off his sloth and get on with his mission to found Rome; Hannibal is also admonished by Mercury for sleeping and delaying in Spain (3.172-3, 176), but *his* unaccomplished mission is to *destroy* Rome. In both scenes it is Mercury, and ultimately Jupiter, who urges the idle commander to action, but the result of such action will carry very different connotations. The complete reversal of the result of Jupiter's intervention is also clearly shown if we refer to another instance of the Virgilian Jupiter dispatching Mercury to earth: in *Aeneid* 1, Mercury is sent (*Aen.* 1.297-304) to calm the Carthaginians' fierce hearts (*ferocia Poeni / corda*, *Aen.* 1.302-3) so that Aeneas is received by Dido in hospitable fashion. In contrast, the sending of Mercury in Silius will stir up this ferocious nature, resulting in a raging storm with an unmatched level of violence (*non ulla nec umquam / saevior it trucibus tempestas acta procellis*, 3.227-8).

Naturally, Silius' readers, familiar with the story in Livy, might well have expected its inclusion in the poem. Silius' "obvious" substitution of Mercury for the unnamed boy, however, is a clear sign that the poet wants his readers to compare this episode to its corresponding scenes in the *Aeneid*. We expect Jupiter to be opposed to Juno's plans, but here he not only does not oppose the events she has set into motion, but actively engages in following it up.¹⁶¹ Why would Jupiter do such a thing? Silius pre-empted the reader by having the narrator provide the reason immediately after the introduction of Jupiter – he hopes to test the Romans (referred to as *Dardanium*, 3.164) with peril and raise their fame to the stars through savage warfare, in a repeat of the

¹⁶⁰ Feeney (1991), 305, and see Spaltenstein (1986), ad 3.163 for a fuller list of the sources available for this dream vision. Spaltenstein notes that Silius is alone in attributing to the young man the identity of Mercury.

¹⁶¹ Note too Jupiter's later comment to Venus, where he declares himself to be in charge of what is going on (*hac ego... / paro*, 3.573-4).

siege of Troy (3.163-5). Thus it is not Juno but Jupiter who re-enacts the Trojan War, and this from a Jupiter who, in Virgil, had promised to Juno that the name of Troy would vanish forever. In fact, Jupiter does not seem particularly trustworthy, since his promise to preserve the walls of Carthage at the end of the *Punica* is also broken at the end of the Third Punic War.

Jupiter further elaborates on his reason for allowing the war to go ahead soon after Hannibal's vision, in a scene (3.557-629) that carefully mimics the conversation made between Venus and Jupiter at *Aeneid* 1.220-97.¹⁶² Venus anxiously asks Jupiter whether there will be another siege of Troy (*anne interim capta repetentur Pergama Roma?*, 3.569), which, as we have just seen some four hundred lines before, has already been given by the narrator as the reason for the war. In response, Jupiter dives straight into a lengthy monologue, telling Venus that he has instigated the war to awaken a people who have fallen into inaction and ingloriously live out their lives in silence (3.573-81). As Feeney observes,¹⁶³ Jupiter's judgement of third century Rome is strikingly incongruous, considering that the narrator has described the senate at 1.609-16 as a group equal to the gods in virtue (*aequantem superos virtute senatum*, 1.611).¹⁶⁴ The contradiction between the narrator's remarks in book 1 and Jupiter's criticism in book 3 is seen by Feeney as a sign of Silius' inability to piece together a consistent storyline,¹⁶⁵ but the inconsistency would not have gone unnoticed by Silius' audience. To them, Jupiter's comments about Rome's neglect of war, when applied in the context of their own time, might have seemed darkly amusing.

¹⁶² The most recent discussion of the prophecy is the thorough treatment of Marks (2005a), 13-15 and 211-221. Also see Gossage (1969), 78-9; McDermott and Orentzel (1977), 27-30; Vessey (1982a), 333-4; Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2504; Pomeroy (1990), 126 and 131; Feeney (1991), 306; Santini (1991), 8; McGuire (1997), 79-80.

¹⁶³ Feeney (1991), 306. He goes on to assert that "Jupiter's motive may appear to be in some sort of rough agreement with the poem's thematic interest in Roman decline".

¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Silius says that they have acquired their names through military victories (*ac nomina parta triumphis*, 1.610), apparently alluding to cognomens like *Africanus*. However, Scipio was the first to receive such an honorific title, so Duff (1934), vol. 1, 50 sees it as an anachronism. Spaltenstein (1986), ad 1.610 attributes the description to thoughtlessness, and suggests that Silius may have consulted his source when he makes the correct assertion at 17.626 that Scipio was the first to be named after his conquest, a source he did not think to consult at 1.610. The apparent anachronism is definitely hard to explain away, but the mention of the senate's military achievements certainly contrasts with Jupiter's later accusation about their inaction.

¹⁶⁵ Feeney (1991), 306: "Silius' expedient here is a makeshift, a poetic saving of the phenomena."

Jupiter's prophecy that follows these initial remarks is the passage in the epic that most overtly places the historical position of the Second Punic War within the context of Flavian Rome. The significance of the prophecy, however, has been much debated, with scholars usually choosing to see it as an obligatory epic panegyric with no real political meaning. It is of course notoriously difficult to sift out any "truth" behind a panegyric,¹⁶⁶ but the recent study by Raymond Marks has put forth a powerful argument about the contemporary nature of Silius' epic. In analyzing the panegyric of book 3, Marks argues that Scipio is intimately connected to the Flavian regime, and a figure acting as a *speculum principis* for Domitian, fulfilling a didactic function.¹⁶⁷

Part of Marks' argument focuses on the common ties that Scipio and Domitian have with Jupiter.¹⁶⁸ His thesis, which argues that Scipio is a hero who should be emulated by Domitian, leads him to read the connections between Jupiter and Domitian in the context of a broader connection between Scipio and Domitian. Such a reading, however, neglects other implications for these connections. Here I will expand upon his analysis by taking up the connection between Jupiter and Domitian as a connection in itself. Due partly to the historical subject of the poem, the Jupiter in the *Punica*, more than the Jupiter in either the *Argonautica* or the *Thebaid*, is tied most closely to Rome. In the context of Flavian Rome, we know that Jupiter enjoyed a renaissance under the Flavians, after his comparative neglect under Augustus. Domitian in particular actively associated himself with Jupiter by, among other actions, erecting a shrine to Jupiter Conservator and restoring the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.¹⁶⁹ In coinage and literature (for example, at Mart. 9.20.9-10 and Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.128-9 and 5.137-8), Domitian is portrayed as a vice-regent of Jupiter who wages war and rules on earth on behalf of the

¹⁶⁶ For example, see Bartsch (1994), 148-87 for an examination of the question of sincerity in relation to Pliny's *Panegyricus*.

¹⁶⁷ Marks (2005a), 211-44.

¹⁶⁸ Marks (2005a), 230-5.

¹⁶⁹ Fears (1981a), 74-80; Jones (1992), 99-100; Marks (2005a), 231. Fears believes that Domitian was motivated by a genuine belief in the notion that Jupiter saved him from death at the hands of the Vitellians in 69. Silius includes this detail in his panegyric at 3.625-6, cited by Fears as evidence for the Domitianic Jovian theology; he follows McDermott and Orentzel (1977) on Silius' relationship with Domitian.

god.¹⁷⁰ While Marks connects Scipio to Domitian by emphasizing their roles as vice-regents to Jupiter, it is possible to see Domitian as more than just an earthly representative for the king of the gods. As Kenneth Scott shows, Domitian, in addition to being described as Jupiter's vice-regent, was also portrayed as a "Jupiter on earth", a *Iuppiter Ausonius*, as Statius puts it (*Silv.* 3.4.12).¹⁷¹ The differences between these two portrayals are not easily distinguishable, but nevertheless exist. Domitian is at once both an earthly representative of Jupiter, thus making a connection to Jupiter through the epic proxy Scipio, and an earthly incarnation of Jupiter, making a direct connection to the god himself. Thus, any reflection on Jupiter's character would have, to some extent, reflected on Domitian himself. Silius, surely aware of Domitian's attachment towards Jupiter, could not have created a politically meaningless deity.

As I have already shown, Silius' Jupiter often performs actions that appear to be at odds with his motivations. He is portrayed as a fundamentally benevolent deity who wishes the best for Rome, but he also plans and orchestrates the suffering that Rome endures during the Second Punic War. It appears that, like the battle of Cannae, Jupiter's role in the *Punica* is a highly paradoxical one. He acts as protector of Rome, but also deliberately forces Rome to suffer through the horrors of the war, because he believes it to be in the best interests of Rome. Similarly, Cannae is the moment of Rome's greatest suffering in the Second Punic War, but experiencing the disaster is necessary before Rome can recover to defeat Carthage. It is impossible to attribute to Silius an attitude towards Domitian by analyzing his portrayal of the epic Jupiter, but in this portrayal we can at least see a desire on the part of Silius to create a deity who cannot be judged wholly positively or negatively. There is not enough evidence elsewhere in the *Punica* to make any judgment on Silius' thoughts regarding Domitian, but such lack of evidence is also accompanied by the way in which Silius treats the character of Jupiter. Silius' attitude towards Domitian cannot easily be inferred from the

¹⁷⁰ Marks (2005a), 232.

¹⁷¹ Scott (1936), 133-5.

text of the *Punica*, partly due to the confused and ambiguous way in which deities connected to Domitian, such as Jupiter, are deliberately portrayed.

Jupiter was not the only god to be closely connected to Domitian. The emperor's favourite deity was in fact Minerva, who he believed acted as his protector,¹⁷² and in Minerva we can find another example of a deity who is connected with ambiguity, mainly through her ties to both Rome and Carthage. According to Suetonius, Domitian kept a private shrine to Minerva in his bedroom (*Dom.* 15.2) and his devotion to the goddess approached outright superstition rather than mere piety (*Dom.* 15.3). The emperor also associated his military success with Minerva: she is frequently depicted on coinage alongside Victoria, and a new legion formed in 83 AD was given the name *Flavia Minerva*.¹⁷³ Given Domitian's liking for Minerva, then, we might expect that Silius, surely aware of such a predilection, would have obliged by giving her a prominent role in engineering Rome's triumph over Carthage. However, we find that the goddess, far from being a pro-Roman figure in the *Punica*, is a character more in keeping with her Homeric predecessor, being one of the deities who most fiercely champions the Carthaginian cause. While she indeed acts as a protector, it is the great anti-Roman, Hannibal, who gains her protection. The ambiguous identity of Minerva in the *Punica* is most apparent when we return to the focus of this chapter, Cannae, where Minerva performs her most prominent role in the epic in the climactic *Kampf der Götter*.¹⁷⁴

As the two armies advance towards each other to begin the real fighting at Cannae, Silius tells us that the strife on earth is mirrored by strife in heaven: "the mad discord invaded heaven and prompted the gods to do battle" (*discordia demens / intravit caelo superosque ad bella coegit*, 9.288-9). The poet then gives a list of the deities on each side (9.290-9);¹⁷⁵ on the Roman side is an extensive array of gods, including Apollo, Mars, Venus, Hercules, and the various native Italian deities, but on the Carthaginian

¹⁷² For Domitian's devotion towards Minerva, see Scott (1936), 166-88; Girard (1981); Jones (1992), 99-100.

¹⁷³ Scott (1936), 176-80.

¹⁷⁴ Juhnke (1972), 207.

¹⁷⁵ The partition of the gods into two camps is of course derived from Homer's depiction of the gods; see Ripoll (2006) for more.

side only three are actually named: Juno, Minerva and Hammon, although Silius is careful to tell us that there were many other lesser deities present as well. The presence of Minerva on the Carthaginian side is not entirely surprising, as she is able to neatly reprise her Iliadic, anti-Trojan role.¹⁷⁶ Shortly afterwards, Minerva's role as Carthaginian champion is made apparent when she initiates a duel against her brother Mars (9.438-69).¹⁷⁷ Mars and Minerva are cast as the personal guardians of Scipio and Hannibal, as their descent to earth is prompted by fear for the safety of their charges (*Mavors Scipiadae metuens, Tritonia Poeno*, 9.439). Minerva spells out her motivations later in an address to Jupiter, in which she claims that she descended to earth only in order to prevent the death of Hannibal (9.532-4). Thus Minerva is not simply a Carthaginian sympathizer but specifically the guardian of the supreme Carthaginian commander, but as the reader would have known, also the guardian of the Roman emperor Domitian. Of course, one may claim, as Ripoll does, that Silius' Minerva bears no relation to the Minerva favoured by Domitian, thus making comparisons between the two irrelevant;¹⁷⁸ but it is clear that Silius, in his characterization of Minerva, at least makes a concerted effort to emphasize her conflicted loyalties. Indeed, in her speech Minerva pledges that Rome will survive as the home of the Palladium (9.530-1), despite her professed

¹⁷⁶ Ripoll (2006), 253, however, sees Silius' placement of Minerva into the Carthaginian camp as contrived and done in an extremely ham-fisted fashion, only so that he can insert the Homeric *topos*: "De même, le lecteur s'étonne de voir figurer Minerve du côté punique pour une obscure raison légendaire, alors que rien dans ce qui précède ne laissait présager cette prise de position de sa part. Quant à l'intervention de Mars et de Minerve dans le combat et à leur duel, qui se veut un résumé de la grande théomachie du chant XXI de l'*Iliade*, le plus ardent défenseur de Silius ne peut y voir rien d'autre qu'une reprise plate et froide de *topoi* homériques." It may indeed be true that Silius gives no prior indication as to Minerva's pro-Carthaginian position, and that the revelation of this at Cannae is not done skilfully, but as I argue here, Minerva's Carthaginian (and Roman) loyalty can mean more than just "une reprise plate et froide de *topoi* homériques".

¹⁷⁷ Ripoll (2006), 238 n.7 notes that the duel between Minerva and Mars is the ultimate manifestation of the conflict between the gods, an example that does not recur anywhere else in the extant Latin epics. In addition Ripoll argues that "la grande théomachie" (241) present in book 21 of the *Iliad* is condensed into this single duel. See also n. 176 above.

¹⁷⁸ Ripoll (2006), 250 n. 72 says in relation to Silius' Minerva: "Une Minerve issue de la tradition épique qui, contrairement à ce qu'on a dit parfois, n'a évidemment rien à voir avec la déesse favorite de Domitien." Just why a lack of relevance is so obvious, however, is left unsaid. Of course, if one were to argue that Silius' depiction of Minerva is deliberately intended to be a sarcastic parody of Domitian's favourite, one would be basing such an argument on very flimsy evidence, but to suggest that the Roman reader is expected to ignore the real life significance of Minerva when he reads the epic seems to me to be equally unhelpful.

favouritism towards Hannibal and the Carthaginians. Such a confusion in Minerva's sympathies will appear again in the aftermath of Cannae, and cannot safely be ignored.

Both Minerva and Mars actively engage in protecting their favourites from harm. Minerva is especially proactive in this regard, as Silius tells us that Mars only decides to aid Scipio personally when he sees his sister turning a spear away from Hannibal (9.455-9). As the duel between the two deities intensifies, Jupiter is made aware of their actions and sends Iris down to remove Minerva from the battlefield, threatening to let his daughter know the force of his thunderbolts should she refuse (9.470-8). Minerva reluctantly accedes to his demand and vacates the field (9.479-85). Intriguingly, Suetonius relates an anecdote about the end of Domitian's reign, in which Minerva appears in a dream to the emperor and tells him that she has been disarmed by Jupiter.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Silius' Minerva is verbally "disarmed" by Jupiter and made unable to defend Hannibal any longer, although Hannibal does not suffer from her lack of protection in this case. Could Silius be making a subtle reference to Domitian's famous dream? Without knowing when specific portions of the *Punica* were revised, it is impossible to tell. Yet just as an equation may be drawn between Aeneas and Hannibal,¹⁸⁰ the champion and nemesis of Rome, a similar equation may be drawn between Domitian and Hannibal, both favourites of Minerva.

Minerva's double loyalty is again brought to the reader's attention in the aftermath of Cannae. The remnants of the Roman army have assembled at Canusium, where they debate on what to do next; Metellus (the actual Metellus this time, and not Juno in disguise) plans to sail far from Italy so that he will no longer have to worry about the war (10.415-25). Upon hearing this, Scipio, who is also at the camp, bursts onto the scene and swears that he shall never leave Italy. He swears by Jupiter, Juno and Minerva (10.432-5). Certainly, they form the Capitoline Triad, but Juno and Minerva have also

¹⁷⁹ *Dom.* 15.3: *Minervam, quam superstitiose colebat, somniavit excedere sacrario negantemque ultra se tueri eum posse, quod exarmata esset a Iove.* Another version of this dream is given by Dio (67.16), in which Rusticus, the philosopher whom Domitian had executed, approaches the emperor with sword drawn, and Minerva is seen throwing away her weapons and falling into an abyss, mounted on a chariot drawn by black horses.

¹⁸⁰ See p. 178.

just been witnessed literally fighting on behalf of Carthage, and in the case of Minerva, fighting against Scipio himself. Scipio, however, confidently vows by her name, recalling her “normal” identity as a Roman goddess. And Scipio’s vow does not merely illustrate Minerva’s confused loyalties. It also calls into question his *own* identity, for Scipio threatens Metellus by telling him that if he refuses to swear to follow his vow, then the Hannibal that he fears will instantly appear beside him (*ni talia sancis, / quem tremis et cuius somnos formidine rumpis, / Hannibal hic armatus adest*, 10.442-4).¹⁸¹ Scipio indicates that he will be as deadly to Metellus as Hannibal could ever be, reminding us of both his competition and similarities with the Carthaginian. Like Minerva, Scipio’s own sense of identity at Cannae is not uncontroversial. In Chapter Three, I argue that at the end of the epic, Scipio becomes an exemplar of virtue, virtue that allows Rome to finally win the war. His portrayal at Cannae, however, is in keeping with the atmosphere of paradox and of ambiguity that I have highlighted in this chapter. In preventing Metellus and his co-conspirators from breaking their faith to Rome, Scipio invokes the names of two deities who have been fighting on behalf of Carthage, and even refers to himself as another Hannibal. Strangely, in order to maintain the *fides* of his fellow citizens, Scipio must almost assume the identity of the enemy and do to his compatriots what the enemy themselves would have done. Thus, just as we have previously witnessed in the cases of Satricus, Varro and Paulus, virtue behaves in strange ways at Cannae.

Anna, double loyalty, and the *Aeneid* in reverse

I conclude this chapter on paradoxical virtue at Cannae by analyzing an episode which illustrates the clearest example of double identity in the *Punica*, the character of Anna, who sets Cannae into motion after being compelled to do so by Juno. In Anna, the identities of Roman and Carthaginian converge to form a distinctly confused deity, one that has close ties to both sides. It is not surprising that she is chosen by Silius to

¹⁸¹ On the disturbing connotations of Scipio’s threat, see Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2547. Marks (2005a), 132-3 provides objections to their claims.

introduce his Cannae narrative, for, as the Satricus episode and the conflict between Varro and Paulus demonstrate, Cannae is as much a battle fought by Roman against Roman as it is a battle fought by Roman against Carthaginian. It is entirely fitting that Anna sets Cannae into motion, for as a deity who is both Roman and Carthaginian, she owes loyalty to both sides, thus making her conception of virtue highly ambiguous. In addition to Anna's confused sense of identity, the Anna episode also acts as a conscious reversal of *Aeneid* 1-4. The Anna episode thus offers vital insight into the relationship between the *Punica* and the *Aeneid*, in addition to its place as an introduction to the Cannae books.

Silius begins book 8 by having Juno summon Anna to her cause, ordering her to comfort the troubled Hannibal and prompt him into marching to Cannae (8.25-38). In her response to Juno, Anna acknowledges both her current position as a favoured goddess of the Romans (*inter Latios Annae stet numen honores*, 8.43) and her ties to her homeland and her sister Dido (*favorem / antiquae patriae mandataque magna sororis*, 8.41-2). The narrator takes up these conflicting links and says that he will tell the reader why the Romans have dedicated a temple to Dido's sister and worship her as a deity (8.44-9), an introduction reminiscent of Ovid's *Fasti*. What follows is a long recounting of Anna's story (8.50-201).

For Anna's story, Silius, as one would expect, draws on the *Fasti* and the *Aeneid*. Santini breaks the tale up into three sections: Anna's escape from Carthage and her meeting with Aeneas (44-75), an intervening *ekphrasis* that describes Dido's death (76-159), and the rest of Anna's story (160-201); the first and third sections he sees as Ovidian, and the second Virgilian.¹⁸² He has also amply shown how Silius communicates with the texts of Ovid and Virgil in his telling of Anna's story.¹⁸³ As he notes, in Ovid, Anna's arrival in Italy and Aeneas' subsequent hospitality acts as a mirror to *Aeneid* 1, with the identities of the guest and host reversed (Anna acting as a surrogate Dido).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Santini (1991), 40-1.

¹⁸³ Santini (1991), 39-59.

¹⁸⁴ Santini (1991), 47-8.

Silius' utilization of this mirror theme, however, is more complicated than its corresponding usage in the *Fasti*, hardly surprising as Silius is able to draw upon both Virgil and Ovid for his version of Anna's tale. Silius both explicitly and implicitly refers back to the *Aeneid*: the former by making use of material in Virgil in his own narrative, the latter by shaping his narrative as a mirror of its Virgilian predecessor.

Silius' story begins with the aftermath of Dido's death, with Anna assuming the role of Virgil's Aeneas. Just as Aeneas escapes from Troy, Carthage is quickly overrun by the hostile Iarbas and Anna must escape like a fugitive (8.54-6, cf. *Fasti* 3.545-66). Both become exiles from their homeland. Aeneas' stopovers on the way to Carthage, described in *Aeneid* 3 (Delos, Crete, Epirus), are paralleled by Anna's stopover in Cyrene (8.57-64, cf. *Fasti* 3.567-72); Aeneas receives the friendly hospitality of Helenus, while Anna is welcomed by Battus. Once she is forced to leave Cyrene due to the vengeful pursuit of her brother Pygmalion, Anna returns to the seas and is shipwrecked, Aeneas-style, in Italy (8.65-8, cf. *Fasti* 3.587-600). So far, Silius has followed Ovid's account of Anna's travels quite closely, and it is likely that Ovid himself deliberately chose to base his account on a reversed *Aeneid*. Once Anna finds herself in Italy, however, Silius' narrative begins to deviate from Ovid's.

The most significant change in Silius' version is Anna's retelling of her sister's death (8.116-59), which is completely absent in Ovid (Anna's storytelling at Aeneas' court is dealt with in two lines, *Fasti* 3.625-6). This section is both an extended reminder of *Aeneid* 4 and a reversed version of *Aeneid* 1, in which Anna is now the exile telling stories to Aeneas, now the king of his newly-found city (*Aeneas... / iam regni compos*, 8.71-2).¹⁸⁵ Other minor details about the meeting between Anna and Aeneas differ between the two poets. One is what happens when Anna and Aeneas first meet. In Silius, Anna kneels before Iulus while Aeneas wordlessly lifts her up and brings her into the palace (8.71-5). In Ovid, meanwhile, Aeneas initially stands dumbfounded until Iulus breaks the silence by exclaiming, "*Anna est!*" (3.601-7). For Santini, Ovid's treatment of

¹⁸⁵ Both Silius and Ovid seek to stress this fact; see Santini (1991), 46.

this scene shows “greater narrative skill and psychological intuition”,¹⁸⁶ and Ovid’s account has, admittedly, a much more intimate feel about it. Yet we must keep in mind that Silius and Ovid tell the story of Anna Perenna with very different purposes.

Ovid begins by asking who the mysterious Anna Perenna is, and offers up the story of Dido’s sister Anna as the most plausible explanation. This story is followed by a few more alternative explanations. Silius, on the other hand, professes his aim to be to show how Anna came to be Anna Perenna; the equation of these two identities is already assumed. Furthermore, the merging of these two identities is key to Silius’ *Cannae* narrative, since Silius must explain to the reader why Juno chose Anna to send her message to Hannibal, and why Anna was actually present in the first place. No such background is present in the *Fasti*, as Ovid’s apparent motivation in relating the story of Anna, besides the complex subtext of Julius Caesar’s assassination, is to answer questions concerning the festival of Anna Perenna. While both poets construct the tale as a mirror of the *Aeneid*, the *Punica*’s self-portrayal as a sequel to Virgil’s epic makes its connections to the *Aeneid* all the more important.

Keeping this in mind, then, it is easy to see why Silius chooses to insert the “digression within a digression” of Dido’s death within the Anna story proper; he wishes to emphasize his thorough knowledge of the Virgilian past, while seeking to show his own innovation through his reworking of this past into a new context. Anna’s retelling of Dido’s death is a reworking of *Aeneid* 2-3, with the now-exiled Carthaginian telling the story of the “fall” of her home city and her wanderings afterwards to the formerly exiled Trojan, now the founder of his own new city. Other discrepancies between Ovid’s and Silius’ stories further demonstrate the difference in aims between the two poets. The *Fasti* focuses on the jealousy of Lavinia upon seeing Aeneas’ treatment of Anna;¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Santini (1991), 46. In addition, he argues that Silius tells the story from the point of view of Anna, while Ovid relates the thoughts of each of the participants.

¹⁸⁷ Santini (1991), 48: “Like Ovid’s reader, Lavinia is witnessing a new, small-scale *Aeneid* (here modelled on Book I with Aeneas’ entry into Carthage), where host and refugee have changed places... She therefore has good reason to suspect an intrigue mounted against herself. This motif of Lavinia’s jealousy of Anna may not be mere poetic invention on Ovid’s part, but rather a reflection of the ancient version of the legend attributed to Varro according to which Anna, not Dido, had been Aeneas’ lover.”

in the *Punica*, the focus is solely on Aeneas and Anna. Santini argues that in contrast to Ovid, Silius “gives not the slightest hint of a love relationship between Anna and Aeneas”¹⁸⁸, but if we consider that Silius’ Anna episode is constructed as a reversal of the *Aeneid*’s Dido-Aeneas episode, then although a love relationship between Anna and Aeneas is not implied, we are certainly reminded of the relationship between Dido and Aeneas in Virgil. After Anna concludes the story of Dido’s death and her travels, Silius tells us that Aeneas was “moved and received the unhappy Anna with peaceful heart and tranquil mind” (*motus erat placidumque animum mentemque quietam / Troius in miseram rector susceperat Annam*, 8.160-1). These are not words that suggest love, but they nevertheless are meant to be directly contrasted with Dido’s reaction following the conclusion of Aeneas’ tale. Virgil’s Dido, far from displaying the qualities of *placidus* and *quietus*, possesses zeal so intense that such qualities are completely absent (*nec placidam membris dat cura quietem*, *Aen.* 4.5). Although Silius’ Aeneas and Virgil’s Dido are in virtually the same position, Aeneas’ behaviour is literally the opposite of Dido’s; in this miniature reversal of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is a reversed Dido.

The episode continues to follow the path of *Aeneid* 4, as Anna now becomes another Aeneas; just as the Trojan behaved at Carthage, the Carthaginian no longer seems like a foreigner in the house of her Trojan host (*Phrygiis nec iam amplius advenat tectis / illa videbatur*, 8.163-4). Then, just as Mercury had appeared to Aeneas in his sleep to remind him of his task and urge him to action, Dido appears in Anna’s dream to remind her of her Carthaginian roots and drive her from Aeneas’ hospitality (8.164-83). Dido’s appearance was not strictly invented by Silius, as it also makes its way into Ovid’s version of the tale (*Fasti* 3.639-41), but the two poets use it in very different ways. Firstly, the ghost’s role in the *Fasti* is limited to a mere three lines. Before its appearance, Ovid has emphasized Lavinia’s envy and her simmering hate for the newcomer (*Fasti* 3.633-8). It is thus Lavinia’s rage that prompts Anna’s flight; Dido’s speech, on the other hand, consists only of a simple command, that Anna should flee from Aeneas’ house. By

¹⁸⁸ Santini (1991), 48.

contrast, Dido's words take up a substantial sixteen lines in Silius, and there is no previous hint of hostility on the part of Lavinia. Although this envy is hinted at by Dido in the course of her speech (8.176-7), Dido's main point is that Anna must remember the enmity between the Carthaginians and Aeneas' people. Such enmity is destined to remain forever, Dido declares, as long as the stars move in the sky and the moon shines upon the earth (*dum caelum rapida stellas vertigine volvet, / lunaque fraterno lustrabit lumine terras, / pax nulla Aeneadas inter Tyriosque manebit*, 8.173-5). Thus both Mercury and Dido act as divine messengers; the former reminding Aeneas of his destiny to found a new Troy, the latter reminding Anna of the destined enmity between the Carthaginians and Romans.

Dido's warning has its effect in both Ovid and Silius, and the end result is the same, with Anna jumping into the river Numicius and becoming the nymph Anna Perenna. Silius' Dido even predicts this very result in her warning to Anna, telling her that her name will forever be celebrated in Italy after her deification (*te sacra excipient hilares in flumina Nymphae / aeternumque Italis numen celebrabere in oris*, 8.182-3). Dido's prophecy may seem strange to the reader, since we have just heard her declare that there will be eternal strife between Aeneas' and Dido's people. Why, then, must Anna also be worshipped eternally in Italy? This incongruity is of course borne out of necessity; Anna Perenna was indeed worshipped by the Romans annually at her festival in March. Yet for Silius, Anna's transformation into an Italian nymph accomplishes several things. Firstly, it allows her to lie in wait among the enemy, waiting for the perfect opportunity to help fulfil Dido's curse. Dido thus allows Anna to be "planted" into Italy in order to aid her scheme of revenge against the Romans. Secondly, her actions aptly bring out the theme of civil strife at Cannae. Just as Varro and Paulus engage in a sort of civil war amongst themselves shortly after this episode, Anna turns against her adopted country by obeying Juno's orders. Thirdly, Anna's double allegiance is another example of the confused loyalties held by so many of the deities in the epic that we have previously discussed.

Fourthly, returning to our reading of the Anna episode as a reversed version of the *Aeneid's* Dido episode, we see that Anna's integration into Roman religion reflects yet another aspect of such a reading. Anna's transformation into a nymph occurs after her departure from Aeneas' hospitality. In Silius' model, after Aeneas departs from Carthage in the *Aeneid*, Dido becomes consumed with rage to such an extent that she curses Aeneas and commits suicide. As we have seen, at the moment when he has finished listening to the stories of the shipwrecked Anna, Aeneas acts exactly like a reversed Dido in that he is calm and collected, completely without the passion that Dido displays at the conclusion of Aeneas' telling of his stories at Carthage. Now, at the moment of Anna's departure, Aeneas (represented by the Aeneadae who search for her) once again reacts in an opposite manner to Dido. Instead of cursing the departed foreigner, the Aeneadae worship her as a goddess. It is entirely possible that, through the Aeneadae's celebration of Anna, the Romans' moral superiority is contrasted with the moral depravity of the Carthaginians, and Aeneas' own superior self control with Dido's lack of control.

Even though the Anna episode appears to draw to an end following Anna's transformation into an Italian nymph, Silius continues to interact with Virgil and Ovid in the aftermath of her story. By following Juno's orders and urging Hannibal to battle, Anna fulfills Dido's curse. Cannae brings Dido's wished-for destruction upon the Romans, but the reader also knows that Cannae will not be the end of the Second Punic War. As much as Cannae embodies Dido's revenge on Aeneas, the Romans themselves will wreak vengeance upon the Carthaginians by the end of the *Punica*. Intriguingly, the reason that they are able to do so is precisely because of their moral superiority; the calmness displayed by Aeneas compares favourably to Dido's *furor*, and by the end of the epic Aeneas' descendants will also be able to use their superior understanding of virtue as a weapon against Dido's descendants. At Cannae, however, the Romans are still unable to do so; even when they attempt to act virtuously, such as in the cases of Solimus and Paulus, they do not meet with success. The fact that Anna, a deity with a

confused sense of loyalty, plays such a prominent role in the battle reinforces the atmosphere of paradox at Cannae. Anna acts against Rome as both a Carthaginian and Roman deity, in a battle fought as much by Hannibal against Rome as by Varro against Paulus; yet this is also a battle in which Varro's impiety proves to be more fruitful for Rome than Paulus' heroism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed several episodes within Silius' Cannae narrative that contribute to a general atmosphere of paradox throughout the battle narrative. Silius' treatment of virtue in books 8 to 10 shows a great deal of ambiguity, since, despite his characters' best intentions, their attempts to be virtuous do not result in success. Satricus and Solimus, unlike the Saguntines earlier in the epic, cannot be accused of having an incorrect understanding of virtue; they act according to *fides* and *pietas*, but circumstances beyond their control cause them to become involved in impious patricide, just as the Saguntines were. Silius' portrayal of Varro and Paulus continues to demonstrate the paradoxical nature of virtue at Cannae. Varro is a man utterly devoid of virtue, who lacks even the bravery to fight and die on the battlefield, and he is contrasted with Paulus, a Roman who possesses exemplary military virtue, whose death at Cannae is presented as a heroic *devotio*. However, despite being polar opposites in terms of virtue, the roles that Varro and Paulus play at Cannae are far less clear than they initially appear. Paulus' virtue, for all its praiseworthiness, appears to actually do less good for Rome than Varro's lack of it. Only by being unable to die is Varro able to inspire Rome to band together and recover from her disastrous defeat. It is, like the battle of Cannae itself, a necessary step in Rome's path to eventual triumph in the war.

The paradoxical nature of Cannae is neatly summed up by Silius' apostrophe at the end of book 10, which I briefly noted at the beginning of this chapter. Silius comments that "that was how Rome was; and if it was fated that her character was to

change afterwards, then it would have been better if you had remained, Carthage” (*haec tum Roma fuit; post te cui vertere mores / si stabat fatis, potius, Carthago, maneres*, 10.643-4). The “character” referred to by Silius is shown by the Romans’ reaction towards Varro after they are chided by Fabius; the positivity and togetherness that they embody is contrasted with the moral depravity of Romans in later times. In this verdict on Cannae, Silius not only stresses the importance of moral character, but also concludes the Cannae books on an appropriately paradoxical note. At the moment of Rome’s greatest peril, Silius does not wish defeat upon Carthage, but in fact issues the hope that she might have survived, if only to maintain Rome’s sense of morality.¹⁸⁹ Just as Varro’s lack of virtue, while unpleasant, plays a beneficial role for Rome, the continued presence of Carthage, though a dangerous foe, could have provided the *metus hostilis* that may have prevented Rome’s morals from slipping following the Third Punic War.

Cannae and morality are thus inextricably linked. Only through suffering through the disaster of Cannae are the Romans able to display true unity and moral strength, qualities that Silius clearly admires. However, they are only able to achieve such moral strength through an initial lack of virtue, as demonstrated by Varro. Cannae’s paradoxical place as both Rome’s greatest disaster and also one of Rome’s greatest moments of glory is therefore reflected through Silius’ treatment of virtue in the books of Cannae. Though capable of virtue, the sort of virtue shown by characters at Cannae merely reflects the paradoxical nature of the battle that surrounds them. The positive results achieved via a correct application of virtue will eventually become clear at the end of the epic, when Rome’s victory over Carthage at Zama is directly attributed to her superior grasp of morality. In the next chapter, I will discuss the treatment of

¹⁸⁹ Tipping (2007), 231 comments that Silius’ concluding remark “conveys the impression that this military nadir was simultaneous with Rome’s moral zenith. In suggesting this simultaneity, Silius casts a shadow over Roman successes in the last six books of his poem. In a sense, Rome’s victory over Carthage is already part of a moral defeat.” While Tipping’s interpretation is correct, in that Silius laments the moral decline that Rome *did* suffer following the Punic Wars, Silius also wishes to show the reader that such moral decline is not inevitable, as I argue in Chapter Three.

virtue at Zama, where virtuous deeds at last lead to successes not seen at either Saguntum or Cannae.

Chapter Three: Zama and exemplary virtue

Virtue and victory

In Chapters One and Two, I argued that Silius' treatment of virtue at the beginning of the epic, at Saguntum, and at the middle of the epic, at Cannae, depicts a type of virtue that corresponds to the outcome that occurs at both of these battles. The Saguntines' failure to defend to their city from the Carthaginians is connected to their inability to demonstrate a correct understanding of virtue, while the paradox of Cannae is also well reflected in the paradoxical way in which virtue operates throughout the battle. Both Saguntum and Cannae turn out to be heavy defeats for Rome, and in both cases virtue can be seen as operating disharmoniously, with *fides* and *pietas* constantly being incapable of coexistence. In this chapter I turn my focus to the end of the epic and the battle of Zama, in which the Romans finally manage to reconcile *fides* and *pietas* in showing off the sort of exemplary virtue that allows them to win the Second Punic War. The Romans' improved application of virtue is deeply connected to the victory that they manage to achieve. In his depiction of the process of Roman victory, Silius repeatedly uses the Romans' moral superiority as justification for why they triumph over their foes. In particular, *fides* and *pietas* are stressed as core components of the *virtus* that the Romans hold, components that they not only hold in abundance, but ones that their opponents also explicitly lack. The harmonious relationship between these virtues recalls the failure of these same virtues at Saguntum and Cannae. The horror suffered at those defeats is now replaced by total victory, demonstrating the crucial importance of the correct application of virtue.

In addition, I argue in this chapter that Zama represents the culmination of Rome's transformation after the disaster of Cannae. Through her victory at Zama, Rome is seen as entering a new age, one ruled by an ideology alien to old Roman modes of behaviour. I argue that this ideology is one that prioritizes foreign conquest over the

welfare of Italy itself, and is therefore one that causes Rome to move onto the path towards empire. This new ideology is espoused during the debate between Scipio and Fabius Maximus held in order to discuss the Roman expedition to Africa, in which Scipio represents Rome's imperial future, and Fabius Rome's insular past. The aftermath of Zama, which features a triumphal procession of various conquered peoples and places, further reinforces the idea that after Zama, Rome is now on her way to becoming an empire. It is not, however, a path that inevitably leads to moral depravity, despite Silius' recognition elsewhere in the epic that moral failure would eventually become common. Rather, Silius hopes to illustrate the possibility of a properly moral Rome even in empire, through his treatment of virtue at the end of the epic. In providing examples of proper understanding of virtue and linking them with Rome's victory in the Second Punic War, Silius hopes to steer his readers towards a better, more virtuous Rome, one that avoids the mistakes made by those who had participated in the episodes of civil strife of first century Rome.

Zama: Rome entering a new age

To begin, we must see just how Silius portrays Zama as a crucial turning point in Rome's history, one that irrevocably sets her on the path to empire. The main signal given by Silius concerning the gravity of the decision to invade Africa is the lengthy debate between Fabius and Scipio at the end of book 16. After Scipio has put an end to the funeral games that he hosts for his dead father and uncle in Spain, he returns to Rome and is elected consul with a view to invading Libya for the first time in the war. It is at this point that the older senators, wary of a risky war and afraid of any potential catastrophe, object to Scipio's proposal of a foreign campaign (*sed non par animis nec bello prospera turba / ancipiti senior temeraria coepta vetabant / magnosque horrebant cauta formidine casus*, 16.597-9). The debate that follows between Fabius, representing the older faction of the senate, and Scipio, representing the new direction on which

Rome is about to embark, takes up the remainder of the book (16.600-700). In this debate, the differing concerns of the old and new factions of Rome are laid out, and Scipio's victory over Fabius indicates that Rome's future lies outside Italy, with the decision to invade Africa being Rome's first step to becoming an imperial power.

The same debate is related in Livy as well, and Silius' portrayal of the debate bears a considerable Livian influence. Many of the arguments used by Fabius' and Scipio's speeches are present in both versions of the debate. Fabius begins his attack on Scipio by expounding on the glory that he himself has obtained during the war, evidence proving that he cannot be attacking Scipio out of jealousy, but rather out of a conscientious duty towards his country (16.604-10). Fabius gives the same defense in Livy, and argues further that it would be ridiculous to suggest that he, who had not raised a voice in protest when his command had been divided with Minucius at the very peak of his career, would now object to Scipio's command when he was now an old and weary man (Livy 28.40.8-14). Silius' Fabius follows by noting that since Hannibal is still active in Italy, there is no reason for Scipio to leave; he would gain the glory that he seeks by defeating the enemy right then and there. Leaving for Carthage would merely leave Rome defenceless against Hannibal, a foolhardy and treacherous move that would play straight into Hannibal's hands (16.611-40). Similarly, Livy's Fabius urges Scipio to end the war in Italy and points out the danger of separating the two consular armies when resources are already scarce (Livy 28.41.2-13). Both bring up the example of Fulvius, who was recalled from Capua when Hannibal marched on Rome (16.625-7; Livy 28.41.13). Both also tell Scipio to recall the example of Scipio's own father, who abandoned his campaign in Spain in favour of returning to Italy when he discovered that Hannibal had crossed the Alps (16.632-6; Livy 28.42-20). Silius' Fabius concludes his speech by arguing that even were Hannibal to follow Scipio to Africa, it would still be the same Hannibal that now rages in Italy, with the implication being that victory would be no less certain (16.641-3). Livy's Fabius makes the same argument, and further declares that by fighting him in Italy, Scipio's army would be strengthened by both the

aid provided by the other consular army and the lack of reinforcements Hannibal's army would have, reinforcements that he would easily be able to obtain were they fighting in Africa (Livy 28.42.16-19).

Scipio's response to Fabius in the *Punica* is also modelled on Livy's version of the event, with some important differences which strip away the Livian focus on the political machinations behind the debate, causing the debate to become portrayed as one about the fundamental differences between Scipio and Fabius' visions of Rome's future, rather than about petty bickering between political rivals. Scipio begins by noting that the same doommongers who objected to his campaign in Spain shortly after his father and uncle had been killed there are the same men who now criticize his current plan, critics whom he proved to be completely wrong via his earlier exploits (16.645-53). He then outlines his accomplishments during the Spanish campaign and points to the fact that he is now even stronger and more experienced than he was at that time, while the Carthaginians are far weaker due to the losses that they suffered (16.655-69). In contrast, Livy's Scipio states that there was in fact nobody who showed any concern when he took on the command in Spain, making their current objections appear to have arisen from questionable motives (Livy 28.43.9-14). Silius' Scipio appears to be an outsider who has been consistently criticized throughout his career, as opposed to Livy's Scipio, who sees the senators' present criticism arising purely out of jealousy, not because of any fundamental opposition to his way of thinking. Silius thus manipulates his material to allow Scipio to represent a transition into a new era and its new lines of thought, at odds with an older Rome and its more conservative views, rather than simply a man caught up in petty political squabbles.

Silius' Scipio concludes his speech by arguing that since Hannibal has laid waste to Italy for so many years, Carthage should get a taste of its own medicine via Scipio's own invasion of Africa (16.677-97). The same sentiment is expressed in Livy's version (Livy 28.44.12-15). However, even though the senate accedes to Scipio's wishes in both cases, the way it does so differs markedly. After Silius' Scipio finishes delivering his

speech, the senators, “thus roused up” (*talibus accensi patres*, 16.698) and with “fate calling upon them” (*fatoque vocante*, 16.698), agree to Scipio’s plan (*consulis annuerunt dictis*, 16.699). Once again, Silius’ description of the event strips away the political infighting that characterizes Livy’s account. In Silius, the senate’s assent is due to the effectiveness of Scipio’s speech and also to the inevitability of fate, a theme to which we shall soon return. By contrast, Livy portrays Scipio’s speech as being ineffectual, largely because of the political circumstances surrounding the speech. According to Livy, it was generally thought that if Scipio’s wishes had been rejected by the senate, then he would have tabled his proposal to the people, thus making the authority of the senate irrelevant (Livy 28.45.1). Being naturally displeased at Scipio’s attitude in the matter, the senate proceeded to demand reassurances from Scipio that he would respect the decision of the senate before voting on the issue. After consulting with his colleague, Scipio concedes the point to the senate, whereupon the senators finally ratify the decision to allow Scipio to cross to Africa if he deems it to be appropriate. Thus, in Livy the senate’s resentment at Scipio’s arrogant treatment of itself is placed at the fore. Silius, on the other hand, removes any mention of Scipio’s intention to bring the matter to the people and portrays the senators as largely won over by Scipio’s speech, thus moving the emphasis to the contrast between the two doctrines espoused by Fabius and Scipio, rather than the political wrangling that provides the crucial context for the Livian episode. Even if the reader is unaware of Livy’s account, the fact that Silius has stripped away (and even altered) most of the political background behind the debate indicates that he is more concerned with portraying a basic ideological divide between Scipio and Fabius, rather than providing a truly accurate account of why Scipio was allowed to lead an expedition to Carthage.

The fundamental issue being presented in the debate in the *Punica* is in fact the break between the old and the new, with Fabius representing the former and Scipio the latter. As Frederick Ahl, Martha Davis and Arthur Pomeroy state, Fabius’ “words highlight the radical difference of opinion between the new and young, and the

experienced and old.”¹ Raymond Marks agrees, and explores the issue further. He argues that the *Punica* is an epic about a Rome that transforms itself in the Second Punic War through “reinvigoration and rejuvenation”.² He uses the argument between Fabius and Scipio as an example of Rome’s progress towards such rejuvenation, and characterizes the debate as something that is “as much a conflict between generations as it is between two different approaches to warfare or military policies”.³ Marks provides several convincing examples to show Silius’ emphasis on the contrast between young and old in Scipio’s speech. Scipio purposefully compares his own age to those of his detractors, Fabius included:

tum grandaeva manus puero male credita bella
atque idem vates temeraria coepta canebat.

Then the old men said it was wrong to entrust war to a youngster,
and the same prophet warned of rash undertakings.

(16.652-3)

The contrast between *grandaeva* and *puer* is noted by Marks as being a particularly striking rhetorical strategy, since Scipio had already technically no longer been a *puer* at the time of the Spanish campaign. Furthermore, Scipio uses the term again just two lines later, referring to himself as “that boy” (*ille puer*, 16.655) and sarcastically associating youth with uselessness (*futilis aetas*, 16.655) and lack of competence in war (*imbellesque anni necdum maturus ad arma*, 16.656), at least in the eyes of his critics. Later in his speech, Scipio once again refers to the old age of those who appear to be afraid of Hannibal (*Hannibali ecce senectus / intermit*, 16.665-6) and now associates his youth with strength rather than weakness (*robur florentibus auximus annis*, 16.669). All of these examples are, Marks argues, symptomatic not of Scipio’s egotistical valuation of his own youthful ability, but of the narrator’s concern with a broader conflict between youth and old age, beyond the simple context of the debate.⁴

¹ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2554-5.

² Marks (2005a), 13.

³ Marks (2005a), 52.

⁴ Marks (2005a), 54.

His argument is convincing, but I would add that the debate between Fabius and Scipio is not merely representative of a clash between the young and old. It also marks a more general break between an old Rome represented by the Fabian faction, and a new Rome represented by Scipio, one that ultimately leads Rome on the path to empire. When the senate ratifies the decision to send Scipio to Africa, it not only favours the young over the old, but also sets into motion the events leading up to Zama, a battle that will result in Rome's supremacy over Carthage, the first step towards her supremacy over the world. Fabius' concern that Scipio would leave Italy at the mercy of Hannibal if he left for Africa not only demonstrates his prioritization of the welfare of the city of Rome itself over swift victory against the Carthaginians, but also reflects a more insular view of Rome, one that focuses upon the confines of Italy rather than the broader scope of empire. Fabius believes that Rome should be content with maintaining the welfare of Rome and her immediate surroundings, but his opponent has a radically different conception of Rome's future identity. Fabius' accomplishments are eclipsed by those of Scipio, a man who gains glory not by fighting in Italy but by crushing the Carthaginians in Spain and Africa.

The sense that the debate foreshadows a fundamental transition from "old Rome" to "new Rome" is also heightened by Silius' portrayal of the decision as inevitable and preordained. As mentioned before, when the senators side with Scipio, they are seen as being beckoned by fate (*fatoque vocante*, 16.698). However, it is even more significant that Scipio himself calls upon Jupiter in his speech. He states that his final "labour" will be Carthage herself, and declares that Jupiter, the father of eternal time, tells him this (*nunc ultimus actis / restat Carthago nostris labor. hoc sator aevi / Iupiter aeterni monet*, 16.663-5). Of course, there is a double meaning here, since Jupiter is not just *sator aevi aeterni* but also literally Scipio's divine father; Scipio is actually perfectly correct when he says that the conquest of Carthage is Jupiter's will. A little later, Scipio refers to Jupiter again when he tells the senate to stop trying to delay the will of the gods:

ne vero fabricate moras; sed currere sortem
hanc sinite ad veterum delenda opprobria cladum,

quam mihi servavere dei.

Truly, do not devise delays, but allow the fate that the gods have reserved for me to run its course, the fate to expunge the shame of our earlier defeats.

(16.670-2)

Scipio's destiny is to conquer Carthage, and his destiny is intertwined with that of Rome. For any other Roman, the claim that military glory has been divinely handed to him would seem supremely arrogant, but we, along with Scipio himself, know that Scipio is the son of Jupiter and that he speaks the truth. Silius does not pass certain judgement on the merits of Fabius' and Scipio's arguments, but portrays the senate as bowing to the inevitability of fate by siding with Scipio. By doing so, it ushers in the battle of Zama, the end of the Second Punic War, the end of the the *Punica*, and the end of the old Rome of Fabius.

As much as Zama is the end of an era, though, it is also the start of a new era, one that Silius looks forward to via its vanguard, Scipio. How Silius characterizes Scipio at the end of the *Punica*, therefore, is crucial to our understanding of Silius' attitude towards this fundamental shift in Roman policy. As we shall see, Silius' appraisal of Scipio is broadly positive. Unlike other critical battles that have been analyzed earlier in this thesis, most notably Cannae and Saguntum, the Romans are led by a son of Jupiter who comes closest to being an ideal paragon of Roman virtue as anyone in the poem. Zama is certainly a much more straightforward battle than either Cannae or Saguntum, with the Romans triumphing easily and their superiority in *fides* being emphasized throughout. But Zama also sees the final appearance of Hannibal in the epic, and Hannibal takes on an arguably larger role than Scipio in the final book of the *Punica*. Hannibal's acceptance of his recall to Africa, his subsequent change of heart, the storm that prevents his change of heart, and Juno's elaborate stage-managing to ensure Hannibal's ultimate survival point to a complex characterization that makes him far from a simple antagonist fit only to be conquered by Scipio. Hannibal's sense of identity is oddly similar to that of Scipio; like Scipio, he looks outwards rather than inwards, and

judges himself not on whether or not Carthage survives the war, but on whether or not he conquers Rome. Furthermore, Silius' portrayal of Hannibal's departure at the end of the epic reprises a theme previously witnessed at Cannae, the benefits to Rome's morality that arise from *metus hostilis*. Rather than mocking Hannibal for his cowardly exit, Silius appears to acknowledge that the survival of Rome's greatest enemy at the end of the battle, though not what Scipio had wanted, nevertheless actually fulfilled a needed role for Rome.

Hannibal: surviving to preserve Roman *virtus*

After Scipio crosses to Africa, he swiftly defeats the Numidian king Syphax in battle. It is at this point that Hannibal, who has not appeared since the beginning of book 16, returns to the narrative. Silius describes Carthage as a nation that can now only rely on a single man for support, all its other limbs having been ripped off (*stabat Carthago, truncates undique membris, / uni nixa viro*, 17.149-50). Hannibal's name, though the man himself is absent, remains the only thing keeping the state from completely falling apart (*tantoque fragore ruentem / Hannibal absenti retinebat nomine molem*, 17.150-1). As far as Silius is concerned, then, Carthage by this point is no more than a single man, Hannibal. The sentiment that an entire nation is dependent on a single individual is reprised during the battle itself, when the hopes of Carthage and Rome are seen by the narrator as being entirely dependent on the fates of Hannibal and Scipio, with the fates of all the other participants on the battlefield being entirely irrelevant. The stage is thus set for Hannibal to return home, as Carthaginian envoys are sent to beg him to return as swiftly as possible (17.152-7). The language used by Silius conveys the urgency of the situation by noting that the envoys set out from Carthage without delay (*nec mora*, 17.155) and the envoys themselves tell Hannibal that if he acted too slowly, there might not even be a Carthage for him to return to (*ne lentus nullas videat Carthaginis arces*, 17.157).

Throughout the *Punica*, Hannibal has been the very embodiment of swiftness.⁵ However, paradoxically, he is now even slower to react to the situation than the envoys sent to fetch him. Before the envoys arrive, Hannibal is alarmed by a nightmare in which he is confronted by the ghosts of the various generals whom he killed in Italy, Flaminius, Gracchus and Paulus, who join with a vast ghostly Roman army to expel him from Italy (17.158-65). Reluctant to escape via the Alps, Hannibal instead clings to the ground with both hands until finally he is driven to the sea and carried off by storms (17.166-9). Rather than choosing to escape, he undertakes no movement at all. As Marks notes, the detail of Hannibal trying vainly to hang on to Italy is striking, since it illustrates precisely how slow Hannibal has become; he is immobile, while the storms that drive him out to sea are swift (*rapidis*, 17.169).⁶

The envoys arrive and proceed to outline the situation to Hannibal (17.170-83). Again, Hannibal is described as being immobile, since he is described as “guarding the Bruttian coast” (*Bruttia / servet litora*, 17.179-80). Hannibal is no longer actively attacking Italy, but is merely protecting what he already has. In contrast, the envoys describe the attack of Scipio, who is even swifter than the storms that had dragged Hannibal out to sea in his dream (*praerapidum iuvenem*, 17.179). While Scipio in Africa acts as the Hannibal of old had done in Italy, the current Hannibal acts more like Fabius, preferring inertia to action.⁷

Another paradoxical aspect to Hannibal’s current character is the fact that he appears more attached to Italy than he does to his own homeland, Carthage. In fact, it seems that Italy has become more of a home to him than Carthage. Instead of acknowledging the grave danger faced by his homeland and showing concern for its fate, Hannibal shows extreme reluctance even to accede to the envoys’ entreaties. He

⁵ Marks (2005a), 15 states that in the first ten books, Hannibal’s actions are “marked by restlessness, impatience, and haste.”

⁶ Marks (2005a), 58.

⁷ Marks (2005a), 60 notes that the situation at the end of the epic is a reversal of the earlier situation, when Hannibal was pitted against Fabius. Then the young and swift Hannibal fought the old and delaying Fabius, but by the end of the war the young and swift Scipio is ready to defeat the older and now also delaying Hannibal.

replies to the envoys by first complaining that he could have sacked Rome years earlier, if only Carthage, out of jealousy of his greatness, had not refused to give him the resources and manpower that he demanded; the nation's present plight is of its own making (17.186-96). But since he remains Carthage's only hope, Hannibal agrees to follow the senate's decree and move his standards back across the sea (*vertentur signa, ut patres statuere*, 17.199). However, in doing so, he would be saving those whose actions he sees as having doomed him to failure in Italy; in particular, he mentions Hanno, his chief antagonist in Carthage, as the main beneficiary of his return (*simulque / et patriae muros et te servabimus, Hannon*, 17.199-200); this same Hanno cheated Hannibal's soldiers of bread to eat in Italy (*etiam Cerere et victu fraudasse cohortes / Hannoni placet*, 17.194-5). Hannibal thus paints his return as something he makes with reluctance; when he sets out to sea, he does so only with "many a groan" (*multumque gemens movet aequore classem*, 17.202). His departure is, however, also a noble sacrifice, since those he will save are actually his enemies. As the Carthaginian ships begin to make their way back home, Hannibal's emotions make clear his obsession with Italy. His face remains fixed on the Italian shore (*ductor defixos Itala tellure tenebat / intentus vultus*, 17.213-4), and Silius compares his reaction to one who is being driven from his home and household gods and dragged unwillingly into exile (*haud secus ac patriam pulsus dulcesque penates / linqueret et tristes exul traheretur in oras*, 17.216-7). From this simile, it appears that Hannibal, though nominally Carthaginian, has remained in Italy for so long that he has become more attached to the country than his own homeland.⁸ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy draw a comparison between Hannibal's attitude and that of Lucan's Pompey, who, when departing from the shores of Italy, is the only one to look back (*BC* 3.3-9).⁹ His behaviour is in stark contrast to that of Scipio, who, far from being attached

⁸ Spaltenstein (1990), ad. 17.211 notes that this is not the first time Silius uses the exile imagery in relation to Carthaginians. At 16.291, a victorious Scipio in Spain tells his men that they have succeeded in driving the Carthaginians in Spain back to Carthage, as though they have been exiled back to their native land.

⁹ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2516-7. In addition, they note that "the scenario is the exact opposite of that which begins Aeneid 5, where all the Trojans but Aeneas seem preoccupied with what may be happening in the city of Carthage that they are leaving."

to Italy, would rather leave it at all costs. As the *Punica* draws to a close, the barbarian becomes almost Roman,¹⁰ even as the Roman becomes fixated on foreign shores.

Hannibal's prioritization of Rome over Carthage is emphasized by what occurs shortly after his extremely reluctant departure. The shores of Italy have barely faded from view when he turns upon himself, accusing himself of being mad and attacking himself for leaving when Rome still stands (17.221-3). Most tellingly, Hannibal declares that he would prefer that Carthage were set to the torch and the Carthaginian people were destroyed in sacking Rome (*flagrasset subdita taedis / Carthago, et potius cecidisset nomen Elissae*, 17.223-4). Hannibal's obsession with Rome is such that it now supercedes all consideration for his own land and people.¹¹ While Hannibal's words invert the normal relationship between one and one's homeland, his belated desire to reverse his original decision to accept the Carthaginians' order also shows his indecisiveness at this stage of the war. Rather than making a decision and sticking with it, inertia again sets in as Hannibal tries vainly to order his ships to turn back (17.234). Hannibal's attempt to return to Italy is, however, thwarted by a storm instigated by Neptune, the progress and effect of which are described at length by Silius (17.236-90). Excluding a possible lacuna in the text,¹² the storm is the last episode in the epic before we reach the battle of Zama itself.

The storm, of course, draws most obviously on the storm in *Aeneid* 1, which drives Aeneas away from his intended destination, Italy.¹³ The parallels to the Virgilian episode are readily apparent. In the *Punica*, as in the *Aeneid*, the victim of the storm is prevented from reaching Italy and driven towards Carthage instead. Both Hannibal and Aeneas have been, in some way, "exiled" from their homeland; Hannibal from Italy, and

¹⁰ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2517: "...Hannibal is himself, in a way, an exile. Ironically, he has spent more of his life in Italy than in Carthage which he left at the age of nine and to which he does not return for thirty-six years, as he declares in Livy 30.37. It is little wonder that he has established a paradoxical relationship to the country he has ravaged for sixteen years."

¹¹ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2517 see this as another connection between Hannibal and Pompey: "what they are fighting against is clearer in their minds than what they are fighting for." Pompey, in his obsession to defeat Caesar, would call upon Rome's great enemy, Parthia, to help him accomplish this goal (*BC* 8.262-327).

¹² On this issue, see Wallace (1958), 101.

¹³ See Spaltenstein (1990), ad 17.236.

Aeneas from Troy. The arrival of Hannibal and Aeneas in Carthage are both preludes to disaster for Carthage: defeat at Zama and the death of Dido. Roman valuables spill onto the sea at both *Aen.* 1.119 and *Pun.* 17.278-82. Neptune himself puts an end to both storms, albeit for different reasons.¹⁴ Since Zama can be seen as a defeat of Dido's chosen avenger, the storm in *Punica* 17 can in a sense be read as bringing the theme of Dido's revenge to a close. While the storm in *Aeneid* 1 sets in motion the series of events that lead to Dido's curse upon Aeneas and the Romans, the storm in *Punica* 17 introduces the final battle that ensures the defeat of her would-be avenger and the ultimate failure of her curse. The introduction of the storm motif at this stage of the epic, therefore, is not without reason. Numerous references are made to Aeneas' misfortunes at the start of the *Aeneid*, but the circumstances and details of Hannibal's misfortune recall and reverse several Virgilian themes.¹⁵ The end of the epic not only marks the end of an era of Fabian, insular attitudes towards Rome's place in the world, but also marks the end of Dido's curse, as established in the *Aeneid*. Thus even in the prelude to Zama we see Silius describing Hannibal in a way that sets his defeat up as an event that brings the *Punica*, and, on another level, the *Aeneid*, full circle. However, while Zama is in many ways an end, it is not the end for Hannibal himself. Silius' treatment of the issue of Hannibal's survival reveals the poet's view that, despite his being Rome's greatest enemy, Hannibal's continued existence was of benefit to Rome.

The *Aeneid* had ended with a climactic duel between Aeneas and Turnus. We might therefore expect that Scipio and Hannibal would engage in such a duel at the end of the *Punica*, but our expectations come to nothing. In fact, Silius teases the reader with expectations of such a duel long before Zama; the two combatants are prevented from fighting at Cannae when their protectors, Pallas and Mars, descend to earth to do battle in their stead (9.438-69). In this brief episode Pallas, Hannibal's protector, comes out

¹⁴ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 17.274.

¹⁵ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2516 note the neat reversal of situations: "Hannibal will, like Aeneas after the fall of Troy, become an exile; and his final refuge will be Pontus in Asia Minor, not far from, of all places, Troy itself. Thus Hannibal ends his career where Aeneas began his. And as he departs, something of Aeneas and the 'Aeneid' goes with him."

well on top, and it has been suggested that her superiority over Mars shows that “a fight between Scipio and Hannibal at this stage would have resulted in a clear victory for Hannibal.”¹⁶ It may also simply symbolize the Carthaginians’ decisive victory over the Romans at Cannae. Whatever the meaning of Pallas’ defeat of Mars, the reader’s expectations of a duel between Scipio and Hannibal are unfulfilled, and the possibility of a duel only resurfaces at the end of the epic. Even then, however, Juno’s fear of the result of such a duel prompts her desperate stage-managing of the battle to prevent Hannibal from seeking out Scipio. Her efforts continue to play up the possibility of the climactic duel, but when it ultimately never comes, we are left to ponder the significance of the non-duel.

The actions of Silius’ Juno deliberately recall those of Juno in the latter stages of the *Aeneid*, where she attempts to save Turnus by similar means. Juno, both in the *Aeneid* and in the *Punica*, has asked Jupiter for permission to spare the life of her protégé, and permission has been granted in both cases (*Aen.* 10.606-32; *Pun.* 17.341-84). Virgil’s Juno fashions an empty likeness of Aeneas to lure Turnus away from the battlefield (*Aen.* 10.633-52), just as Silius’ Juno creates a ghostly Scipio who flees from Hannibal and leads him astray (17.522-46).¹⁷ Both Turnus and Hannibal taunt their fleeing target, asking where they are fleeing to (*quo fugis, Aenea?*, *Aen.* 10.649; *quo fugis, Pun.* 17.542). When the ghosts disappear and Turnus and Hannibal discover that they have been deceived, both men rage against the gods for their deception (*Aen.* 10.666-69; *Pun.* 17.548-53). Hannibal proves to be somewhat more decisive than Turnus, as he delays his lamentations in favour of trying to return to the field immediately, but Juno is equal to him, for she now strikes down his horse, preventing him from doing so (17.553-7). The parallels with the Turnus episode resume, as Hannibal, defeated a second time, finally begins to lament his fate (*Aen.* 10.670-79; *Pun.* 17.558-65). Turnus blames himself for leaving his men to die (*Aen.* 10.672-5), as does Hannibal (17.561-4). Both

¹⁶ Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2546.

¹⁷ For other parallels between these two episodes, see Spaltenstein (1990), 17.522 and following.

men declare that death by drowning would be preferable to their current plight (*Aen.* 10.676-9; *Pun.* 17.559-60). In Hannibal's case, his declaration bears even greater significance, since he had feared drowning in his stormy crossing not so long ago (17.260-7). Finally, both Turnus and Hannibal contemplate suicide as a way to erase their shame (*Aen.* 10.681-3; *Pun.* 17.565-6).

The numerous parallels between Turnus and Hannibal are significant in that they, far from clearly foreshadowing Hannibal's subsequent survival of the battle, continue to actively play up the possibilities of a final duel between Hannibal and Scipio. We know that Juno's protection of Turnus proves to be only temporary, for he eventually succeeds in returning to the battlefield and confronting his rival in book 12. In the same way, we may expect that Juno's intervention will only succeed in delaying a clash between Hannibal and Scipio. Silius, however, turns this expectation upon its head, as a third and final intervention by Juno succeeds in ending the possibility by leading Hannibal even further away from the battlefield. Just as Hannibal is turning his thoughts to ending his life, Juno, in the disguise of a shepherd, offers to lead him back to the battlefield. Accepting her offer, Hannibal follows, but is instead led further away (17.567-80).¹⁸ Juno's success in preventing Hannibal's death highlights a major difference between the ending of the *Punica* and that of the *Aeneid*; there will be no single defining death to bring the *Punica* to an end. The sense of finality that accompanies Turnus' death in the *Aeneid* is replaced in the *Punica* by a sense of continuity. While in *Aeneid* 12 Juno accepts Aeneas' victory and rejoices at the compromise that she has wrung out of Jupiter (*adnuit his Iuno et mentem laetata retorsit*, *Aen.* 12.841), Juno makes a final appearance in the *Punica* in a disturbed state of mind as she finally leaves Hannibal behind (*tunc superas Iuno sedes turbata revisit*, 17.604).

¹⁸ Juno's third intervention here may refer to Turnus being prevented three times from swimming back to face the Trojans at *Aen.* 10.685; see Spaltenstein (1990), ad 17.567.

Thus while Silius portrays Zama as the end of the Second Punic War and the end of an old, insular Rome, the survival of Hannibal complicates matters and ensures the lack of total resolution. For while Silius sees Zama as the end of an era, he is also keen to point out the consequences of change, events in the future that still depend on the past. Hannibal's survival ensures a link between the old and new eras. Hannibal himself appears to be aware of the role that he is to play in the new Rome. After being led by Juno onto a hill, where he can observe the rout of Carthage all below him, he pauses and makes a speech (17.606-15) before fleeing into the mountains (17.616-7). The scene reminds us of the situation confronted by Varro at Cannae, which I have discussed earlier in this thesis.¹⁹ Both Varro and Hannibal survey the total defeat of their armies, and both are presented with an option to rush into battle and end their lives heroically. Hannibal, in fact, has already contemplated suicide moments before being led onto the hill. But when he is now faced with the reality of defeat, Hannibal remarkably rejects the thought of suicide. While, as I earlier argued, Varro appears to be in little control of his own fate when he flees Cannae, Hannibal's speech outlines the reasons for his flight:

nec deinde relinquo
 securam te, Roma, mei; patriaeque superstes
 ad spes armorum vivam tibi. nam modo pugna
 praecellis, resident hostes: mihi satque superque,
 ut me Dardaniae matres atque Itala tellus,
 dum vivam, expectant nec pacem pectore norint.

Nor do I leave you safe from me henceforth, Rome; surviving my country, I will live on in the hope of bearing arms against you. For you are only just now victorious, while your enemies remain: it is enough and more than enough for me if Roman mothers and the land of Italy expect my return and know no peace in their hearts for as long as I live.

(17.610-15)

In these lines, Hannibal expresses the belief that his survival will mean more than Rome's victory. He will be satisfied if the very sound of his name is enough to prevent the Romans from having everlasting peace of mind. I argued earlier that Varro, in not rushing to his death at Cannae and instead fleeing to Rome, accomplishes more

¹⁹ See Chapter Two.

than he would have by dying; he allows Fabius to reunite the Romans and end the bitter squabbles that had caused their numerous disasters in the war. Here, Hannibal's failure to die is similarly portrayed as something beneficial. Certainly, Hannibal could merely be justifying his cowardly decision to flee, and the reader may not necessarily agree with his argument, but at no point does the narrator contradict Hannibal or construe his departure as something to be condemned. The *metus hostilis* caused by his survival may satisfy Hannibal, but Silius also sees it as beneficial for the Romans themselves. This viewpoint is, after all, consistent with the narrator's interjection at the end of Cannae, where he states that if Rome's character were fated to change when Carthage fell, then it would have been better if Carthage had remained (10.657-8). Carthage falls at Zama, but the spectre of Hannibal lingers, a spectre that will delay the erosion of Roman morals, at least for a time. Thus even though the victory over Carthage is celebrated by the joyous Romans at the end of the epic, Silius' treatment of Hannibal strikes a bittersweet note as well. Paradoxically, Rome needs to defeat Hannibal, for his goal is the destruction of Rome, but she also needs Hannibal to survive, for it is through his survival that her virtues are maintained after the victory. Ironically, these virtues are exactly what allow Rome to defeat Hannibal in the first place. Thus an uneasy relationship between Rome and her greatest enemy is established: the Romans must demonstrate their superior morals to overcome Hannibal, but Hannibal must also remain to ensure that these same morals do not decay. Let us now turn to these morals and how Silius portrays Zama as a victory founded on Roman moral superiority.

Rome victorious: *virtus* on display

Thus far, I have argued that Hannibal's survival at Zama is seen by Silius as being beneficial to Rome, as the Romans' morals will not degrade as long as they are wary of the danger posed by Hannibal. Next I will analyze the poet's description of the battle itself, which takes on a starkly moralizing tone, and shows the reader the fruitful results

of virtuous behaviour. At every turn, Silius is keen to show the reader that the Romans win the war due to their moral superiority. At Saguntum, virtues such as *fides* and *pietas* had worked against each other, leading to the Saguntines' failure and eventual suicides. By Zama, the situation has entirely reversed. *Fides* and *pietas* now exist in harmony, and through their demonstration of these virtues, the Romans are able to achieve victory. This depiction of Zama shows us that the world need not be constantly embroiled in civil war. Through correct application of Roman virtues, a happier outcome can be reached.

Virtue's crucial part in Rome's victory over Carthage is made clear in the opening episode to book 17, in which the famous story of Claudia Quinta is told. The first lines of the book emphatically link the coming victory to the episode that follows; we are told that in order to remove the invader from Italy (*hostis ut Ausoniis decederet advena terris*, 17.1), the Sibyl has prophesied that the Phrygian goddess Cybele must be welcomed to Rome. Livy provides the same tale (Livy 29.10.4), but his narrative lacks the moralizing tone of Silius' version. For Silius, what occurs at the welcoming ceremony for the goddess demonstrates the virtue that is needed for the Romans to overcome their enemies. Furthermore, the very fact that a foreign goddess is needed to ensure victory reminds us of the new age into which Rome is about to enter. Rome will no longer be relying on Italy alone, but will soon be absorbing cultures from all over the empire.

The arrival of Cybele is inextricably linked with virtue, as the Sibylline instructions demand that the goddess be received by the person whom the senate chose to be the "best" among those living (*advectum exciperet numen, qui, lectus ab omni / concilio partum, praesentis degeret aevi / optimus*, 17.5-7).²⁰ The identity of this man, Scipio Africanus' cousin Scipio Nasica, only adds to the sense that the Cybele episode is as instrumental to Rome's victory at Zama as the battle itself; Nasica represents virtue at

²⁰ Cf. Livy 29.11.6: *ut eam qui vir optimus Romae esset hospitio exciperet*. Livy attributes this instruction to the Delphic oracle, not the Sibylline books. However, in both cases the instruction comes from a divine source.

Rome, while Africanus represents virtue on the battlefield in Africa. However, despite Nasica being the man chosen to represent all that is good about Rome, the Cybele episode actually belongs to Claudia Quinta, whose role in the affair demonstrates in even clearer fashion the virtue that the Romans must demonstrate in order to triumph over Carthage.

As well as being recounted in the *Punica*, the Claudia Quinta episode is also present at Ovid's *Fasti* 4.291-348, and it is likely that Silius drew on Ovid's version for inspiration.²¹ But although there are certain similarities, there are also significant differences. Michael von Albrecht has analyzed both Ovid's and Silius' narratives, but his analysis draws mainly on the way Silius shapes Ovid's elegiac narrative into an epic one, and focuses on the specific literary constructions that each poet uses in their versions of the story.²² Nevertheless, one of von Albrecht's conclusions is most relevant for our purposes. He notes that "in Silius, Claudia is less prominent than in Ovid. Her vindication, which was a matter of personal concern to the elegist, is not Silius' ultimate goal; the legend rather symbolizes the fact that Rome's morality has stood the test and that the victorious end of the great war is near at hand."²³ While it is debateable that Roman morality has "stood the test", since in numerous instances earlier in the epic we see the failure of such morality, it is certainly true that by the end of the epic this morality rises to the foreground and heralds the possibility of victory.

In both Ovid and Silius, the ship that has arrived from Phrygia with Cybele on board ends up stuck in the Tiber, and Claudia comes to the rescue by pulling it forward and proving her chastity. The major difference between the two narratives is that Ovid's Claudia takes a much more proactive role than Silius'. In Ovid's account, when the ship comes to a sudden stop, no explanation is given for the phenomenon, and the men present simply stand, stunned and afraid (*illa velut medio stabilis sedet insula ponto; / attoniti monstro stantque paventque viri*, *Fasti* 4.303-4). Without prompting, Claudia

²¹ For the account of Claudia Quinta given by Ovid, see Langlands (2006), 67-73, who discusses Claudia's appearance and how it relates to perceptions of her chastity.

²² For more, see von Albrecht (1999), 305-16.

²³ von Albrecht (1999), 313.

then steps forward and performs the miracle; she prays to Cybele to prove her chastity by allowing her to pull the ship forward (*Fasti* 4.319-28). In Ovid's narrative, the miracle is therefore a very personal event whose main purpose is to prove Claudia's chastity. In Silius, the audience that witnesses the event is not mystified when the ship becomes stuck, for the priests aboard the ship immediately provide the explanation for why this has happened: no polluted hands must touch the vessel (*parcite pollutes contingere vincula palmis*, 17.27), and only those who are chaste should undertake the task of moving the ship (*quod si qua pudica / mente valet, si qua illaesi sibi corporis adstat / conscia, vel sola subeat pia munera dextra*, 17.30-2). While the priests' words make chastity a central issue to the episode (*pudica / mente valet*), they also provide a much more public dimension for the task. Rather than being simply a means by which Claudia can vindicate herself, by pulling the ship forward she performs *pia munera*, her pious duty. That she does so after the urging of the priests removes part of her initiative and makes her action one done for the good of the city rather than solely for clearing her own name. Furthermore, the requirement that those who are polluted should remain far from the ship brings to mind the scenes of pollution witnessed at Saguntum and Capua; the failures of the Saguntines and Capuans are now replaced by the success of the Romans. Thus the episode is also a way by which the Romans can demonstrate their *pietas*; they prove their devotion to the gods by having the correct representative (Scipio Nasica) receive Cybele at the mouth of the Tiber, and by having the correct representative (Claudia) pull her into the city proper. Finally, the reaction of the audience to the miracle also reflects the different priorities of Ovid and Silius. Ovid's audience rejoices in response to the portent, but the reason for their rejoicing is not mentioned (*index laetitiae fertur ad astra sonus*, *Fasti* 4.328). Silius, on the other hand, specifically attributes the joy of the crowd to the hope for an end to the war and an end to their peril (*exemplo maior cunctis spes pectora mulcet / finem armis tandem finemque venire periclis*, 17.46-7). These two lines form a conclusion to the Claudia episode, and clearly create a causal link between the events within the episode with the victory at

Zama that the poet will later describe in the rest of the book. The *pia munera* performed by Claudia is a necessary step that the Romans must take to bring about a successful conclusion to the war. While this prelude to the *Punica*'s final book already illustrates the importance of virtue, Silius also provides other examples of Roman moral superiority on the battlefield itself, to which we now turn.

Just as Scipio Nasica is *optimus* in Rome, his cousin Scipio Africanus is *optimus* outside it. Scipio is associated with both *pietas* and *fides* at various stages of the conflict. Rome's victory is not merely a military one but also one based on their moral superiority, with Scipio being a prime example of such superiority. Already at Cannae Scipio is described as being morally superior to Hannibal; the two men are "equally matched in strength, but the Roman was otherwise better – greater in both *pietas* and *fides*" (*Marte viri dextraque pares, sed cetera ductor / anteibat Latius, melior pietate fideque*, 10.436-7). It is no surprise that Silius chooses these two virtues to differentiate Scipio from Hannibal, and Scipio's proficiency in both is made abundantly clear in the rest of the epic.

Examples illustrating Scipio's virtue are scattered throughout the *Punica*. The most famous is perhaps the extended episode in which Scipio, after the death of his father and uncle in Spain, is confronted by the two deities Voluptas and Virtus, who both ask Scipio to follow their path (15.18-128). Voluptas tries to convince Scipio that a leisurely, obscure life is better than one that leads him to hardship and death, while Virtus encourages Scipio to take up the duty of defending his country and conquering Hannibal. In the end, Scipio accepts the call of Virtus and assumes command in Spain; his acceptance of Virtus' arguments more than spells out his role as a model of *virtus* in the rest of the epic. The episode, which has no basis in the historical record, has been read as Silius' version of the famous Hercules at the Crossroads tale, in which Hercules is similarly confronted by the deities of Vice and Virtue and must choose between both;

told by Prodicus, it is reproduced at Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.1.21-34.²⁴ A clear connection is therefore made between Scipio and Hercules, and Marks observes that the Hercules that emerges from the Crossroads episode "is a fearsome warrior, but is driven by philosophical principle and a sense of moral conviction rather than by the self-destructive forces of *furor*... Silius assures us that [Scipio], who is about to take on a leadership role in the war, will do so as a new Hercules."²⁵ His observation allows us to read Scipio's role at the end of the epic not only as a model of Roman virtue, but also as the antithesis of *furor*, a departure from the misguided, *furor*-driven applications of *fides* and *pietas* practised by the Saguntines at the beginning of the *Punica*. The end of the epic provides us with a hero who correctly commands these virtues, and thereby leads his people to success rather than destruction.

Elsewhere, Silius displays the specific virtues of *pietas* and *fides* even earlier in his career. His *pietas* is most obvious in book 4, where he rescues his father from death at the battle of the Ticinus. Jupiter, upon seeing that Scipio the elder is in danger, asks Mars to guide the consul's son to save his parent (4.425-9).²⁶ Although Scipio shows signs of not being up to the task – twice Mars has to save him from killing himself out of fear for his father (4.454-9)²⁷ – he ultimately succeeds in entering the fray and assumes the role of Aeneas in rescuing his father, with both Scipio and Aeneas carrying their fathers away upon their shoulders (4.467-8; *Aen.* 2.632-3). If the simple imagery of the scene were not enough to bring home Scipio's Aeneas-like character, then Silius' use of *pietasque insignis* (4.470), a reference to Virgil's *insignem pietate* at *Aen.* 1.10, allows the

²⁴ The link between Silius' version and its Xenephotic predecessor has been often noted; see for instance Bassett (1966), 259; Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy (1986), 2553; Spaltenstein (1990), ad 15.18; Ripoll (1998), 128. The most comprehensive treatment of Silius' usage of this story is Marks (2005a), 148-61, which interprets the episode as part of the continued education of Scipio to become a complete hero.

²⁵ Marks (2005a), 161.

²⁶ For a reading of the entire episode, see Marks (2005a), 115-22, who sees it as the first stage of Scipio's education to become a proper hero.

²⁷ In Scipio's initially unheroic reaction to his father's plight, Marks (2005a), 117-8 notes resemblances to Turnus' reaction to being taken away from battle at *Aen.* 10.680-6, a passage we have already read earlier in this chapter as being similar to Hannibal's reaction to being deceived by Juno at Zama. If the Turnus passage indeed relates to both, then the implications are interesting; as Marks notes, Juno intervenes to remove Turnus (and Hannibal) from combat, while Mars does so to send Scipio into the thick of the fighting. The contrasting usage of the Virgilian passage thus also illustrates the difference between Scipio and Hannibal.

reader to make no mistake. Scipio's *fides*, on the other hand, is not a particularly noted part of his character until the aftermath of Cannae, when Scipio thwarts an attempt made by the cowardly Metellus at Canusium to persuade soldiers to desert (10.415-48). The episode relates closely to Livy's version, given at 22.53,²⁸ but as Marks observes, Silius' version takes on "a strong moralizing tone", as the language used to describe Metellus' designs presents his plan as one borne out of decidedly evil minds (*mala... / pectora degeneremque manum*, 10.421-2), and the plan itself as an "evil disgrace" (*turpe malum*, 10.429). Scipio's intervention, in which he forces the conspirators to swear oaths never to forsake Italy, "purges their hearts of guilt" (*purgant pectora culpa*, 10.448). Though the word *fides* is never used in the episode, Scipio's actions amply prove his loyalty to Rome. By taking control of the situation and using his leadership to force the conspirators also to be mindful of *fides*, Scipio once again shows himself to be a champion of Roman morality.²⁹ From these examples, it is clear that Silius builds up Scipio's character so that by the end of the epic, Scipio is unquestionably a model of morality. At Zama, his moral character becomes critical to Roman success, for it is through their moral superiority that the Romans are able to triumph over their opponents.

Nor is such superiority limited merely to Romans. The moral contrast between victor and loser is also apparent in Silius' portrayal of the barbarians caught up in the wider conflict, namely the Numidian prince Masinissa, who becomes a faithful ally of Rome and shares in her victory, and the Massylian king Syphax, who betrays Rome when Scipio begins his invasion of Africa and soon pays for his betrayal with a swift and humiliating defeat. When Masinissa is first introduced, Silius tells us that he would gain fame for maintaining a long lasting and devoted alliance with Rome (*mox foedere longo / cultuque Aeneadum nomen Masinissa superbum*, 16.116-7). Still, Masinissa's later claim

²⁸ For specific parallels between the two, see Marks (2005a), 131.

²⁹ As I argued in Chapter Two, however, Scipio's display of *fides* in this situation is not entirely unproblematic, as he indicates that he is as prepared as Hannibal to kill fellow Romans in order to prevent their desertion. Nevertheless, despite Scipio's mention of Hannibal, he successfully prevents the conspiracy and the episode thus portrays his *fides* in a generally positive light.

to loyalty does not remove the fact that at this time he was allied with Hasdrubal in Africa (16.115-6), and that in order to become loyal to Rome, he must first switch sides. Silius explains his decision by introducing a divine omen which convinces Masinissa's mother that her son is destined for an alliance with Rome (16.118-31). When Masinissa makes his way to the Roman camp, he begins his address to Scipio by referring to the "divine warning" and the prophecy of his sacred mother (*caelestum monita et sacrae responsa parentis*, 16.140), reconfirming the divine nature of his alignment with Rome and also stressing the filial piety he shows in accepting the encouragement of his mother. Masinissa's second explanation for his switch of allegiance is that he has been convinced by Scipio's most pleasing virtue (*tua... gratissima virtus*, 16.141), further emphasizing the moral righteousness of his new alliance. In addition to this explanation, Masinissa stresses that he switched sides not in search of the spoils of war (*praemia Martis*, 16.147), but because he wants to distance himself from the treachery and falseness of the Carthaginians (*perfidiam fugio et periuram ab origine gentem*, 16.148). Masinissa thus portrays himself as a man in search not of physical rewards but of moral ones. Scipio's response to Masinissa again takes on a moralizing tone, as he promises that the Romans' *fides* will prove to be superior even to their aptitude in battle (*si pulchra tibi Mavorte videtur, / pulchrior est gens nostra fide*, 16.155-6). Once the treaty with Masinissa is confirmed (*firmato sociali foedere regis*, 16.168), Silius moves from the faithful barbarian to his counterpart, the disloyal Syphax, who pens his own treaty with the Romans, but eventually deserts them in favour of Carthage.

Unlike Masinissa, Syphax has not yet committed to either side when Scipio arrives to seek his support, and also unlike Masinissa, Syphax fails to comprehend the situation. He recognizes Scipio as the son of Scipio the elder (*revocat tua forma parentem*, 16.193), while Masinissa more correctly adjudges Scipio to be the son of Jupiter (*nate Tonantis*, 16.144). In his ignorance, he thinks that he is capable of reconciling the two sides, rather than choosing to side with the better one (16.219-21). When Scipio finally asks Syphax for an alliance, appealing to the fact that nothing can

provide greater glory to Syphax than Roman *virtus*, loyally allied to him (*amplius attulerint decoris, quam Romula virtus / certa iuncta fide*, 16.254-5), Syphax accepts and prepares to seal the alliance with a sacrifice, but in contrast to the favourable divine omen received by Masinissa, Syphax's sacrifice goes badly and the victim bolts from the altar, leaving the narrator to remark on the evil omens given by the gods that anticipate the coming disaster (*talia caelicolae casuro tristia regno / signa dabant, saevique aderant gravia omina fati*, 16.270-1). So while Syphax manages to make the correct choice on this occasion, the gods demonstrate that his alignment with the Romans will not last.

From the beginning, then, Syphax's pact with Scipio is doomed to failure. It does not take long for the gods' prediction to come true. When Scipio makes his way to Africa, the situation has already changed drastically, and in Hannibal's absence, far from being Scipio's ally as he had pledged, Syphax is now the "one hope for Carthage and the one fear for the Romans" (*spesque Syphax Libycis una et Laurentibus unus / terror erat*, 17.62-3). Syphax has forgotten the treaty that he had sworn before the altar (*immemor hic dextraeque datae iunctique per aras / foederis*, 17.67-8), and in the process has broken the laws of hospitality in addition to his *fides* (*et mensas testes atque hospital iura / fasque fidemque simul... / ruperat*, 17.68-70). The reason that he has done so is also important; Syphax has been changed by a "perverse passion" (*pravo mutatus amore*, 17.69), namely for a daughter of Hasdrubal. While book 17 began with a demonstration of *pudicitia* through the episode of Claudia Quinta, Syphax's sense of *fides* is shattered by immoral sexual desire, thus establishing the clear moral superiority of the Romans over their opponents. His lust over Hasdrubal's daughter compares unfavourably to Scipio, who, after the sack of Carthago Nova, demonstrates his ability to resist sexual temptations by returning a prisoner of war to her betrothed, rather than keeping her for himself (15.268-71); his decision is praised by Scipio's companion Laelius, who states that Scipio's continence is superior even to other heroes in epic (15.274-82).³⁰ Syphax is

³⁰ On Scipio's continence in this episode, see Ripoll (1998), 352-3, 463-4, Marks (2005a), 238-9, Cowan (2009), 237 and Tipping (2010a), 160-1.

no match for Scipio in sexual continence, just as he soon proves to be no match for Scipio on the battlefield.

Attempting to bring Syphax back to the side of virtue, Scipio reminds him that to abide by the pact of friendship is a divine duty (*reputet superos, pacta hospital servet*, 17.78). When Syphax fails to heed his warnings, Scipio has no choice but to appeal to the sacred treaty that the king has defiled (*castas polluti foederis aras / testatus*, 17.86-7) and punish him through military means. Syphax's camp is easily burned down in a nighttime raid and the king barely escapes (17.88-108), but even then Syphax fails to learn the moral lesson. He is now driven by anger, shame and the aforementioned passion for his new wife, three factors that conspire to ignite within him savage thoughts (*ira pudorque dabant et coniux, tertius ignis, / immanes animos*, 17.112-3). Driven by such irrational urges, Syphax unwisely confronts the Romans in full on battle, but is easily defeated and captured. As the Roman soldiers close in on him, they are quick to brand him as the one who dishonoured the divine altars and the one who broke the treaty with their own virtuous general (*violavit et aras / caelicolum et casti ductoris foedera rupit*, 17.129-30). Again, Syphax is contrasted with *castus* Scipio, and the moral difference is given by the combatants as the main reason why he is defeated. The king may have to be overthrown in battle, but his defeat is made inevitable by his immorality.

The moral superiority of the Romans also comes into play when the actual battle at Zama gets under way. The Carthaginians are supported by Macedonians, who clash directly with the Numidians led by Masinissa (17.413-5). Like Syphax before him, Philip of Macedon is forgetful of his pact with Rome and has sent help to the reeling Carthaginians (*immemor has pacti post foedus in arma Philippus / miserat et quassam refovebat Agenoris urbem*, 17.420-1). When the Macedonians' phalanx is eventually worn down and the Romans seize the opportunity to rush in and cut them down, the band of Greeks that they break is described as "perjured" (*globus et periuria Graia resignat*, 17.425). The next opponents that the Romans assail are the Bruttians that Hannibal has brought over from Italy, and they are subject to even greater abuse by

Laelius, Scipio's right hand man. Before attacking them, Laelius unleashes a verbal assault, accusing them of betraying Italy. He asks them why they hate Italy so much that they must flee over the seas on Carthaginian ships (*adeone Oenotria tellus / detestanda fuit, quam per maria aspera perque / insanos Tyrio fugeretis remige fluctus?*, 17.433-5). This offense, Laelius says, was already severe enough (*sed fugisse satis fuerit*, 17.436), but the Bruttians compound their error by even seeking to spill Roman blood on foreign soil (*Latione cruore / insuper externas petitis perfundere terras?*, 17.436-7). In the ensuing combat, the Romans are driven to rage by the familiar faces of their enemies, the arms that they have been equipped with, as well as the familiar sound of their speech (*accendant iras vultusque virorum / armorumque habitus noti et vox consona linguae*, 17.442-3). Curiously, when the Bruttians begin to flee, Hannibal responds by urging them to "stand and not betray our people" (*state ac nostram ne prodite gentem*, 17.445), a command that actually succeeds in turning the Bruttians back to the fight (17.446). Spaltenstein notes the confusing aspect of Hannibal's words – what does Hannibal mean when he asks the Bruttians to not betray "our people"?³¹ Does Hannibal count Bruttians among those who now owe their loyalty to the Carthaginians? If so, then the Bruttians are placed in a real bind, for they are not only traitors to Rome, but also traitors to Carthage, should they insist on fleeing. The option that they choose, to return to battle, appears to indicate that they would rather suffer the disgrace of being branded traitors by Rome, than be seen as betraying both sides in succession.

The moralizing that typifies the battle at Zama continues when Silius describes the defeat of Carthaginians on the battlefield. What they have done in the past is now recalled, and they are seen to have got what they deserve; Silius counts among the men killed those who had taken Saguntum and begun this "impious war" (*qui muros rapuere tuos miserasque nefandi / principium belli fecere, Sagunte, ruinas*, 17.494-5), those who had defiled sacred Lake Trasimene and the Po with putrid blood (*qui sacros, Thrasymenne, lacus, Phaethontia quique / polluerant tabo stagna*, 17.496-7), those who

³¹ Spaltenstein (1990), ad 17.444.

were bold enough to want to pillage the seat and home of Jupiter, ruler of the gods (*ac ducia tanta / quos tulit, ut superum regi soliumque domosque / irent direptum*, 17.497-9), and those who boasted that they had transgressed upon and defiled the Alps, hitherto secrets of the gods and denied to humans (*temerata ferebant / qui secreta deum et primos reserasse negatas / gressibus humanis Alpes*, 17.500-2). All these men are repaid for their crimes with death at Zama, and in fact Silius states that they, terrified because of these things that they had done (*formidinis huius*, 17.502), rush headlong from the battlefield, scared out of their wits (*exanimata*, 17.503). Thus at the moment of Carthage's demise, the wrongs that her people have committed against others literally come back to haunt them, and their defeat is presented as deserved punishment for their repeated, impious challenges to the gods.

Through such scenes of stark morality, Silius portrays Zama less as a military victory than a moral one. Led by Scipio, the supreme exemplar of Roman virtue, the Romans hold the moral high ground over their opponents, whose impious deeds of the past finally catch up with them and cause their ultimate demise. In contrast to the imperfect and misguided application of *fides* and *pietas* that we witness early in the epic at Saguntum, the Romans fighting at Zama employ these virtues as their main weapons, with their accusations of their enemies' immorality forming a crucial role during the fighting itself. It is only through this harmonious usage of *fides* and *pietas* that the Romans are able to end the war as victors.

The triumph of Zama: an outward looking Rome

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that Zama acts as a sort of end of the old Rome, with Scipio's victory carrying Rome into a new era, complete with new ways of thinking. The *Punica* closes with the triumphal procession that occurs after the victory at Zama (17.625-54). Through Silius' description of the triumph, we gain a sense of just where this new era will lead Rome. The fact that the *Punica* ends with a triumph

focused on Rome's subjugation of foreigners, rather than on a celebration of Rome's survival of the catastrophes that had befallen her throughout the war, hints that the priorities of the new Rome lie outside Italy.

Scipio's victory is revolutionary, for it sets out a new agenda of Roman behaviour. Silius tells us that Scipio was the very first Roman to acquire a new name based on the land that had conquered (*devictae referens primus cognomina terrae*, 17.626). This little fact anticipates the direction in which Rome is headed, where generals will be all too glad to follow Scipio's example. And in order for them to acquire such names, they will need to conquer new lands; thus Scipio has started not just a trend of nomenclature, but has also set foreign conquest as a fundamental objective for future Roman leaders. No longer will Romans follow the Fabian, insular model of activity. The future will see them emulate Scipio, and extend the boundaries of Rome's empire. The triumphal procession described by Silius is further demonstration of Rome's new path, for it parades the captives taken by Scipio during the battle, who represent the various peoples that Rome has subjugated. In addition to these are depictions of the geographical locations themselves, which in a way have come under the sway of Rome.

At the head of the captives is Syphax, king of the Massylians, the most prestigious of Scipio's prisoners (17.629-30). The rest of the captives cover a wide range of nationalities: Hanno acts as representative for the Carthaginians (17.631), and he is followed by Macedonians and Moors (17.632), then by Numidians (17.633) and the people of the Garamantes and the Syrtis (17.634). The display of prominent prisoners of war became a notable part of the triumph in the later republic and through to the empire, when the parading of "celebrity captives" became one of the highlights of the triumphal experience,³² and their conspicuous presence at Zama acts as an indicator of Rome's imperial future. The catalogue of prisoners is then supplemented by descriptions of actual geographical locations: Carthage (17.635-6), Gades (17.637), Calpe (17.638), the river Baetis (17.638-9), the Pyrenees (17.640-1) and the river Ebro (17.641-2). If such

³² Beard (2007), 120.

a wide array of locations were not enough to emphasize the scope of Rome's accomplishments during the war, Silius takes particular care to note the extreme nature of two of these locations in particular. Gades (the modern day Spanish port of Cadiz) is described as the "end of the world" (*terrarum finis*, 17.637) and Calpe (modern day Gibraltar) is accompanied by its role of the "limit of Hercules' achievements of old" (*laudibus olim / terminus Herculeis Calpe*, 17.637-8). Rome has, through its campaigns during the war, brought all of these places under her control, places that were considered to be among the most remote in the world. The fact that they are put on display in Scipio's triumph hints at the future to come, when more and more places on earth will be absorbed into the Roman empire.

Silius' use of the triumph as a tool to illustrate Rome's new imperial future in the *Punica* is hardly surprising, as the parade of prisoners was generally seen as a vehicle by which Rome's territorial might could be best displayed to its people. As Mary Beard observes, "the triumph and its captives amounted to a physical realization of empire and imperialism. As well as the image of Roman conflicts with monarchy, the procession (or the procession's written versions) instantiated the very idea of Roman territorial expansion, its conquest of the globe. The prisoners' exotic foreignness, at the heart of the imperial capital, put on show to the people watching the procession... the most tangible expression you could wish of Rome's world power."³³ The triumph illustrated at the end of the *Punica* is precisely the point at which Rome begins to embark on the path towards empire and imperialism. But there is also something curious at work here. In addition to being a visible statement of Roman supremacy, Beard asserts that the procession "dramatized the conflict between its own political system – whether the Republic or the autocratic Principate that officially disavowed the name 'monarchy' – and the kings and kingship which characterized so much of the outside world."³⁴ She notes that enemy kings "dominated the imaginative reconstructions of historical triumphs", and the presence of kings in triumphs was especially noted in the triumphal

³³ Beard (2007), 123.

³⁴ Beard (2007), 121.

inscriptions in the Forum.³⁵ How ironic then that in the triumph described by Silius, not only does Rome set out on the path to empire, but she also implicitly abandons the republican system of governance in favour of the rule of one, and not just any rule, but rule that is specifically implied to be kingship.

The sign that shows Scipio to be assuming a kingly role comes just before the triumph itself. Silius states that Scipio, “with his sceptre assured”, crosses the seas back to Rome where he celebrates his triumph (*securus sceptri repetit per caerula Romam / et patria invehitur sublimi tecta triumpho*, 17.627-8). The phrase *securus sceptri* has been seized upon by Donald McGuire as a phrase that denotes “a king’s scepter, and by extension his power” and one that “has a decidedly negative force”.³⁶ He uses the phrase to suggest that at the end of the epic Scipio prefigures the emperors of imperial Rome, and to support his own argument that the *Punica* is a pessimistic epic that comments critically on Flavian Rome and views the rule of the Flavians as tyranny. Marks similarly identifies Scipio as a king, but provides a much more positive reading of the passage in which he argues that it is unjustifiable to assume that just because Scipio is associated with the kingly sceptre, such kingship bears negative connotations.³⁷ My reading of the episode falls on the side of Marks. As I have outlined previously in this chapter, Scipio is portrayed throughout the buildup to Cannae as a model of morality, and his morality plays an even larger role in Rome’s victory than his military ability. McGuire’s suggestion, that Scipio’s association with an indicator of royal power at the moment of his triumph means that his form of kingship is threatening, is unconvincing. For what would we make of Silius’ overwhelmingly positive portrayal of Scipio as a model hero? In the context of the final stage of the war, Scipio’s moral qualities, so emphasized throughout the closing stages of the epic, cannot be instantly invalidated by his association with kingship. Syphax, led in the procession that Scipio presides over, is certainly an example of a bad king, but it need not follow that Scipio will be bad too,

³⁵ Beard (2007), 121.

³⁶ McGuire (1997), 101.

³⁷ For McGuire’s negative reading, see McGuire (1997), 101-2. For Marks’ rebuttal of McGuire’s claims, see Marks (2005a), 201-6. Another recent interpretation of Scipio’s kingship is Tipping (2007), 231-41.

since he is fundamentally differentiated from Syphax due to his virtue.³⁸ While the hint of kingship at the end of the *Punica* hints at Rome's imperial future as McGuire suggests, the hint is a hopeful one. Silius tells the reader that tyrants like Syphax need not be a typical ruler. Bad rulers like Syphax can and do exist, but their inability to be good rulers like Scipio is due to their immorality. If one exercises one's power in accordance with virtue, one can be a successful, moral ruler. The triumph at the end of the *Punica* vividly depicts the contrasting fates that await either possibility: while the immoral Syphax is paraded as a captive (17.629-30), virtuous Scipio is present as the victorious conqueror (17.645-6).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that at Zama, Silius provides a treatment of virtue that connects proper understanding and application of virtue with success, through the Romans' victory over Carthage. The way virtue behaves at Zama is significantly different from Saguntum and Cannae. Instead of possessing virtue that is misguided or paradoxical, the Romans' virtue at Zama shows their ability to balance the needs of both *fides* and *pietas*; their ability to do so, combined with their opponents' inability to display either of these qualities, is what leads them to success. Even as the impressive nature of the Romans' morality is shown through episodes such as the tale of Claudia Quinta, her enemies' faithlessness and immorality are highlighted through Silius' treatment of Syphax, whose downfall is directly linked to his betrayal of his sacred oath. At Zama, the mistakes apparent at Saguntum and Cannae are rectified, allowing the epic to end on a positive and optimistic note.

In addition, I have shown that Zama is portrayed by Silius as a definitive turning point in Roman history. Two alternative visions of Rome are outlined by Fabius and

³⁸ Marks (2005a), 206 argues that there is a difference between the sceptre that Scipio wields at the end of the epic and the one held by other kings such as Syphax, in that Scipio "has proved that he is worthy of it, has earned it by the spear in a just war, and, most of all, has been given it by the gods."

Scipio, with Scipio's vision of Rome proving to be ascendant. His vision of Rome, rather than being focused on Italy itself, is instead based on what will soon be incorporated into Rome's empire. Scipio's attitude is mirrored by that of his great opponent, Hannibal, who has a similar vision of success, based on the destruction of Italy rather than the salvation of his real homeland. Scipio's conquest of Carthage proves that his strategy works, but the conquest is not merely born out of divine favour, as stated in Scipio's argument to the senate, but also out of Rome's superior morality, the single most important factor in Rome's victory. Scipio's success ensures that his vision of Rome becomes ascendant, and will eventually lead to empire; Silius' description of the triumph following Zama, in which the peoples and places conquered by the Romans in the Second Punic War are put on display, provides an initial glimpse of what the future holds for Rome. The implied role that Scipio assumes through his victory, that of a king, also hints at Rome's imperial future, but Silius, by emphasizing Scipio's exemplary virtue, wishes to show that it is possible to blend imperial rule with proper morality. Silius' portrayal of imperial Rome at the end of the *Punica* is thus an optimistic one. Such optimism is, however, not unqualified, for Silius also shows his awareness of a peculiar relationship between Rome and her enemies; in his final depictions of Hannibal, he declares that in order for Rome's virtues, which have led her to such success, to remain, her enemies must survive to force Rome to be ever vigilant. Even though Silius' outlook at the end of the epic is generally optimistic, he nonetheless introduces this paradoxical postscript, showing a painful awareness that all too often, Romans since have failed to follow the path of virtue that he advocates.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that in the *Punica*, Silius constantly questions and challenges the reader on the definition of virtue. Virtue plays a key role in each of the battle narratives that mark the beginning, the middle and the end of the epic. Our interpretations of Saguntum, Cannae and Zama are guided by the sort of virtue and morality that Silius depicts for each battle. Through providing moral lessons at these three critical points of the epic, Silius sheds light on the broader significance that these battles have in his work, but also in the grand scheme of Roman history.

Above all, Silius stresses the need to achieve a balance between *fides* and *pietas*. He does this by connecting both military failure and familial tragedy with an inability to maintain such a balance. This is most apparent in his treatment of the Saguntum episode; in it, the Saguntines believe that they are taking a correct course of action by acting according to *fides*, but their fidelity to Rome comes at the cost of killing their own kin and losing sight of the importance of *pietas*. The narratorial praise given to the Saguntines is rendered suspect by the numerous hints within the text that lament the horrifying nature of their actions. Due to their inability to be truly virtuous, the Saguntines cannot be considered as true heroes and their actions are ones that should not be emulated. The Saguntines are in fact eerily similar to the Capuans, despite the fact that the Capuans embody the antithesis of *fides*. Neither the Saguntines nor the Capuans are able to maintain the necessary balance between *fides* and *pietas*, and both peoples meet a fate that sees their city sacked (by the Carthaginians and the Romans respectively) and a mass suicide take place. The similar fate suffered by the Saguntines and Capuans causes us to question the supposed virtue shown by the former as well as the lack of virtue shown by the latter, and associates their military failures with their moral failings. I have further argued that Silius' portrayal of the exemplary tale of Regulus engages with the question of virtue in a similarly complex way. Although Regulus may initially appear to be an *exemplum* of virtue, it becomes apparent that his

conception of virtue is, like the Saguntines', based on excessive *fides*. It is a *fides* that causes him to sacrifice his obligations towards *pietas*, and the cost of such a sacrifice is expressed through the laments of his wife Marcia. Through the presence of a dissenting voice in Marcia and a competing model of moral behaviour in Fabius Maximus, Silius' portrayal of Regulus is one which questions just how praiseworthy Regulus' virtue is. The unpleasant fate suffered by Regulus suggests that like the Saguntines, Regulus is an inadequate hero. It is their flawed conceptions of virtue that lead Regulus and the Saguntines to become failures, and their flawed virtue stems directly from their inability to balance *fides* and *pietas*.

Conflict between *fides* and *pietas* continues to be a major issue in Silius' portrayal of Cannae. Just as the heroism of the Saguntines and Regulus is questioned earlier in the poem, Silius continues to provide ambiguous and complex treatments of virtue in his Cannae narrative. The theme of paradox is crucial to Silius' Cannae; it is a battle which is Rome's worst disaster, but one that is ultimately beneficial to Rome. Just as the Saguntines' military defeat is closely connected to their inadequate conception of virtue, Silius reinforces his paradoxical interpretation of Cannae by depicting scenes in which the behaviour of virtue can be best described as paradoxical. The unlikely deaths of Satricus and Solimus form one such scene. In it, Satricus and Solimus perform actions that are prompted by their *fides*, but this *fides* cruelly leads them to their deaths. The patricide that results from Satricus' and Solimus' *fides*, unlike the ones performed by the Saguntines, is unintentional, but the trend of conflict between *fides* and *pietas* that we see in the Saguntum episode continues.

In the battle narrative, the characterizations of the consuls Varro and Paulus are heavily based on their virtue, and the paradoxical nature of this virtue is again indicative of the theme of paradox that pervades Cannae more generally. Varro is a man wholly lacking in virtue, a trait demonstrated by his cowardly flight from the battlefield. Paulus, on the other hand, is a man who bases his own identity on the display of virtue. He refuses to do as Varro does and remains to die a glorious death, but as I have argued,

Silius questions whether Paulus' obsession with virtue is actually beneficial to Rome. Paulus may die virtuously, but his death actually does nothing for the wellbeing of Rome. Silius similarly tackles the issue of Varro's flight by pointing out the fact that, despite Varro's lack of virtue, his act of running away allows Fabius Maximus to rally the Romans together and begin their road of recovery. Through acting without virtue, Varro paradoxically does more good for Rome than the virtuous Paulus. The way that virtue behaves in this episode is entirely appropriate for Silius' Cannae, as Silius' overall judgment on the significance of the battle in Rome's history shows. This judgment is itself keenly focused on virtue and morality. Silius argues that Cannae, despite its identity as Rome's worst military defeat, represents the best of Rome, namely the unity and positivity the Romans show in the defeat's aftermath. Furthermore, he laments the fact that after Carthage's defeat, this unity gradually dissipates, with Rome heading further and further away from the morals that she ought to embody. Silius depicts Cannae as a crucial turning point in the Second Punic War, while also depicting the Punic Wars as a crucial turning point in Rome's history. In both cases, what changes is Rome's morality. According to Silius, Rome's morals begin to decline following the destruction of Carthage. In the *Punica*, however, the change in morals after Cannae is a positive one. The imperfect model of virtue displayed by the Saguntines at the beginning of the epic is gradually displaced, and the defeats associated with such imperfect virtue are replaced by victories.

These victories culminate in the battle at Zama, where the excessive virtue displayed by the Saguntines is finally entirely replaced by the ideal virtue displayed by the conquering Romans. Silius' depiction of Zama is significant for our interpretation of the text, as it contrasts earlier episodes such as Saguntum, but like Cannae, Zama is also an important part of Silius' view of Roman history. Silius' commentary on Cannae allows him to link Rome's moral decline with a specific point in Roman history, namely the destruction of Carthage after the Third Punic War. Similarly, Silius depicts Zama in such a way that it becomes another critical moment in Roman history, at which Rome

begins to look outwards rather than inwards, thus embarking on the path to empire. This is shown in two ways. Firstly, in the debate which occurs before the African campaign, Scipio's argument, that Rome should bring the fight to Africa rather than be content to keep Italy safe, wins out over Rome's old, insular way of thinking, represented by the arguments provided by Fabius Maximus. Secondly, the triumph held following the battle looks ahead to Rome's future, through the display of foreign prisoners and exotic locations which now belong under the power of Rome. Zama is the point in Rome's history at which the seeds of Rome's empire are sown, and also the point at which the fruits arising from these seeds are first seen.

Besides being a critical point in Silius' vision of Rome's history, Zama also provides plenty of moral lessons to the reader, just as Saguntum and Cannae do. The type of virtue and morality presented at Zama is, however, vastly different to the ones seen earlier in the epic. The Romans at Zama act according to virtue that combines both *fides* and *pietas*, rather than having to sacrifice one for the other. It is this virtue that ultimately enables them to defeat their enemies. This ideal conception of virtue is demonstrated in numerous ways. In the Claudia Quinta episode, evidence of *pietas* is needed to bring Cybele to Rome, a necessary step towards victory. Scipio is portrayed as a man who embodies both *fides* and *pietas*, and even the African Masinissa chooses to side with the Romans based on the principles of morality rather than material benefits. The Romans' virtue is further contrasted with the immorality of their enemies. Syphax not only breaks his oath of alliance with Rome, proving his lack of *fides*, but he breaks this oath due to his lust and sexual immorality, making him a counterexample to Claudia Quinta, whose *pietas* arises from her chastity. Rome's victory at Zama is fundamentally due to her newfound ability to balance the needs of *fides* and *pietas*, and her enemies are doomed to defeat because they fail to achieve either of these virtues.

The *Punica* chronicles the the story of the Second Punic War, in which Rome falls to numerous defeats and reaches the brink of destruction before recovering and finally defeating her enemies. It is also a story about moral defeat and moral victory, and

about Rome's past and future. Silius links the defeats suffered by the Saguntines with an imperfect application of virtue and the victory at Zama with a newly improved understanding of virtue. However, Silius also constructs episodes such as Saguntum and Regulus in such a way that his readers are required to think deeply about the sort of virtue depicted in these episodes and to consider multiple possible interpretations of the events that occur within them. In these episodes, Silius does not give his readers an open guide on how to interpret them. Although Silius does often explicitly warn against immoral behaviour and praise those who show virtue, such praise cannot necessarily be taken at face value, as the Saguntum episode proves. Rather, Silius encourages his readers to analyze the various models of virtue in the text for themselves and only then understand why they ought or ought not to be followed. The need for such analysis is another sign of the fundamental importance of virtue and morality in the *Punica*. The *Punica* is not a handbook of morality, with easy to follow instructions on how to be virtuous and moral. Throughout the epic, the reader is asked to closely consider the various issues surrounding virtue and morality, weigh up all the competing evidence that Silius provides, and finally come to properly understand the importance of acting virtuously and morally. The *Punica* is vitally concerned with virtue. Only by being equally concerned with virtue while reading the epic is the reader able to truly appreciate the poem's message and the part that it plays in both epic and history.

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