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ERINYS' MORTAL VENOM. THE POETIC EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS IN SILIUS ITALICUS' *PUNICA* (BOOKS I–V)

ABSTRACT: Negative emotions are used to construct and develop the plot in the first five books of Silius Italicus' *Punica*. Dark, irrational forces, i.e. madness, cruelty and suffering, are hostile to the cosmic order and bring chaos to the epic world. The narrator employs pathos, hyperbole, irony, sarcasm and paradox. The scenes of bad emotions penetrate the longer ekphrases and the descriptions of the fall of Saguntum. The epic language abounds in passionate emotions and gives a foretaste of the later uncommonly atrocious events. Famous *imperatores*, such as Paulus, Fabius and Maximus suffer, but they will renew Rome and ensure its eventual victory.

KEY WORDS: madness, cruelty, suffering, poetic techniques, ekphrasis, prolepsis

The main aim of this paper is an analysis of the most important emotions in the first five books of the epic poem *Punica* by Silius Italicus.[1] In total these books contain 3622 verses. Despite being separated into books, this part of the poem forms a single entity, because it describes the initial phase of the Second Punic War: the siege and capture of Saguntum, the battles on the banks of the Ticinus and the Trebia, as well as the battle of the Lake Trasimene. I shall endeavour to show how the emotions,

[1] The text is quoted after *Sili Italici Punica*, ed. Ludovicus Bauer, vol. prius libros I–X continens, Lipsiae, in aedibus B.G. Teubneri, MDCCCXC.

which I consider negative, act as a plot-building device in the poem. Let me start with some general remarks. An important role is played by the rhetorical technique of employing vivid imagery (ἐνάργεια, *evidentia*). Already in the opening verses of the poem the narrator introduces the reader *in medias res*, stating that he intends to extol the arms[2] which made the fame of the house of Aeneas soar to the stars and put the wild[3] Carthage under the yoke of Oenotrian laws. He asks the Muse to let him recall the glorious labours (*decus laborum*[4]) of the ancient Hesperia, the great Roman men, ready for war, the house of Cadmus (i.e. the Punics), who, by breaking the sacred alliance, intensified the fight over world dominance; thus the wait was long before Fortuna found the fortress where she could finally rest her head (I 1–8):

Ordior arma, quibus caelo se gloria tollit
Aeneadum, patiturque ferox Oenotria iura
Carthago. Da, Musa, decus memorare laborum

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[2] *Arma* is the key word of the epic poem; sometimes it is linked with the noun *viri* (of course, this is a result of emulating Vergil's *Aeneid*), e.g. I 1; I 18; I 36; I 47; I 74–75; I 132; I 305; I 364; I 365; I 391; I 476; I 517; I 519; I 567; I 618; I 626; I 662; I 692; II 21; II 36; II 46; II 76; II 212; II 244; II 281; II 286; II 293; II 303; II 312; II 331; II 352; II 368; II 387; II 394; II 455; II 474; II 518; II 603; II 675; II 680; III 117; III 253; III 262; III 330; III 358; III 362; III 385; III 407; III 432; III 444; III 456; III 474; III 501; III 508; III 526; III 592; IV 11; IV 50; IV 64; IV 98; IV 117; IV 158; IV 166; IV 253; IV 280; IV 294; IV 312; IV 381; IV 389; IV 414; IV 447; IV 463; IV 501; IV 543; IV 718; IV 761; IV 812; IV 814; V 3; V 30; V 98; V 114; V 120; V 125; V 131; V 175; V 191; V 198; V 238; V 241; V 325; V 433; V 568; V 580; V 584. Equally important is *ensis*, e.g. I 91; I 166–167; I 219; I 429; I 500–501; I 515; I 625; I 648; II 22; II 155; II 400; II 504; II 567; II 606; II 615; II 640; II 644; II 679; III 120; III 234–235; III 279; IV 19; IV 207; IV 238; IV 342; IV 386; IV 415–416; IV 608–609; IV 627; V 38; V 119; V 146; V 284–285; V 295; V 413; V 429; V 524. See also von Albrecht 1964: 15–24.

[3] *Ferox, ferocia* appears frequently, e.g. I 191; II 53; II 78–79; II 532; III 444; IV 61; IV 236; IV 639; V 147; V 382; V 418–419; V 430; V 467; V 555. There are multiple references to the First Punic War, e.g. I 61–62; I 621–623; II 304–305; II 340–344; II 432–436; IV 78–80; V 246; VI 658–697; XI 527–528; XIII 729–731.

[4] The noun *labor* is one of the most important ones in Silius's poem: e.g. I 139; I 180; I 369; II 5; II 348; II 359; II 638; III 32; III 58; III 75; III 89; III 92; III 113; III 161; III 165; III 327; III 350; III 377; III 400; III 421; III 477; III 511; III 529; III 531; III 575; III 582; III 586; III 706; IV 4; IV 53; IV 64; IV 311; IV 421; IV 433; IV 485; IV 530; IV 707; IV 748; IV 818; V 579. In Book III *labor* is the dominating theme.

Antiquae Hesperiae, quantosque ad bella crearit
Et quot Roma viros, sacri cum perfida pacti
Gens Cadmea super regno certamina movit;
Quaesitumque diu, qua tandem poneret arce
Terrarum Fortuna caput.

Incidentally, this is also the first proleptic passage in the poem,[5] as it clearly indicates that in the course of the Second Punic War both nations struggled to annihilate one another and it was actually the final winner who was closer to being destroyed.[6] The leader of the Dardanes cleared the way to the Agenorean strongholds, Palatine was under siege and assaulted by the Punics, and Rome defended its liberty only due to its strong walls (I 13–16). Next there follow longer passages describing the reasons behind the anger and hatred between the two nations. The narrator recalls the distant mythical and historical past. The epic language abounds in passionate emotions and gives a foretaste of the later uncommonly atrocious events.

Initially the protagonist is Dido, the queen who with a handful of fugitives reached the predestined shores of northern Africa. Yet Juno, knowing well that Rome is the greatest of all cities and sends its ships to faraway shores to carry its banners of victory, is apprehensive and fills the hearts of the Phoenicians with war frenzy. There appears a short mention of Pygmalion's land, i.e. Tyre, and the foundation of Carthage. It is here, the narrator stresses, quoting an ancient story, that Juno wanted

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5 Cf. Harrison 2010: 279–292.

6 Cf. Liv. XXI 1–3: *bellum maxime omnium memorabile quae unquam gesta sint me scripturum, quod Hannibale duce Carthaginienses cum populo Romano gessere. nam neque validiores opibus ullae inter se civitates gentesque contulerunt arma, neque his ipsis tantum unquam virium aut roboris fuit, et haud ignotas belli artes inter sese sed expertas primo Punico conferebant bello, et adeo varia fortuna belli ancepsque Mars fuit ut propius periculum fuerint qui vicerunt. odiis etiam prope maioribus certarunt quam viribus, Romanis indignantibus quod victoribus victi ultro inferrent arma, Poenis quod superbe avareque crederent imperitatum victis esse.* A bit further (XXI 29, 4) Livy states that the first skirmish of Hannibal's army with the Romans was an *omen*, predicting the final favourable outcome of the war, although the victory was to be paid with a river of blood and changeable fortune during the fights; Plb. I 3, 7: τὰ πολιτεύματα τὰ περὶ τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῆς ἀμφισβητήσαντα. See also Pomeroy 2010: 32–33.

to found an eternal city for the fugitives, more than in any other place, such as Argos or her beloved Mycenae (I 21–37). Finally, the narrator introduces Hannibal, the most important character, who is the focus of all the events in the first five books. Silius shows both the rational and the irrational motives that govern his behaviour. Hannibal's anger was inspired by Juno, who dared to oppose only him against the works of the fate (*componere fatis*). Silius suggestively builds *loci horridi*. Juno foretells that the banks of the Ticinum will not be able to hold the corpses of fallen Romans, and the tame Trebia will flow backwards through the Celtic lands, obstructed by Pergamenian blood and bodies of the dead warriors. Lake Trasimene, agitated, will fear for the future of its waters, poisoned with thick cadaverous toxin.[7] Cannae will become the tomb of Hesperia. Aufidus will struggle to make its way towards the shores of the Adriatic Sea, so burdened it will be with shields, helmets and slaughtered men (I 38–54). These *prodigia*, based on hyperbole, conclude the preface to the epic poem.

1. FURY[8] AND WILDNESS OF THE HEART

I shall begin the detailed analysis of emotions by looking at the poetic description of the sacred circle dedicated to Elissa, mother of Carthage. Again the description is undoubtedly of a proleptic nature. The narrator emphasizes that in this place there are standing marble statues with solemn countenances:[9] the parent Belus and the whole procession of his descendants, Agenor, the pride of the family, and Phoenix after whom numerous nations were named. A priestess in a Stygian robe summons the powers of Henna's goddess and Acheron. Earth bellows (*immugit*) as if it were a wounded animal, and a terrible howl rises from the world of the dead. Spirits of the dead, invoked by a magical spell, wander through

[7] Cowan 2009: 226–237.

[8] *Furor* is omnipresent, e.g. I 32; I 71; I 79; I 146; I 150; I 429; I 444; I 595; I 683; II 36; II 43; II 210; II 324; II 528; II 623; II 633; II 645; II 657; II 665; III 146; III 359; III 491; IV 57; IV 190; IV 243; IV 250; IV 351; IV 373; IV 528; IV 565; IV 640; V 172; V 182; V 259; V 276.

[9] I believe this is an allusion to the eventual defeat of Carthage in her war with Rome.

the emptiness,[10] and the marble face of Elissa pearls with sweat. This is naturally a presage of a cruel war. The narrator introduces rational argumentation, he refers to emotions and points out that the rage (*rabies*) of Hannibal, directed against the Italian borders and the lands of Saturn, has built up enormously due to the madness he inherited from his father. It is Hamilcar who, as soon as Hannibal learned his first words, cleverly stoked the fire of his rage and filled the boy's heart with a thirst for war against the Romans (I 70–80). The protagonists' emotions are fed by their overly active imagination. For example, Hamilcar says that he sees, as if in a prophetic trance, Aetolian fields covered with innumerable bodies of soldiers and waters red with Trojan blood. An army hastens through the mountains, the local population is mortally afraid, because their walls stand in fire and the lands to the West are also glowing with Sidonian conflagration (I 125–131).[11] The whole image is saturated with striking pathos and hyperbole.

Here's another example. In the first phase of the siege of Saguntum, Hannibal fiercely shakes his head, he encircles the city walls on a steed covered in froth, and he watches closely the terrified inhabitants (I 298–302). A while later Hannibal is as powerful as Mars,[12] when he crosses the land of Bistonia in his war chariot. Daunus cries that Hannibal is pursued by the Furies inherited from his father. The Punic should be aware that the walls[13] of Saguntum were raised by the gods and that the city has a strong ally in Rome (I 428–447). Fury overwhelms Hannibal while murdering Murrus. Just before delivering the mortal strike the Carthaginian asks Hercules to show him favour and help him to annihilate the youths of Phrygian tribe (I 509–514). As we can see his reasoning here is of a religious nature. The citizen of Saguntum, bearing the

[10] The allusions to magic play also a certain role in books I–V, e.g. III 300–302, where we read that Marmaridae are people gifted with magical powers; I 431–432.

[11] One of the graphic symbols of death here is a comet, cf. I 460–464: it frightens the cruel kings with its fiery tail, shedding bloody flames; it sparkles with a fearsome light, threatening destruction to the earth. Similarly VIII 637: *regnorum eversor, rubuit letale cometes*. Cf. also Lucan I 529; Verg. *Georg.* I 488.

[12] It is worth noticing the great number of comparisons in the poem, e.g. I 421–425; I 433–436; I 460–464; II 215–221; III 294–297; IV 244–247; IV 295–299; IV 302–307; IV 331–336; IV 520–524; IV 776–777; V 47–52; V 309–315; V 384–391; V 395–400; V 504–509; V 605–606.

[13] The topos of city walls is very important for Silius.

name Sicoris,[14] while speaking in front of the Roman senators, claims that Hannibal was born out of heaving seas or ferocious beasts. He begs the heavenly gods to keep away from the walls of Rome this young man with a deadly hand and to limit his attacks solely to the war with Saguntum. Disregarding the border on the river Iberus[15] and crossing the precipices in the Pyrenees, he woke Calpe city, moved the nations overblown with the sands of Syrte and started to look for much more grand walls.[16] The man of Saguntum asks a rhetorical question whether the senators believe that Hannibal, madly seeking war,[17] which he swore to lead, will be satisfied with his prize for such a great undertaking and breaking the treaty with military force solely for the right to put Saguntum under his own laws (I 634–650). Finally, some senators are selected to go to speak with Hannibal. If he were to remain deaf to his earlier commitments, they should travel to Carthage and immediately proclaim war on this nation which disregards the gods (I 691–694). In response to these demands Hannibal cries: woe betide the blind minds and hearts filled with pride due to their good fortune. He then proceeds to claim that he has been called by the impious land (*impia tellus*) to punish this nation and adds that he will come himself, disregarding the demands made by

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[14] He talks about the famous integrity (*fides*) and valour of the Romans. He says that even the nations forced to obeisance by sword confess that Romans are the progeny of Mars. Cf. Liv., *praef.* 7: *et si cui populo licere oportet consecrare origines suas et ad deos referre auctores, ea belli gloria est populo Romano ut cum suum conditorisque sui parentem Martem potissimum ferat tam et hoc gentes humanae patiantur aequo animo quam imperium patiuntur*.

[15] The Iberus was the conventional border of Roman influence (to the north of that river); the lands to the south were under the influence of Carthage.

[16] Undoubtedly an allusion to *altae moenia Romae*. Cf. I 16: *muris defendit Roma salutem*; V 634–635: *vos en ad moenia Romae / ducitis Hannibalem*; III 591–592: *Qui Poenum revocet patriae Latioque repulsum / Ante suae muros Carthaginis exuat armis*. The opposite of Hannibal are the idealised Roman senators, e.g. I 609–616. The narrator stresses that they are happy only because of their irreproachable poverty, their fame is due to their triumphs and they rival the gods in their valour (*virtus*). Their pride lies in great deeds and noble desire of justice. Their togas are roughly spun, their meals are modest and their hands, used to the curved plough, are ready to seize the hilt of a sword. They are content with a simple life and they do not seek riches. Often they return to their modest households straight after sitting in a triumphal chariot.

[17] Cf. I 638–639: *quem insana freta aut coetus genuere ferarum, / Vidimus Hannibalem*.

Romans. It is Rome, which now defends the foreign cities, that will fear the future fate of its own gates and hearths (II 28–32).[18]

The narrator's comments on Fabius are also of a proleptic nature. This is surely a warning before the disasters that are to fall on the Romans. Fabius, presented as a descendant of the Tirynthian (i.e. Hercules), recalls three hundred ancestors who perished within a single day due to the cruel storm of war, when the Fate (*Fors*) did not favour the efforts (*labor*) of the patricians and soaked the banks of the Cremera with their blood (II 3–6).[19]

Let me show another example. Theron savagely murders Asbyte. When Asbyte attempts to run away from the battlefield, he delivers a powerful blow to her temple with his club, spattering the heated wheels and the disordered reins with her brain which burst from the shattered skull. Next he seizes an axe and, intending to flaunt the murder he committed, he cuts off the girl's head while she is falling out of her chariot. His fury does not stop even then: he thrusts the head on a long spear so that everyone can see it (II 195–204). Hannibal flies into a rage after Asbyte's death, seeing her head carried high as a macabre testimony of victory. His bronze shield flames with light, his arms prophesizing ruin ring from afar in his agile hands: this suffices to make his terrified enemies run frenziedly towards the safety of the city walls (II 208–214).[20] Hannon, the representative of the house who is the sworn enemy of Hannibal, tries to convince the senate of Carthage that Hannibal is a tool of doom. He sees in him inborn poison and inherited pride. When Hannibal took over power, the peace treaty and everything that is morally good were shattered with a sword. Cities were destroyed, the distant descendants of Aeneas are ready to attack the walls of Carthage in retribution,

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[18] Cf. e.g. Lucan I 8–9: *Quis furor, o cives, quae tanta licentia ferri / gentibus invisis Latium praebere cruorem!*

[19] Cf. Liv. II 50, 11: *Fabii caesi ad unum omnes praesidiumque expugnatum. Trecentos sex perisse satis convenit, unum prope puberem aetate relictum, stirpem genti Fabiae dubiisque rebus populi Romani saepe domi bellique vel maximum futurum auxilium*.

[20] Cf. IV 351–352: *Exoritur rabies caedum, ac vix tela furori / Sufficiunt*; II 290: *rabies*; II 620: *rabies cladum*; IV 648; V 394; V 424; V 641; II 504–505: *Vis colitur, iurisque locum sibi vindicat ensis, / Et probris cessit virtus*; II 17; II 21; V 427; V 459: *caedes*; IV 321: *discordia*; V 627: *belli vecordia*.

the peace has been wrecked. The young man is tormented by the restless ghost of his father,[21] by ill-boding sacrifices, by the gods who persecute him, having turned against the peace-breaker, and by the Massylian priestess (II 285–298). The forces of the Romans will not be exhausted by either iron or fire. Their soldiers grow up in military camps, while the old men who already spilt blood throughout their many years of military service stand in the first lines[22] and challenge death (II 315–321).[23]

Here is another passage. The peoples who inhabited the shores of the Atlantic Ocean bear Hannibal some gifts. They give him a shield with an image of Hamilcar. What follows is a short ekphrasis. Hamilcar is seen to be enjoying his time in the fields of Sicily. The narrator adds that his likeness looks almost alive, as if he came back from the dead and began anew the breathless fights; his eyes are aflame (*ardor*), and his form is savage and pitiless (II 426–431).

In the passages to be analyzed below it is easy to discern the theme of crime and punishment. Juno, seeing the goddess Fides in the fortress of Saguntum, condemned her over-eagerness to stir up wars and summoned the dark Tisiphone, ordering her to destroy the city walls and

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21 This is a recurring theme.

22 Cf. Liv. XLII 34, 14: *ne quis me virtute in exercitu praestet, dabo operam*; Tac., *Ann.*, I 17: *sibi tamen apud horridas gentis e contuberniis hostem aspici*.

23 Cf. V 118–120: the sword is a good soothsayer (*augur*) in a fight with the enemy, and the toil of an armed hand is an auspiciousness (*auspicium*), worthy of a Latin soldier. See also V 126–127: Valour (*Virtus*) is the only god full of vigour in the hearts of warriors. After the victory of Lake Trasimene, Hannibal tells Mago that every Roman hand bears a sword and that an armed soldier holds his place in the line even in the moment of his death. He frowns terribly and anger flushes his face. The victorious Carthaginian adds he fears that the earth that gave birth to such brave men is destined to rule the world, even if it is defeated in battle (V 670–676); IV 603–604: adverse circumstances put the soldiers to the test and their intrepid valour (*virtus*), despite hardship, insistently hastens to glory (*laus*) by an arduous road. A similar train of thought can be found in Cicero *Off.* III 47: *Cannensi calamitate accepta maiores animos habuit quam umquam rebus secundis; nulla timoris significatio, nulla mentio pacis*. Let me point here some other passages in which *virtus* makes an appearance, e.g. I 58; I 185; I 312; I 342; I 494; I 510; I 534; I 560; I 611; II 505; II 575; II 578; III 45; III 122; III 177; III 581; III 594; IV 99; IV 328; IV 604; IV 802; V 126; V 269; V 555. In Book XV 18–127 personified *Virtus* stands in strong opposition to *Voluptas*. What's interesting, the noun *miles* does not appear frequently in Silius's work, e.g. I 563; II 318; II 331; III 249; III 446; III 500; IV 68; IV 512; V 627; V 636; V 671.

the audacious nation with her own hands (II 526–533)[24]. The narrator asks a desperate question who would be able to stifle their tears if he were to describe the terrifying fate of the city, the crimes which deserve praise, the punishment sent by the goddess Fides and the lamentable destinies of the pious people. The city which for ages was an abode of the goddess Fides and boasted of having its walls raised by a god, has fallen due to traitorous arms of the Sidon house, the terrifying deeds of its own citizens and the neglect shown by the unjust gods.[25] Sword and fire rage (*furit ensis et ignis*), and a place which has not been yet reached by flames is a murder scene (II 650–658). At the end of Book II we read another proleptic comment on Hannibal. The narrator tells us that the one who gained fame out of an unjust victory will be exiled from his homeland and forced to wander all over the world; the whole terrified Carthage shall be witness to his escape. Tormented in his dreams by the ghosts of the people of Saguntum, he will often regret that he cannot commit a suicide,[26] as use of any arms will be forbidden to him. Finally, the once invincible warrior will arrive on the bank of the Styx disfigured and bluish after having taken a poison to part with his life (II 701–707):

Deformata feret liventi membra veneno.

Replying to his wife Imilce, Hannibal says that he is tormented by the spirits of the dead and that the ghost of his father reproaches him in the darkness of the night. The short and changeable time does not allow him to postpone the date of war against Rome. Should he abandon lofty honours out of the fear of death? A life destined to be forgotten does not

[24] Vessey 1974: 28–36.

[25] Von Albrecht 1964: 55–86.

[26] The evident topos of crime and punishment is expressed with an antithesis. At the end of the war Hannibal is plagued by the ghosts of the Romans who died in the battles of Lake Trasimene and Cannae, cf. XVII 158–169; esp. 161–165: *Cernere Flaminium Gracchumque et cernere Paulum / Visus erat simul adversos mucronibus in se / Destrictis ruere atque Itala depellere terra; / Omnisque a Cannis Thrasymennique omnis ab undis / In pontum impellens umbrarum exercitus ibat*. Vessey 1974: 36: "Hannibal is only a temporary and passing factor in history".

differ much from death! She should not, however, be afraid he will be foolhardy (*incauti furores*) in his search for glory (III 138–146).[27]

Sometimes the accusations of madness are accompanied with comments on indolence. We should recall here Hannibal's dream. The narrator says that the omnipotent father Jove, thinking about putting the Trojan nation up for a dangerous test, glorifying it with victories in cruel wars and undergoing again the arduous efforts (*labores*), rushes Hannibal into action, terrifying him during his calm repose and disrupting his sleep with dreams. Mercury reprimands him saying it does not become a commander to sleep through the night: success in war is only possible if the leader is alert. He should rise, if his heart is capable of attempting such audacious deeds. The god will make Hannibal stand victorious under the high walls of Rome (III 163–182).

On the banks of the Ticinus both commanders are characterized with restless valour (*velox virtus*) and a thirst for glory; their spirits are alike when it comes to war madness (*insania*) (IV 98–100). Hannibal is accompanied by Fear, Terror and Madness. The opponents of the Carthaginian are no longer concerned with noble death and decide to flee, praying to the earth[28] to swallow them (IV 325–330).[29] The narrator adds that a fierce slaughter begins and the madness of the fighters can barely find enough arms. A shield meets a shield, a foot stamps on a foot, and the plumes dancing on helmets wave as they struck the enemy's brow (IV 351–354).[30]

Commenting on the battle of Trebia, the narrator states loftily that even if he was capable of reproducing the famous Maeonian voice and

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[27] In verse 145 it is worth noticing the anagrams: *QuANTum eTENim disTANt a morte silENTia vitae?*

[28] Cf. IV 328–329: *trepidaque a mente recedit / Vertere terga pudor, nec leti cura decori.*

[29] The narrator recalls that many lands and seas have yielded before the rule of Hannibal. What follows is a sort of poetic geographical excursus, expressed by colourful metaphors, e.g. I 193–200. Libya, under the power of the scorching Cancer, burns from the south winds of Aeolus and Phoebus's torches, a great expanse of Asia is glowing, the river of Lagus is the border of the rosy east and with its sevenfold vortex strikes the heaving sea; where a calmer plain looks up to the two Bears, there it is cut in two by the straits of Hercules and the fields of Europe can be seen, divided by the neighbouring peaks.

[30] Cf. V 339: *furiata cohors*.

if the father Phoebus granted him the gift of speaking in innumerable languages, he would not be able to describe all the murders committed by the powerful consul, nor all the mad attacks of the Carthaginian (IV 525–528). Eventually, complying with Juno's request, the river Trebia, which was a bad omen,[31] commenced its audacious attack on exhausted Romans and awoke its waters. The earth collapsed and took with it the bodies of the runaways, then covered them with treacherous mud. Death, as narrator concludes, has shown numerous of its faces. The defeat was made complete by a troop of elephants with towers on their backs. The animals rushed into the river and ran through the waves blindly, like blocks of fallen rock (IV 573–599).

Let me add here another example. The narrator reminds us that the birds whose advice the people of Latium traditionally seek, whenever they prepare for war and want to know the will of the gods regarding its outcome, refused the food given to them, as if they were aware of the disasters to come. The bull by the altar bellowed mournfully and hoarsely and when an axe hung above his neck, ready to strike, it avoided the blow and ran away from the altar.[32] When the soldiers tried to pull the battle banners out of the ground, reeking blood burst out of the crack in the ground, as if Mother Earth herself tried to warn them of the future slaughter (*caedis documenta futurae*) (V 59–69).[33] Let me remind you that a bit further in Book VIII similar *omina* precede the disaster of Cannae (VIII 622–655):

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[31] Other examples of omens are e.g. V 188–189: *Increpuere simul feralia classica signum, / Ac tuba terrificis fregit stridoribus auras*; V 223–224: *feralique horrida cantu / Bucina lymphatas agit in certamina mentes*; IV 105–142: Jove's bird, an eagle, flying from the East, has forced a hawk to fly, then a victorious dove turned back and joyously flew towards the Roman signs; II 378–380; II 487; V 59–104; VIII 624–655; IX 252–266; XV 363–365; XVI 264–274; XIII 115–137; XVI 119–123; XV 138–148; XVII 44–47; XVII 52–55. Similarly Lucan I 237–238: *stridor lituum clangorque tubarum / Non pia concinuit cum rauco classica cornu*.

[32] Cf. Liv. XXII 1, 8–12; 17–18; Lucan I 522–629.

[33] Hannibal's situation is different. Mercury foretells him that he will destroy the Roman warriors and annihilate the Trojan nation. As a snake ravaged mountains, dispersed among fields uprooted trees and moistened the earth with frothy poison, so he, mighty, will run down from the subjugated Alps and cover Italy with a black cloud of war. Hannibal joyous, though at the same time fearful, gives obeisance to the lord of the skies and Mars, after the propitious omens are observed (III 205–218).

Defigunt diro signa infelicia vallo (...)
Obseditque frequens castrorum limina bubo.
Nec densae trepidis apium se involvere nubes
Cessarunt aquilis; non unus crine corusco,
Regnorum eversor, rubuit letale cometes.

The Oracle of the horned Ammon foretells that Libyan men are seeking Latium and preparing for war against the descendants of Assaracus. The cruel Gradivus ascends the war chariot, the fierce stallions breathe fire against Hesperia and blood flows freely down the reins. Hannibal will multiply the glory of his Phoenician ancestors and no one will be able to penetrate further the insides (*viscera*) of the Ausonian people. The men of Saturn will not be free of fear as long as Hannibal breathes (III 700–712).

An important role is played by madness in battle. Consul Flaminius tells Aequanus, a son of the Mountain Soracte, to fill his heart with madness which is appropriate for his bravery and the wounds that he received. He adds that he will join him in battle madness and he will not hesitate to pierce the phalanx of the Marmaridae and attack the squadrons of the Cinyphian riders (V 175–185). Flaminius in an attack of madness falls upon the enemy, leading elite troops, and the hasty alarm loosens the breaking line of the enemies. With a wild voice he calls his horse and hastens into the battle heat in the middle of the valley. A sudden and surprising hurricane falls on the terrified Carthaginians and they are frozen to the marrow with icy fear the moment they spot the consul. He runs through the middle of them, hacking with his sword these ranks where they are standing thickest. The battle cry, as the narrator states loftily, made out of various sounds, rises the battle madness up to the skies and strikes the stars (V 389–394).

Here is another example, this time connected with natural elements. The Roman and Carthaginian soldiers fight fiercely, despite an earthquake raging around them. The narrator says that though they are swaying on the uncertain ground and falling down, when the ground disappears beneath their feet, yet they are still hurling missiles at their enemies (V 627–628). The Roman soldiers, furious both with the gods and with themselves for their defeat and convinced that it is worse than death to watch the victory of Carthage, die covering the fallen consul with their

bodies, as if they were building him a tomb (V 659–666). Hannibal, seeing that, tells his brother Mago that every Roman hand holds a sword and that even at the moment of death they hold their ranks. The land which bore such brave men is destined to rule the world, even if it were to be defeated on the battle field (V 674–676).

The theme of madness is often associated with the theme of fear (*timor*). Let me recall here a very drastic description of the Alps. It is of course another literary *locus horridus*. They are all frozen with ice and blue ancient permafrost, they are the masters of ageless ice. They know neither spring nor summer. Only the ugly winter dwells on their repugnant precipices and guards their eternal abodes. All the winds and storms founded their kingdoms in the Alps. The narrator points out that Athos added to Mount Taurus, Rhodope joined with Mimas, Pelion on top of Ossa and Othrys piled on Mount Haemus, all pale in comparison with the Alps. Hannibal emulates the Tirynthius (i.e. Hercules) who was the first person to trod on these virgin crags (III 477–495). The narrator brings our attention to the huge effort the soldiers made in crossing the Alps. The higher they were climbing, the greater was their toil. Even the monotonous sight of the valleys below only instilled fear in them. As far as their sight could reach they were overwhelmed by the pictures of frozen snow (III 527–535).[34] Fear is also an emotion familiar to the gods. Venus, filled with doubts and fear, asks Jove what would be the end of the punishment, where is the limit of devastation for the descendants of Aeneas. When will he give them a permanent abode, after so many years of wandering the lands and seas? Why does the Punic attempt to banish her descendant from the city that was given to them by Jove himself years ago? Rome is now fearing the fate of Saguntum. Will Rome be seized and will the fall of Pergamum happen again? – she asks rhetorically (III 557–569).

[34] The narrator stresses here that Hannibal's soldiers were marching towards a forbidden land, against the orders of nature and the complaints of gods. Yet the words of their commander filled them with courage and restored energy which had been weakened by fear. Hannibal attempted to make them believe that they were already climbing the walls of the reigning Rome and the lofty hills of Jove. Their toil (*labor*) would help them enslave Ausonia and Tiber. The passage is of a pioneer character. The troops should abandon the road paved by the great Hercules and take a new route, taming the high rocks (III 500–535).

Let me recall here some further passages. After the death of their leader Crixus, the Celts abandoned their posts and fled. The narrator says that all their hope, all their bravery was dependent on this one man only. This reflection is accompanied by a comparison to a hunter who, walking on the top of Mount Picanus in Apulia, rummages through the dense haunts of wild animals, and wading through the bush untouched by human feet, spreads destruction in their lairs (IV 300–304).

According to a rumour (*Fama*) spreading through the terrified cities of Ausonia the Carthaginians crossed over the inhabitable wastelands and Hannibal descended from the Alps, boasting of his achievement as paralleling the feat of Hercules.[35] The narrator says that fear, which is likely to introduce untruth into what the common people say, made them exaggerate whatever they heard (IV 1–9).[36] Fear is a active taskmaster, it speeds up war preparations and everyone who is still on the abandoned fields is filled with panic. The common people are fleeing, terrifying each other and no one is asking who started these rumours. The senators, though afraid of the enemy's advancement and his terrifying resourcefulness, as well as deceived by his crossing of the Alps, face the danger with intrepidity and great courage. Here there is a comment of a historiosophical nature. The narrator says that the senators are joyous because they march to glory through the danger and by the force of their arms they build for themselves a monument to their glory such as the Fortune never granted them in more peaceful times (IV 33–38).[37] Let me recall here an important passage in Livy. Lucius Marcius was convincing the soldiers, whose spirit was broken after the defeat in Hispania, that the Roman people did not perish with the Scipios, nor the strength and valour (*vis atque virtus*) of this nation was buried by the battle of Cannae, therefore surely the Rome will survive all the tempests of the adverse fate (XXV 38, 9–10).

Scipio called to his troops, asking where they are retreating and why fear took from them their personalities. They should chase away the fear,

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[35] Livy treats Hannibal with aversion, because during his passage over the Alps he boasted that his journey rivalled the one of Hercules: *aemulus itinerum Herculis* (XXI 41,7).

[36] Let me point here to the alliteration "R" in verse 9: *pasceRe RumoRem vulgi, pavoR; ituR in acRis*.

[37] In verses 34–37 I can read the acrostic IDEA.

for the Carthaginian warriors are sons of Roman prisoners. There is no hope if they are defeated. Rome with her walls and head crowned with towers begs them for protection, stretching out her hands. If they fail, all one would be able to see everywhere are abducted children, slain parents and the fires of Vesta quenched with blood. They should do all they can to avert this sacrilege (*nefas*) (IV 402–412).[38] Let me recall here one more reflection on the subject of fear. The narrator says that fear is undoubtedly a wrong advisor in danger. Cruel end of many a life has proven that cowardice does not offer good counsel (V 477–479).

The descriptions of cruelty are often not without some irony. Hannibal asks ironically why, although his house comes from Belus of the East and he is surrounded by so many people of Africa and Hispania, should he decline to endure slavery? Let the Rhoeteius be in power for centuries and spread his rule audaciously over other people. Let the Carthaginians shake in fear at his every command and nod (II 49–53). Let me also recall here the audacity of Gestar. He says that Fate (*fata*)[39] is against the Carthaginians and that Mars has condemned and abandoned Carthage, so he will rather die than sentence his homeland to eternal slavery and he will stand on the banks of the Acheron as a free man (II 364–367). When the Carthaginians descended from the Alps and entered Italy, the consul Scipio said that the gods led them there so that they can soak the Latin ground with their blood and put their bones in the land of their enemy. He asked cynically whether this war is led by a different or new Carthage, or by the same power that has sunk beneath the waves and is laying unburied near the Aegadian Islands (IV 75–80). An example of the irony of Fate can be Volunx. The narrator concludes that a man who was favoured by Fortune and gifted with so many riches, will board the boat to Tartarus naked (V 265–267).

Let me show here another, very unusual example. The madness of a man is confronted with the madness of an animal. Batus, being in a frenzy (*amens*), was fighting with the horse of Scipio. When he

[38] The actions of Scipio are often described by means of very vivid comparisons, e.g. IV 243–245: the Roman leader was raging (*perfurit*) on the perturbed plain similarly to Thracian Boreas when, victorious, he stirred himself the entire Icarian Sea from its bottom.

[39] Sometimes the gods must yield before a more weighty destiny, e.g. V 201–202: *Avertere dei vultus fatoque dederunt / Maiori non sponte locum*.

was shielding himself from the stallion, the animal kicked him and he fell down on the rusty sand, his face totally smashed with a hoof (IV 239–242).

Madness can also accompany the forces of nature. Thracian Boreas is the only master of the cruel rocks of Monaecus. Freezing from the cold he either lashes the shore or beats the Alps with hissing wings. Wherever he spreads over the lands, starting from the frozen Bear, no other wind dares to rise against him. He makes the sea churn in rushing eddies, the broken waves roar and the mountains hide in convoluted depths (I 586–593).

The narrator pays particular attention to the retinue of Mars. It includes Anger, accompanied by the Eumenides and innumerable incarnations of cruel death. Bellona hastens the chariots drawn by four horses with her mortal whip. A terrible storm comes out of the vast sky and covers the land, bringing with it dark and violent clouds. The land of Saturn is shaking, terrified by the arrival of the god. Hearing the approach of the war chariot, Ticinus abandons his banks and starts to flow back towards its sources (IV 436–444).

2. CRUELTY

Next let me refer to scenes of particular cruelty. Hasdrubal, indifferent to both gods and people, treated Tagus, a descendant of an ancient family, in a ruthless manner. He ordered to have him nailed to a cross, then he forbade the people to bury him, despite their sorrow (I 151–154). When his servant saw him hanging on the dreadful cross and deformed by death, he grasped the favourite sword of his master, ran into the palace and murdered the heartless Hasdrubal. The narrator describes subsequently the response of the Carthaginians to this audacious assassination. Enraged and moved by sorrow and cruelty, they sought vengeance and inflicted tortures on him.[40] Let me quote here the fate they prepared for him (I 171–175):

[40] Another example of the crime and punishment topos.

Non ignes candensque chalybs, non verbera passim
Ictibus innumeris lacerum scindentia corpus,
Carnificaeve manus penitusve infusa medullis
Pestis et in medio lucentes vulnere flammae
Cessavere.

The spirit (*mens*[41]) of the servant, as concludes the narrator, remained untouched: he won over his pain and made light of it, as if he were a mere observer; he mocks his tormentors, exhausted by inflicting torture upon him (*labor*) and he demands to be crucified, exactly as his master was (I 179–181). The next example refers to Zakynthos, who after his victory over Geryon was gathering near the stream the herd taken from the beaten enemy, triumphantly gloating over his loot, when inadvertently he stepped on a snake. The cruel reptile opened his distended mouth, dripping with poisonous venom heated in the sun, and he mortally bit Zakynthos (I 276–287).

Asbyte, the above mentioned daughter of Hiarbas from the Garamantes tribe, got used to a lonely life. She spent her early years hunting in the wilderness. Diktynna became her beloved goddess, and she was excessively fond of remote gorges, chases after panting horses and pitiless killing of wild animals (II 68–69).[42] Equal cruelty for animals characterized Mopsus. As the narrator stresses, in his youth Mopsus used to shoot with his feathery arrows in Cretean gorges. He often shot down the wandering birds and he could wound from a great distance a stag that escaped from the nets that failed to snare it on the plain (II 94–98).

The description of Asbyte's death (II 197–200; see above),[43] is shocking. The narrator attempts to make the reader more used to thinking of death and asks rhetorically why people fear death so much when there is no escaping it and it will surely come to everyone, in accordance with

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[41] See also other places with *mens*, e.g. I 19; I 63; I 188; I 345; I 483; I 558; I 679; II 28; II 168; II 295; II 355; II 381; II 515; II 568; II 592; II 618; III 132; III 136; III 589; III 603; III 674; IV 35; IV 104; IV 169; IV 368; IV 418; IV 821; V 18; V 60; V 224; V 370; V 426; V 475; V 491; V 569; V 631; V 648.

[42] Women in Silius's poem are often as cruel as men. The only exception is Pyrene, III 415–441.

[43] The effect of cruelty is strengthened by alliteration "R" in verse 199: *FeRventisque Rotas tuRbataque fRena pavoRe*.

the fate that was sealed for them on the day of their birth? (II 223–224). According to the narrator, Hannibal, pursuing Theron, is a cruel (*atrox*) victor (II 250).

Gestar, in his response to Hannon, tries to convince him that though the hearts of Carthaginians shiver from hideous fear, yet Romans are enemies that can be killed like any others. He recalls that Regulus, the hope and pride of Hector's people, was dragged straight to a dungeon amid the cries of the gathered crowd and with his hands tied in the back (II 336–344).[44] According to Gestar, Carthaginians do not lack the necessary energy either (*indole non adeo segni sumus*). Many Libyan troops fight despite their very young age and go to war on unsaddled horses (II 345–349). Hannon, on the other side, aggrandizes the Libyan defeat and the conflagration of the First Punic War, forbidding the Carthaginians to undergo again the hardship of fighting for their freedom (II 358–360).

The goddess Fides replies to Hannibal that she now shuns all the people who are fearsome due to their customs and who live out of robbery, similar to wild beasts. Violence is honoured, the sword demands to have the place rightfully belonging to justice while virtue (*virtus*) yields to crime (II 498–505).

Another goddess, Juno, treats cruelly Tisiphone. She tells her to collect poison which froths when it is mixed with bile, then to gather all crimes, punishments and anger and throw them at Rutuli, sending the whole Saguntum to Erebus (II 535–541).

Cruelty is also associated with the scenes where Hercules plays a part. Let me recall here the ekphrastic description of the doors to Hammon's temple. They are engraved with the labours (*labor*) of Alcmene's son. Lernaean Hydra lays with her snakes cut off, the lion's jaw is crushed and gaping open. The Stygian watchdog, frightening the ghosts of the dead with his terrible bark, rages in his bonds, for the first time being dragged outside his primeval cave. Antaeus lies defeated, the son of Libyan earth, difficult to be overcome as long as he walks on his mother; next are the ugly centaurs, half-men, half-horses, and the river of Acarnania with the horn already torn off. Amid the labours of Hercules shines the sacred fire of Oeta, while the powerful flames carry the hero's soul

[44] A motif similar to the topos of torture in I 151–154 and I 171–181.

to the stars (III 32–44).[45] This is undoubtedly a proleptic remark, hinting at the future labours of Hannibal and the Carthaginians during their pioneering crossing of the Alps.

The interpretation of Flaminius and his role in the history of Rome is very interesting. The narrator says that Flaminius was born in a very inauspicious time, as an ill omen for Rome; Juno selected him for a leader of the broken nation and the appropriate tool of the impending doom (IV 708–710).[46] This is, I believe, a historiosophic remark.

The scenes of cruelty appear as well in relation to animals. Let me recall here the unusually drastic description of the death of an elephant on the bank of river Trebia. A javelin pierced his body, the animal bellowed agonizingly, then raised its wounded and bleeding head, shook off his rider and started to run away. Its huge shoulders and flanks were covered with wounds inflicted by the cruel iron. Many long light spears got stuck in its black back. When all the missiles had been thrown at the beast, it finally fell and its huge body dammed the river (IV 612–621). It is, I suspect, a sort of epicedion for an animal.

The narrator points out that the people who were Dido's offspring, after she landed in Libya, had a custom of human sacrifice and they used to slaughter small children as a gift for the gods. Every year the drama was played out, similar to the sacrifice made to Diana in the kingdom of Thoas. Now Hannon, an old enemy of Hannibal, demanded his son as a sacrifice designated by the gods (IV 765–771).

Full of cruelty is the description of Sychaeus's death at the hands of Flaminius. The consul, as the narrator says, desired very much to strike a mortal blow and he pierced his flank through. The poor victim fell down in agony, deathly cold seized his body and his eyes plunged into eternal sleep (V 523–529). Many atrocities of the war are accompanied by a hyperbole. Here is one of the examples. The whole surface of the field, up to the riverbank, was covered with glittering missiles so thickly that there was no space for the dead to fall (IV 550–553). In another

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[45] A bit further there appears the motif of Domitian's apotheosis, cf. III 607–629; especially 625–629: *Tunc, o nate deum divosque dature, beatas / Imperio terras patrio rege. tarda senectam / Hospitia excipient caeli, solioque Quirinus / Concedet, mediumque parens fraterque locabunt: / Siderei iuxta radiabunt tempora nati"*.

[46] Cf. Liv. XXII 3, 4. Livy says that the innate foolhardiness (*temeritas*) of Flaminius was strengthened in him by his good fortune, both in politics and war.

place we read that death has shown its face in numerous ways (*mille leti facies*) (IV 591). It can be said that this phrase is a motto for the whole epic poem composed by Silius. Thelgon did not find peace even in death, for Trebia took his bloated body to Eridanus, which in turn brought them to the sea (IV 633–634). Thapsus was refused a burial after his death (IV 635).[47]

All the warnings and signs intended to avert Fate are in vain. Even the gods can do nothing to prevent it (V 75–76):

Heu vani monitus frustraque morantia Parcas
Prodigia! heu fatis superi certare minores!

Corvinus warns consul Flaminius to heed the gods and await for an appropriate time to start a battle. The gods themselves will set the time and place for it. He should not scorn their kindness (V 84–88).

The scenes of cruelty are present as well in longer ekphrastic passages, e.g. I 617–629:

In foribus sacris primoque in limine templi
Captivi currus, belli decus, armaque rapta
Pugnantum ducibus saevaeque in Marte secures,
Perfossi clipei et servantia tela cruorem
Claustraque portarum pendent; hic Punica bella,
Aegatis cernas fusaque per aequora classe
Exactam ponto Libyen testantia rostra;
Hic galeae Senonum pensatique improbus auri
Arbiter ensis inest, Gallisque ex arce fugatis
Arma revertentis pompa gestata Camilli;
Hic spolia Aeacidae, hic Epirotica signa
Et Ligurum horrentes coni parmaeque relatae
Hispana de gente rudes Alpinaque gaesa.[48]

[47] In this line there dominates alliteration "T"/"D": *Tu quoque, THapse, caDis, Tumulo posT faTa negaTo*.

[48] Cf. II 406–452. Manuwald 2009: 38–59; Kurman 1974: 1–13.

One can see here wars with Carthage and the Gauls, as well as war spoils of Aeacus's descendant (Pyrrhus), Epirot banners, bristling plums of Ligurian helmets, primitive Spanish shields, Alpine javelins, etc.

3. SUFFERING

I shall now analyze passages in which the narrator invokes images suffused with suffering. The image of the humiliated envoys from Saguntum is pathetic. They are lying on the ground, raising their hands in a gesture of submissiveness and their robes are torn (I 672–674). Let me recall here another ekphrasis. The left side of Hannibal's shield is adorned with inlaid images of Spartan warriors. Close to them, the narrator points out, is a depiction of Regulus, hanging on a cross, noble in his suffering, and below there is a representation of his punishment, which, to the citizens of Saguntum, was a noble example of fidelity (*fides*) (II 432–436).[49]

It is worth recalling here a passage describing mournful burial rites. Numidians honour Asbyte with a funeral pyre. They quickly take Theron's body and carry it three times around her ashes. Then they throw into the flames the mortal club of the man and his fearsome headgear, i.e. a furry head of a tawny lion. When fire consumes the mouth and the cheeks, they leave the hideous cadaver to Iberian vultures (II 264–269).

The besieged citizens of Saguntum had comprehended how hopeless their situation was. Pestilence (*pestis*), deeply entrenched in their bowels, utterly emaciated the starving people. The long hidden famine consumed their hardened bodies with slow and secret poison and burned out their veins, devoid of blood. The sight of the deformed bodies was depressing (II 461–474). The narrator adds that the besieged had to suffer pain worse than death, eat food fit only for wild animals, which disgusted them. One could say ironically that chaste (*casta*) Fides forbade them to prolong their lives, dishonoured by guilt, and to relieve their hunger with the meat of their fellows (II 521–525). The image of horror is completed by a snake which emerged from the mound raised by the son of Amphitryon on the top of the mountain, as a sign for sailors. The reptile writhed amid the groups of terrified people in the center of the

[49] Vessey 1975: 391–405.

city and hurriedly slithered down the lofty walls. Then, as if fleeing, it hurried to the nearby walls and suddenly plunged into the waves of the foamy sea. The narrator adds here an important comment, writing that the people were under the impression that the dead fled the endangered abode and their ghosts did not agree to lie in the conquered ground. Survival is a forlorn hope,[50] people refuse to eat, they are under the power of the masked Erinys. The endless wait for death is as painful as the lack of mercy that the heavenly gods show to those who suffer (II 592–608).

The narrator's remarks on the Cantabri are interesting, for we have here undoubtedly a paradox. These people, when they grow feeble due to old age, find peculiar pleasure in shortening their years of weakness by seeking violent death; they do not agree to live if they cannot fight. Naturally war is the only thing they live for and, as a result, they curse peaceful existence (III 328–331). Also among the Iberian Celts death in battle is an honour. They treat burning a warrior's body on a pyre as a particularly ungodly act (*nefas*), for they believe that the soul soars to the heavenly gods if the body is eaten by a hungry vulture on the battlefield (III 340–343).

Let me turn now to the passages related to the etymology of the Pyrenees. What we have here is an elaborate aetiological myth. These mountains, as the narrator reminds us, have taken their name after Pyrene, daughter of Bebryx and a victim of Alcmene's son. Hercules, when he was travelling to the distant land of the three-bodied Geryon, dazed with wine in the court of the wild Bebryx deprived Pyrene of her virginity. The god, as narrator stresses, was the reason for this unfortunate girl's death (*letum*). When she gave birth to a snake, she immediately left her beloved family home, frightened of her father's anger. When she was lamenting the ingratitude of the one who raped her, while at the same time stretching out her hands in supplication and begging her guest for help, she was torn to pieces by wild animals. When Hercules returned victorious from his quest, he cried over the massacred body of the girl. When he found the head of his beloved, he paled, overcome by pain.

[50] The topos of self-destruction caused by divine injustice is a recurrent theme in Silius's epic poem.

With great sadness he kept saying the name of Pyrene, until he finally laid her body in a grave (III 415–441).[51]

I shall pass now to the analysis of another passage. Even nature itself makes both people and animals suffer. Hannibal's army, when crossing the Alps, was attacked by nimble Alpine mountain-dwellers. The ice, resistant to their passage, was slowly giving way, melting in fresh warm blood. The tough hooves of the horses were getting stuck in ice. The biting frost destroyed the wounded body parts, making cripples out of the soldiers. They suffered through twelve terrible days and nights[52] before they got some rest on the longed-for peak and pitched a camp high on the craggy rocks (III 540–556). Finally, the exhausted soldiers entered the lands of the primeval Latinus. The narrator concludes that Hannibal has passed through the Alps, hitherto untouched by human feet, and set up his camp on the plains of the Taurini (III 642–646).

Here's another proleptic passage. Jove tells Venus that the bravery of the Romans is slowly dwindling and weakening, under the influence of the temptation of idleness.[53] There will come a time when Rome, the master of the world, will be famous for the military defeats it shall suffer. The suffering (*labor*) will "promote" the famous men such as Paulus, Fabius and Marcellus. Paradoxically, these people, as a result of their defeats, will gain for Latium such a great power that their descendants, despite luxury and degeneration, will not be able to destroy. The man has already been born who will recall Hannibal from Latium to his fatherland and take a sword from his hand at the walls of Carthage (III 580–592). I should add here that remarks on Scipio are a specific prelude to a longer panegyric in homage to the Flavian dynasty, particularly to the emperor Domitian (III 597–629).

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[51] Augoustakis 2003: 235–257.

[52] It is entirely possible that number 12 either has here a symbolic meaning or refers to the 12 labours of Hercules.

[53] III 580–581: *blandoque veneno / Desidiae virtus paulatim evicta senescit*. Cf. Liv. II 52, 2; II 54, 2; III 9, 1; III 30, 1; III 65, 6; IV 52, 8; X 6, 3; Lucan I 160–170; especially 160–167: *Namque ut opes nimias mundo fortuna subacto / Intulit, et rebus mores cessere secundis, / Praedaque et hostiles luxum suasere rapinae, / Non auro tectisve modus, mensasque priores / Aspernata fames; cultus gestare decoros / Vix nuribus rapuere mares; fecunda virorum / Paupertas fugitur, totoque accersitur orbe / Quo gens quaeque perit.*

Sometimes suffering and death can have a positive aspect (another paradox!), because they contribute to fulfilling the obligation of duty (*pietas*). For example, brothers, while fighting each other, mutually pierced their breasts with swords, yet due to *pietas* they happily descended to the world of the dead.[54] The narrator prophesizes that future generations will desire to have similar brothers and that their fame will forever remain alive in human memory, if only his songs have the good fortune to survive and see the light of a distant future, and if Apollo does not grow jealous of his fame (IV 394–400).

Flaminius attempts to reason that if someone does not feel rage (*rabies*) caused by a personal pain, then he should find an ample reason for violent anger in the suffering of his homeland. For the peace treaty was broken in the Alps, the fate of Saguntum was terrible and those who were forbidden by the gods to cross river Ebro are now on the banks of the Tiber (V 157–162).

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In conclusion I would like to say that madness, cruelty and suffering play a pivotal role in the first five books of Silius's epic poem. These emotions are shown in a most striking manner in the actions of Hannibal, the protagonist of the historical events. Yet Hannibal's madness and anger are, according to the narrator, for the main part a result of Juno's inspiration and the rage inherited after his father Hamilcar. There prevail scenes demonstrating cruel death of the heroes, in particular Tagus, Asbyte, Pyrene, Regulus etc. Fear is often an inseparable companion to cruelty. In the fight scenes there participate the Furies (Eumenides), who represent dark, irrational forces, hostile to the cosmic order. Undoubtedly, chaos is taking hold over the cosmos. Fate is stronger than any actions of either men or gods. The scenes of cruelty pervade the longer ekphrastic passages and the description of the fall of Saguntum. The narrator frequently employs pathos, hyperbole, as well as irony, sarcasm and paradox. Many speeches have a proleptic character. Nature is often noxious or even inflicts intense pain on people and animals, especially horses and elephants. Silius attempts to build his own philosophy of the

[54] The passage is modelled on the duel between the Horatii and Curiatii, see Liv. I 24–26.

history of Rome; for example, Gaius Flaminius is the leader of the nation yielding to the power of Carthage and the tool of inevitable destruction. Suffering can be also of value. It will "promote" famous men, such as Paulus, Fabius and Maximus, who will renew Rome and ensure its eventual victory. The senators rejoice that the dangers they are facing can give their fame such a monument as the Fortune would never have been able to grant them in prosperous times.[55]

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[55] Von Albrecht 1997: 967: "he combines the epic tradition of κλέα ἀνδρών ('praises of heroes') with the *gloria* and *virtus* in the vein of Roman historians and the Stoic concept of trial and rehabilitation through *labor*. Silius subordinates literature to a moral idea".

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