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# QUIRINIUS' SACRIFICE (SILIUS ITALICUS: *PUNICA* 4,192–215)

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*Abstract:* Contrary to historical accounts, Silius inserts a preliminary encounter into his account of the Battle of Ticinus in the *Punica* in which, prior to facing Hannibal's army, the Romans fight against the Gauls led by the Boian Crixus (4,143–310). Among Crixus' victims, we find three soldiers whose names recall early kings of Rome: Tullus, Remulus, and Quirinius. After a brief overview of the significance of these names, the paper focuses on the character of Quirinius (4,192–215). I interpret this episode through three approaches. 1) Quirinius' death recalls, by inversion, the miraculous survival of L. Sergius Silus (Plin. *Nat*. 7,104–106), 2) his plan to kill Crixus evokes the ritual of seizing and offering the *spolia opima,* while 3) his being certain of impending death makes his case reminiscent of the *devotio.* Quirinius' self-sacrifice thus can be seen as contributing to the Elder Scipio's victory over Crixus, and is also paralleled by how the general's life will be saved through external help (coming from the gods and his son) in the second half of the battle.
*Keywords:* Silius Italicus, Second Punic War, Battle of Ticinus, Quirinius, L. Sergius Silus, *spolia opima, devotio,* sacrifice

The battle at the Ticinus river, fought in November 218 B. C. between the Roman and the Carthaginian armies, seems to have played a controversial role in Roman cultural memory. On the one hand, it was an insignificant encounter: the first and least severe of the four increasingly greater Roman defeats which characterized the first phase of the Second Punic War. In some accounts it was not even distinguished from the second battle at the Trebia,[1] followed by the two catastrophic defeats at Lake Trasimene and Cannae. The memory of the Ticinus was, not surprisingly, overshadowed by these infamous events.[2] On the

1 Plu. *Fab*. 2,2; Cannae is also mentioned as *tertia pugna* at Liv. 23,33,4 (but elsewhere Livy does distinguish between the battles at the Ticinus and the Trebia); cf. perhaps Plin. *Nat.* 16,14. See Urso 2003 on the formation of the historiographical tradition regarding the Battle of the Ticinus; as he emphasises (on p. 71), it is only in sources later than Silius that the two battles are consistently distinguished from each other.

2 This is reflected in the frequency with which the four battles are mentioned in literary texts (excluding Silius' *Punica* and historiographical accounts of the Second Punic War, like Books 21–30 of Livy; the statistics is based on querying the PHI database). Cannae is mentioned, not

other hand, it was important as the first direct encounter between the two main belligerent parties and, perhaps more importantly, there was one episode in this first battle which provided a moral *exemplum* and was thus especially worthy of commemoration. The Elder Scipio, commanding the Roman army as *consul*, was wounded and his life had to be saved by his son, the future Scipio Africanus, as an example of *pietas erga parentes*.[3] The importance of this story is also signalled by the fact that it is mentioned even in the ancient summary of Livy's *Ab urbe condita* (*Per*. 21). To sum up: the Battle of Ticinus seems to have been more memorable as the site of an exemplary deed than as the battle itself in which that deed was done.

This also results in a narrative instability: the battle, on the one hand, is not really important — perhaps not enough information on it survives in the first place — to be told in detail, but one of its episodes is nevertheless of great significance and thus the battle itself cannot be ignored completely either. Polybius and Livy seem to solve the 'problem' posed by this paradox in a very similar way. They both quote the speeches of the commanders before the battle — a well-known site of fictional invention in historiography since at least Thucydides (1,22) — at surprisingly great length in relation to the overall length of the whole Ticinus narrative: only the final 20% remains for the battle itself in Polybius (who, by the way, tells about Scipio's saving of his father in a different passage only), around 35% in Livy.[4] The speeches supplant, to a great extent, what is missing from the battle narrative.

Silius Italicus, in his epic reworking of the historiographic accounts of the Second Punic War, chooses a completely different route in *Punica* 4 (59–479). He spends only some 20% of the episode on the speeches (delivered just before reaching the Ticinus) and portents preceding the battle (59–142). However, the narrative of the encounter between the Roman and Carthaginian armies still occupies the last 40% only (311–479). The resulting gap of equal length is filled with a preliminary encounter in which the Romans fight against Hannibal's Gallic auxiliaries (143–310). This first half of the Battle of Ticinus is entirely

surprisingly, with the greatest frequency (65 times); the Trasimene is recalled relatively frequently still (13 times separately; 5 times together with Cannae). These are also the two battles whose memorable nature is emphasized by Livy (22,7,1; 22,43,9; 22,50,1; cf. also Fabius' speech at 24,8,20). The Battle of the Trebia is mentioned relatively rarely (3 times separately; 4 times as the preliminary of Trasimene and/or Cannae), and the Battle of the Ticinus only in two passages, V. Max. 5,4,2 and Plin. *Nat.* 7,106 (on which see below).

3 The story is told by Polybius (10,3,3–6) and Livy (21,46,7–10, also citing Coelius Antipater for the rival version of the story according to which it was a Ligurian slave, rather than the son himself, who saved Scipio's life), then included in Valerius Maximus' collection of *exempla* (5,4,2) and elaborated in great detail by Silius (4,430–479; see below).

4 Plb. 3,62–65 (chapter 65 on the battle itself); Liv. 21,40–46 (chapters 45–46 on the battle itself).

fictional:[5] Polybius and Livy both mention the presence of the Gauls, but as auxiliaries of the Romans.[6] In the accounts of both historians, some Gallic tribes change sides already before this battle, including the Boians whom Silius himself mentions, but apparently they do not take part in the Battle of Ticinus, in contrast to other Gauls, who are still sided with the Romans, and will only desert them after the first battle is lost (Plb. 3,40–41 and 67; Liv. 21,25 and 48).

The first half of the battle is thus a prominent section of the *Punica* in which the narrator, not bound by — and even explicitly contradicting — his historiographical sources, claims for himself nearly complete freedom to invent episodes and characters as he likes. In this paper, I will discuss some of these fictional elements of the Silian narrative, concentrating on the figure of a certain Quirinius, fighting on the Roman side.[7] Although the stakes of my interpretation are literary in nature, I will also point out similarities with some traditional Roman rituals; it is in this way that I hope to be able to honour the memory of Professor Köves-Zulauf.

## Warriors of the present, kings of the past

The narrator gives us ten names of Italians who become casualties during the *aristeia* of Crixus, the commander of the Gauls in Silius: Picens and Laurus (175–180), Venulus (181), Farfarus (181–182), Tullus (183–185), Remulus (186), the Magii (186–187), Metaurus (187), Clanius (188), and finally Quirinius, who is killed by Crixus' soldiers rather than by the chieftain himself (192–215). Some of these warriors (like Picens, Farfarus or Metaurus) get their names from Italian regions or rivers; some have Vergilian pedigrees (Venulus and Remulus) or suggest historical connections (the Metaurus will be the site of a battle in the war; the Magii, here from Tibur, are historically related to Ca-

5 Silius seems to call attention to his own invention, inserting a preliminary encounter with the Gauls before the main fight with the Carthaginians at 4,189–190: *nec locus est Tyriis belli pugnaeve, sed omnem Celticus implevit campum furor* ("there was no room for the Carthaginians to engage in war or combat; instead, Celtic madness filled the entire battlefield"). The Carthaginians, indeed, are denied space not only on the battlefield, but also in the text, for the time being.

6 „Publius, placing his javelineers and the Gaulish cavalry which was with them in front…" (ὁ μὲν οὖν Πόπλιος προθέμενος τοὺς ἀκοντιστὰς καὶ τοὺς ἅμα τούτοις Γαλατικοὺς ἱππεῖς, Plb. 3,65,5; transl. Paton and Walbank). Polybius' remark is translated almost word for word by Livy (*Scipio iaculatores et Gallos equites in fronte locat*, 21,46,5). Silius' departure from his sources (mainly, Livy) is noted by Heynacher 1874, 24; Schlichteisen 1881, 78; Nicol 1936, 87. Heynacher and Nicol infer that Silius must have been following a source unknown to us. As Niemann 1975, 51 emphasizes, this conclusion is far from inevitable.

7 I quote the text of the *Punica* as printed in Delz 1987, with translation by Augoustakis—Bernstein 2021. At the time of writing, I have not yet had access to Schedel's narratological commentary on *Punica* 4 (Schedel 2022).

pua).[8] The trio I am focusing on here is that of Tullus, Remulus and Quirinius. As McGuire has shown, Silius' dominant strategy in naming his fictional characters is historical foreshadowing; these three soldiers fighting at the Ticinus, however, are interesting because their names recall the city's early kings and thus the prehistory and foundation of Rome.[9]

Tullus is obviously reminiscent of Rome's third king, Tullus Hostilius. That this warlike king and the legends surrounding his rule are not far from the poet's mind in the Ticinus episode is evident from the fact that Silius will later include a triple duel between three Italian and three Punic/Spartan brothers (355–400), a reprise of the famous duel of the Horatii and Curiatii (modelled on Liv. 1,24–25).[10] The naming, however, is ironic: Tullus Hostilius was remembered as a famous warrior king with many martial deeds to boast about, while his Silian namesake is little more than a simple casualty.

> *...et te sub gelido nutritum, Tulle, Velino,*
> *egregium Ausoniae decus ac memorabile nomen,*
> *si dent fata moras aut servent foedera Poeni.*
>
> "…[Crixus also] killed you, Tullus, raised by cold Lake Velinus; Italy's outstanding glory and a memorable name — such you would have been, if Fate had given you time or the Carthaginians had abided by the treaty." (4,183–185.)

The absence of a subjunctive *esset* calls attention to the fact that Tullus the king can actually be seen as „Italy's outstanding glory and a memorable name", while Silius' Tullus could have achieved fame only in peace, i. e. if the Carthaginians had abided by the peace treaty with Rome and there had been no Second Punic War at all.

The next victim, Remulus comes off even worse, being mentioned only by name, without any further information. Even that name is elided: *tum Remul(um) atque* („then [he killed] Remulus and..., 186). Nevertheless, the name is interesting in itself, for it recalls intertextually a number of Vergilian characters.[11] There is a Remulus at *Aeneid* 11,636–640; earlier, Euryalus seizes a golden belt which once belonged to a certain Remulus from Tibur (9,359–364); and there is the most memorable of this Vergilian trio, Numanus Remulus slain by Ascanius (9,590–637). The latter famously boasts in a lengthy speech about Italian superiority and warlike spirit, only to be killed in an instant by Ascanius' arrow. Ovid also mentions a Remulus as king of Alba Longa who him-

8 On these names, see the notes of Spaltenstein 1986, *ad* 4,175–188.

9 McGuire 1995. As he notes, most proleptic names in Silius allude to Rome's civil wars. On the 'poetics of naming' in the *Aeneid*, see O'Hara 2017 and especially Paschalis 1997; cf. Reed 2007, 5–6 and *passim*.

10 On this episode, see Hulls 2011 and Bartolomé 2018.

11 On these Vergilian characters, see Stok 2013.

self hybristically tried to imitate Jupiter's thunderbolt and was punished by the god for that (Met. 14,616–618).[12] In addition to these Vergilian and Ovidian intertextual resonances, Silius' Remulus (as did Vergil's Numanus Remulus in the first place) recalls the names of both twins at the foundation of Rome, Romulus and Remus.[13] The latter is, again, famous for having boasted (about Rome's humble city-walls, followed by his killing by Romulus or Celer), while any reminiscence of Romulus has the function, in my view, to prepare the reader for the last member of the trio, to whom I now turn.

Quirinius receives the most detailed treatment of all the ten victims, getting at least his „twenty lines of epic fame". He is also the only one who manages to kill some enemies before falling victim himself. He comes up with the overly ambitious plan to kill the enemy commander, Crixus, but after some initial success, he meets Ligaunus who cuts off one of his hands; he is then beheaded by Vosegus,[14] who carries away the head together with the helmet as a spoil. I will return below to the possible significance of this violent scene (and the question of which hand was cut off), but for the time being I am concerned with the name. Spaltenstein notes only that it is frequent.[15] There is, indeed, one near-contemporary Quirinius known from literary accounts as well: P. Sulpicius Quirinius (*cos.* 12 B. C.), repeatedly mentioned by Tacitus in *Annals* 3 and also in the Gospel of Luke (2,2) as the governor of Syria at the time of Jesus' birth.[16] It seems to be more important, however, especially after the announcements of Tullus' and Remulus' death, that Silius' Quirinius also has a name which recalls early Rome and the deified founder of the city: Quirinius is a character who is 'like Quirinus' or perhaps even 'a descendent of Quirinus'.[17]

The common denominator between Tullus, Remulus and Quirinius seems to be the motif of boasting in a wide sense of the word, understood as an ironic tension between great expectations and a more lowly outcome. Tullus is a glory of Italy who only might have been; Remulus is reminiscent, by name, of famous boasters in legend and literature; and Quirinius, apparently just an ordinary soldier, also turns out to be aiming too high with his plan. Quirinius, how-

12 This king is mentioned by various names in different texts; see Smith 1985 in more detail. The shared element in these stories is the king's hybristic emulation of Jupiter the Thunderer.

13 Cf. Hardie 1994, *ad Aen*. 9,592–593; Kretschmer 1909, 296–298; Stok 2013, 359–362.

14 Vosegus, as noted by Spaltenstein 1986, *ad loc.*, is the name of a Celtic god. Bearing a divine name, as we will see, is a common characteristic of Quirinius and Vosegus.

15 Spaltenstein 1986, *ad* 4,192, but without parallels.

16 I am grateful to György Németh for calling my attention to the prosopographical information.

17 This is also the instinctive interpretation by the scribes of some manuscripts: the reading of *cod.* G is the metrically problematic *Quirinus* (the same appears in F as a correction); see Delz 1987, *ad* 4,192. In *Punica* 12, Quirinus does, indeed, intervene in the fight, personally defending the Quirinal Hill during Hannibal's assault (12,718–719).

ever, offers a bit more complex case than the other two. In the following, I will try three approaches by which we might better understand this curious figure.

## Quirinius' *virtus* and *fortuna*

The narrator introduces Quirinius as a steadfast soldier. Fleeing is never in his mind, and he does not fear death:

> *Hic inter trepidos immane Quirinius audens,*
> *cui fugere ignotum atque invicta mente placebat*
> *rebus in adversis exceptum pectore letum.*
>
> "Here Quirinius dared monstrous deeds among the fearful warriors. He did not know how to flee, and in adverse circumstances it pleased his unconquerable mind to take death in the chest." (4,192–194.)

In short, Quirinius seems to be an embodiment of *virtus*,[18] or rather, a specific type of *virtus:* one which is based on the principle of offensive, even in the case of adverse situations. The exemplary Roman who is traditionally known as having stood for this type of heroism in the Second Punic War is Marcellus „the Sword", contrasted with Fabius „the Shield".[19] I will return to the connection between Quirinius and Marcellus later, but for now I would like to note that Quirinius' „unconquerable mind" also recalls characterizations of Cato the Younger in Manilius, where the Stoic hero is „defeated without being overcome in spirit" (*invicta devictum mente Catonem, Astr*. 4.87), and in Lucan, where the spirit of the dead Pompey „takes up residence in the mind of unconquerable Cato" (*invicti posuit se mente Catonis*, 9,18).[20] Such intertexts suggest that Quirinius will be, paradoxically, both successful and unsuccessful in some sense; he will die, but even so — or even through his very death — he will remain „undefeated" and able to help the Romans somehow.

There is one more „unconquerable" historical person whom Quirinius' character evokes, ironically, through the manner of his death. Pliny the Elder tells the story of an otherwise unsung Roman hero of the Second Punic War, L. Sergius Silus (*Nat.* 7,104–106).[21] Sergius, we are told, was wounded twenty-three times, taken prisoner twice by Hannibal's troops, but escaped twice. More importantly for us, „he lost his right hand during his second campaign" (*secundo stipendio dextram manum perdidit*, 104; transl. Rackham), yet continued

18 Cf. Niemann 1975, 61, characterizing Quirinius as *exemplum virtutis Romanae.*

19 On this pair in Silius, see Fucecchi 2010.

20 Cf. Wick 2004, *ad loc.* for further parallels and discussion.

21 On the *gens Sergia* in Roman memory, see Urso 2015, esp. 135–136 on the Plinian passage.

to serve in the army. He even „had a right hand of iron made for him and going into action with it tied to his arm raised the siege of Cremona, saved Placentia, captured twelve enemy camps in Gaul" (*dextram sibi ferream fecit, eaque religata proeliatus Cremonam obsidione exemit, Placentiam tutatus est, duodena castra hostium in Gallia cepit*, 105). In other words, he was active in Northern Italy. Pliny does not explicitly say that he was present at the Battle of Ticinus as well, but the statement that he „fought with only the left hand in four battles" (*sinistra manu sola quater pugnavit*, 104), followed by the rhetorical list of the four infamous early Roman defeats of the war a few lines later might suggest just that: „What civic wreaths were bestowed by fighting at the Trebia, the Ticinus or Lake Trasimene? What crown was won at Cannae, where successful flight was valour's highest exploit?" (*quas Trebia Ticinusve aut Trasimenus civicas dedere? quae Cannis corona merita, unde fugisse virtutis summum opus fuit?,* 106). Pliny's conclusion is that „all other victors have conquered men, but Sergius vanquished fortune also" (*ceteri profecto victores hominum fuere, Sergius vicit etiam fortunam,* 106). Sergius' heroic exploits are also depicted on the *denarius* issued by his descendant, M. Sergius Silus in 116/115 B. C..[22] On the reverse, in addition to the moneyer's name, a horseman is shown galopping, holding in his left hand a sword and the severed head of a long-haired soldier, presumably a Gaul; a shield is strapped to his right hand.

Many points of contact suggest that Sergius might have given Silius the idea for the Quirinius scene — but with a twist. Sergius and Quirinius fight against both Hannibal and the Gauls; perhaps they fight in the same battle as well. They both lose one arm. Sergius, Pliny tells us, loses the right; the manuscripts and editors of Silius, however, are less certain about Quirinius. Delz prints *decisaque … dextra* in 4,209, arguing that *moribunda pependit* in the next line is an apparent imitation of a Vergilian passage where a right arm is cut off (*dexteraque ex umero nervis moribunda pependit*, "and the dying arm hung by the sinews from the shoulder", transl. Fairclough and Goold, *A*. 10,341). He also notes, however, that early editions following the Venetian printing of 1483 have the variant *laeva* — presumably because in lines 211–212 (see below) we learn that the arm cut off was the one holding the reins, i. e. the left in a typical case. However, intertextuality might matter more in a literary text than probability, and the story of Sergius (as told in Pliny and depicted on the coin) suggests that these might be, actually, the main models behind Quirinius' losing of an arm.

The similarities between Quirinius and Sergius end here; other points of comparison rather serve to make contrast. Sergius continued to serve even after losing the right arm, but there will be no such glorious return for Quirinius. Silius' grotesque description of how the arm cut off tries to do its job even while

22 Crawford 1974, 286,1.

dying[23] stands in ironic contrast with Sergius' use of a metal prosthetic — similarly but more successfully imitating the natural limb — in his later career:

> *dumque micans tremulo conatu lora retemptat,*
> *flectentem adsuetos imitatur nescia frenos.*
>
> "… [the hand] tried to control the bridle, quivering with trembling effort, obliviously imitating a hand that guides the reins in the customary way." (4,211–212.)

The most significant point of contrast is, nonetheless, the cutting of the head. Sergius, as shown on the coin, was able to cut off the head of a (Gallic) enemy even after losing his right hand; Quirinius, on the other hand, loses his head also, immediately after losing his arm. Silius finishes the episode by describing, in a way which recalls Sergius as shown on the *denarius,* how Vosegus carries away as spoil Quirinius' head and helmet: *iubaque suspensam portans galeam atque inclusa perempti ora viri* („he carried off his helmet, holding it by its crest with the dead man's head still contained inside", 4,213–215). If Pliny characterized Sergius as „the conqueror of *fortuna*", in Silius it is rather *fortuna* (or the personified *Fortuna*) who conquers Quirinius. In the Ticinus episode of the *Punica*, it will be another Roman who „stands fast, determined not to yield to Fortune": the Elder Scipio, characterized thus by the narrator when he is being surrounded by enemy soldiers before his wounding (*stabat Fortunae non cedere certus*, 4,448), although he will need external help to resist Fortuna.[24] Further links between Quirinius and Scipio will emerge.

## Quirinius aspiring for the *spolia opima*

Quirinius, nevertheless, is much more than just an unfortunate loser like Tullus, Remulus and the others. Among the fearful Italian soldiers (*inter trepidos*, 192) he is the only one to come up with a plan, a particularly daring plan (*immane … audens,* 192) at that. He tries to find his way to Crixus and kill him:

> *cuspide flammat ecum ac dispergit gaesa lacerto,*
> *si reserare viam atque ad regem rumpere ferro*
> *detur iter.*
>
> "His spearpoint spurred his horse to fury and his arms launched javelins, to see if he could open a path and slaughter his way with his sword to the Gallic king." (4,195–197.)

23 See Spaltenstein 1986, *ad* 4.211 for parallels of the motif in Roman epic.

24 On constructions with *certus* in Silius, see n. 31 below. It may be added that the Ticinus episode also begins with the figure of personified Fortuna „removing the delays" (*sustulerat Fortuna moras,* 4,59) of the encounter of the two armies.

Quirinius' intentions as described in these lines may remind the reader of the *spolia opima,* or „rich spoils", in both a rather general and a quite precise sense of the term.[25] On a number of occasions in the *Punica*, the narrator and various characters use variants of the Latin expression with reference to killing the enemy commander in single combat, regardless of the rank and ethnicity of the soldier who executes such a feat.[26] At the Battle of Ticinus, some Garamantian spearmen in Hannibal's army try to give their commander „a new gift, the stripped armor" (*nova dona … armorum spolium*, 4,446–447) to be taken from the Elder Scipio. While inspiring his troops at the start of the battle at the Trasimene, Flaminius exhorts a certain Orfitus, apparently an ordinary soldier who will not be mentioned again, to compete with his peers in seizing the rich spoils (*opima … dona*, 5,166–168); at Cannae, Hannibal — a general, to be sure, but not a Roman — is denied the honour to kill and despoil Varro (*opimae caedis honor*, 9,430–431). Marcellus' soldiers rival each other during the siege of Syracuse in seizing the rich spoils (*spoliis … opimis*, 14,141–142), and later, after the Roman general is ambushed and killed, Hannibal will applaud a soldier for wearing the despoiled arms (*opima*, 17,298) of Marcellus.

We also encounter in the *Punica* more precise references to the three famous cases of a Roman general — or at least officer — killing the enemy commander, followed by the proper ritual of offering the *spolia opima* to Jupiter Feretrius.[27] Romulus and Cossus are not explicitly mentioned in this context, but Marcellus is specified early in the epic as the „third to bring the rich spoils in triumph to the Thunderer" (*tertia qui tulerat sublimis opima Tonanti*, 1,133), and he is especially dear to Jupiter because of that (*gratusque mihi Marcellus opimis,* „Marcellus, who is my favorite because of the rich spoils" 3,587).[28] The narrator reminds us again of his great deed at the much less distinguished Varro's election to consulship (*Iovi spolia alta ferentem Marcellum,* „Marcellus who brought the greatest spoils to Jupiter", 8,254–255). Later, his victory at Nola is said by the narrator to be even greater than his previous seizing of the rich spoils (*graditur comitante triumpho maior quam ferret cum victor opima Tonanti*, „he proceeded with a triumphant retinue, greater than when he brought the rich spoils to the Thunderer", 12,279–280). Finally, shortly before his death Marcellus himself prays to Jupiter to grant a new set of rich spoils, this time over Hannibal (*summe deum, Libyco faxis de praeside nunc his, his umeris tibi*

25 Cf. Spaltenstein 1986, *ad* 5,167–168 and 17,298.

26 Cf. Festus 189,4–6, attributing to Varro a loose definition, according to which any soldier could seize the rich spoils.

27 On the *spolia opima* and the possible course of development of the stories regarding Romulus', Cossus' and Marcellus' dedications, see Flower 2000; cf. Oakley 1985 on famous generals' single combats in Roman cultural memory.

28 Marcellus' importance in the *Punica* with respect to the *spolia opima* is noted by Spaltenstein 1986, *ad* 1,132.

*opima feram,* „greatest god, please make it so that I can bear on these shoulders of mine the rich spoils to you from the Carthaginian general", 15,362–363).

Quirinius' case clearly belongs to the first group: he is an ordinary soldier, not a general, and he will not be successful in killing the enemy commander. All three legendary cases, nevertheless, also seem to offer relevant parallels. The more obvious connections are with Romulus and Marcellus. The very name of Quirinius reminds us (and its wearer himself) of Romulus: he is a „Romulean" character who, in planning to kill the enemy commander, seems to be trying to emulate his namesake. If he is successful in defeating Crixus, he will be „like Romulus" truly, not just in name.[29] As for Marcellus, the direct point of contact is provided by the temporal and geographical proximity of the two battles. Both Quirinius and Marcellus take part in a battle against the Gauls in Northern Italy, a few years apart: Marcellus won the *spolia opima* by killing Viridomarus, leader of the Insubres, at the Battle of Clastidium in 222 B. C., just four years before the Battle of Ticinus in which — according to Silius' fiction — Qurinius plans to overcome Crixus. Marcellus' heroic deed is thus a very recent one, and an obvious target of emulation by Romans fighting (whether historically or in fiction) in the War against Hannibal. The links with Cossus' *spolia opima* — won, according to legend, at the battle against Veii by killing their king, Lars Tolumnius in 438 B. C. — are rather indirect, but nevertheless relevant and interesting. Unlike the two other legendary champions, Cossus' military rank worn in the battle is a matter of dispute in ancient sources.[30] Livy cites sources that have him as *tribunus militum;* and although the historian asserts, in the end, that Cossus must have been *consul* if he was allowed to dedicate the spoils to Jupiter Feretrius afterwards, he concedes that the *dictator* under whose auspices the Roman army fought was Mamercus Aemilius at the time (Livy 4,17,8–20,11). In other words, both he and Quirinius are subordinate soldiers. Moreover, as Livy tells us, Cossus „steals the show" from Aemilius in the triumph officially held by the latter: *longe maximum triumphi spectaculum fuit Cossus, spolia opima regis interfecti gerens; in eum milites carmina incondita aequantes eum Romulo canere* („By far the greatest spectacle in the triumph was Cossus, bearing the spoils of honour of the slain king, while the soldiers sang rude verses about him, comparing him to Romulus", transl. Foster, 4,20,2). Likening Cossus to Romulus is the same idea that is also suggested by the name of Quirinius in the *Punica*.

The theme of the *spolia opima* takes us back to the motif of boasting, recognized above as a link between the deaths of Tullus, Remulus and Quirinius. The

29 Cf. also the alternate tradition, preserved e. g. by Festus (204 L, quoting Varro), citing a *lex Numae* and distinguishing between three types of spoils, the *spolia tertia* being dedicated to Ianus Quirinus. On this tradition, and the problems it poses, see McDonnell 2005, 145–147.

30 Flower 2000, 44–46.

very fact that someone remains unsuccessful in seizing the rich spoils may imply that the cause of failure was hybristic behavior itself: the warrior chose a target too powerful, or (in case of a subordinate soldier) undertook a feat which should have been the prerogative of his commander. In the Quirinius episode, the latter aspect might be particularly relevant, for it will be the Elder Scipio who overcomes Crixus in the end: his *aristeia* starts right after Qurinius' death (4,216–299). Quirinius acts hybristically, at least in a narrative sense, in that he tries to kill an adversary whose killing is reserved, so to speak, for another character, one more important than himself.

Scipio's killing of Crixus, we might think, qualifies for being treated as the seizing of proper *spolia opima;* but — somewhat surprisingly after reading the Quirinius episode — the narrator does not make any mention about what happens to the weapons (4,289–310). For even if Crixus, and thus the Gauls, are defeated, the battle is not over yet; in its second half, the Romans must face a bigger foe, the Carthaginians, and the life of the Elder Scipio himself will be in danger. In the end, the Battle of Ticinus will be lost by the Romans; there will be no cause for celebration, triumph, and the offering of *spolia opima* in Rome.

**Quirinius' self-sacrifice and the Scipiones**

There is one more traditional military ritual which Quirinius' conduct recalls, in many respects the opposite of the *spolia opima,* for it requires the death of the Roman commander. Quirinius himself is certain of his death when he begins his charge:

> *... si reserare viam atque ad regem rumpere ferro*
> *detur iter, certusque necis petit omnibus ausis,*
> *quod nequeat sentire, decus.*
>
> "… to see if he could open a path and slaughter his way with his sword to the Gallic king. Certain of his death, he sought with every effort the glory which he would be unable to perceive." (4,196–198.)

The expression *certus ... necis* might mean, in this context, that Quirinius is overconfident about killing Crixus, but the parallels we can find in the *Punica* suggest the opposite, namely, that Quirinius is certain of his own imminent death (whether or not he will be successful in killing Crixus before). Bruttius, the standard-bearer of the Roman army at the Trasimene, buries the legion's Eagle when he realizes that he cannot survive (*necis certus*, 6,27), and Dido is likewise *certa necis* (8,53) when she decides to end her life after Aeneas' de-

parture.[31] Quirinius' act is thus a form of willful self-sacrifice, comparable to the *devotio.*[32] This ritual is linked in Roman memory to the Decii Mures: members of the family ensured the victory of the Roman armies they led by consecrating both their own and the enemy's lives before engaging in battle. Quirinius does not perform a proper *devotio*, to be sure: again, he is not the commander of the Roman army, and he does not utter the necessary prayer (quoted at Livy 8,9) in the presence of a *pontifex.* Other characteristics emphasized at the beginning of the episode, however, do recall the ritual as performed by the Decii: Quirinius decides to act in a moment of crisis (his fellow soldiers' panic, caused by Crixus' *aristeia:* see *inter trepidos* at 192), he rides a horse (*cuspide flammat ecum,* 195) and, being certain of death, throws himself into the midst of the enemy (196–197, quoted above).

The pervasive presence of the 'logic of *devotio*' in Books 4–10 of the *Punica* has been analyzed in detail by Raymond Marks.[33] Representatives of Rome, as he shows, engage in various self-destructive acts throughout this section of the epic narrative. Some of them are generals, most importantly Flaminius at the Trasimene and Paulus at Cannae, both killed on the battlefield. Others are ordinary soldiers, like a certain Catus who is killed instantly at the beginning of the Battle of Ticinus, but only because he spurs his horse to the fore; otherwise the spear thrown by a Carthaginian soldier to start the battle would fall on empty ground (4,134–142). The case of Catus and some others are rather banal, or can be criticized as reckless acts like Flaminius' incautious decision to meet Hannibal's troops at the Trasimene, and his hurling himself into the midst of the enemy later, in search of certain death (5,636–643). Paulus' behaviour in the battle of Cannae is similar, as Marks shows, but — and I stress this point — he may nevertheless fall under better judgment, because he committed himself to the fight out of his sense of duty, despite his sharp criticism of Varro expressed earlier (8,328–328). His „beautiful death" (*mors ... pulchra,* 10,307–308) thus seems to be a more noble form of self-sacrifice. Even if all these self-destructive Roman deaths, culminating in Paulus' fall (10,215–325), are not proper instances of *devotio*, they seem to have a similarly positive effect on later Roman conduct of the war: after Cannae, the series of defeats is over and the path towards victory is finally in sight. This is announced early on in the *Punica*, in Book 3, where Jupiter singles out Paulus along with Fabius and Marcellus as the ones who „will bear for Latium a great

31 The future winner of the chariot race is also *certus ... laudis* (16,440). Silius also uses the construction *certus* + infinitive to express a character's determination (1,268 and 12,624 of Hannibal; 4,448 of the Elder Scipio, see above).

32 On the ritual in detail, see Versnel 1976 and Janssen 1981; cf. Cowan 2011 on the motif in Roman epic, esp. Vergil.

33 Marks 2005b.

empire through wounds and suffering" (*tantum parient Latio per vulnera regnum*, 3,588).[34]

Quirinius' death, although not discussed by Marks, seems to fit perfectly into this series of self-destructive acts. The question remains if it also contributes to fulfilling Jupiter's program of "victory through suffering", and if so, how. This takes us back to the significance of Quirinius' name. In addition to — or rather, precisely by — recalling Quirinus, the deified founder of Rome, Quirinius' name is also linked with the word *Quirites* (probable cognate of Quirinus), i. e. the traditional formal appellation of Rome's citizen body.[35] The very name of this soldier in Silius' fiction (reinforced by the *certus necis* motif) thus allows us to see him, symbolically, as 'one for the many',[36] a representative of the community, which also makes Quirinius' role similar to that of a substitutive sacrifice whose death is supposed to ensure the survival of the community.

The motif of (sacrificial) substitution is clearly discernible in how Quirinius' plan and his death relates to Crixus' self-professed aims in the first half of the battle. Crixus boasts that he is the descendant of the Gauls who sacked Rome in the past. He "swells with pride in his claim of descent from his forefather Brennus; among his honors, he included the Capitol's capture" (*ipse tumens atavi Brenni se stirpe ferebat Crixus et in titulos Capitolia capta trahebat*, 150–151),[37] and on his shield the Gauls are depicted as they measure the gold on the Capitol, paid as ransom by the Romans (152–153). When he finally meets Scipio on the battlefield, he even provokes the Roman commander by asking if "no one survived from the burned and captured city to tell you what kind of fighting hands we, Brennus' people, carry to war" (*nemone incensae captaeque superfuit urbi, ut tibi, quas Brenni populus ferremus in arma, narraret, dextras?*, 279–281). Crixus is thus intent not only on killing Roman soldiers on the battlefield, but also on repeating and even surpassing the famous deed of his ancestor by capturing Rome and finally extinguishing the community of Romans once and for all.

In context of the story of the Gallic sack of Rome the beheading of Quirinius gains added meaning. The name of Rome's citadel is etymologically

34 See also Ahl–Davis–Pomeroy 1986, 2501–2504 on the pervasive theme of 'victory through defeat' in the *Punica*, also discussing Lucan as a precedent, and Clark 2014 (esp. 50–93 on the Second Punic War) on the handling of Roman defeats and the motif of 'defeat foreshadowing victory' in the historiographical tradition (focusing on the Republican era).

35 Walde—Hofmann 1938, *s. vv. Quirinus* and *Quirites.*

36 See Hardie 1993, 19–56 on 'synecdochic heroes' and the motif of substitutive sacrifice in post-Vergilian Roman epic.

37 Brennus was chieftain of the Senones, while Crixus is leading the Boians in Silius; thus, he might be hybristically (cf. the narrator's comment *demens*, „crazy", 4,150) taking pride in a fictional ancestry, or at least implying the existence of a common Gallic identity, which allows any Gaul to think of himself as „Brennus' descendant".

connected to the word *caput:* the Capitol and, by extension, Rome is the "head/capitol of the world".[38] The idea is expressed in the legend that, at the foundation of the temple of the Capitoline Jupiter during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, an intact human head was found in the ground, and the interpretation of the *omen* was that the Capitol will be, in Livy's words, "the citadel of a great power and the capitol of the world" (*arcem eam imperii caputque rerum fore,* 1,55). The metaphor is already used by Romulus/Quirinus himself, who proclaims right after his apotheosis that "it is the will of the gods that my Rome should be the capitol of the world" (*caelestes ita velle ut mea Roma caput orbis terrarum sit*, 1,16,7). Silius himself reworks the Livian metaphors in the proem of his epic: the stake of the Punic Wars is "in which citadel would Fortune at last set the head of the world" (*qua tandem poneret arce terrarum Fortuna caput*, 1,7–8).

Consequently, cutting the head of a Roman named Quirinius might be symbolically connected with Crixus' prospects in capturing Rome and the Capitol. Had Quirinius' Gallic opponents — either the ordinary soldiers who actually kill him or Crixus whom he originally wanted to confront — recognized the significance of his name, they would have probably seen Quirinius' beheading as a good *omen.* By contrast, readers who are aware not only of Quirinius' name but also the self-sacrificial nature of his plan (as suggested by *certus necis*) can interpret his beheading also as a symbolic substitution which actually helps in averting the grave danger of the city being captured by the Gauls (or later by Hannibal). Instead of Quirinus' city and the Capitol being sacked by Crixus, only an ordinary soldier named Quirinius loses his *caput* to two of his soldiers.

The principle of substitution seems also operative in the relation of Quirinius and the Elder Scipio. The *consul* leading the army at the Ticinus is also included in Marks' list of self-destructive Romans. It is just after Quirinius' death that the tide of battle turns, for the time being: Scipio immediately begins his *aristeia* and "rushes first against the enemy" (*primusque ruebat in hostem*, 218), "turning his horse to the middle of the whirlpool of combat that was devouring the battle lines" (*qua medius pugnae vorat agmina vertex infert cornipedem*, 230–231). Significantly, at this point he is "enraged by the slaughter of his troops, and sacrifices enemies as offerings to the dead" (*instinctus strage suorum inferias caesis mactat*, 231–232; followed by a list of six victims). He does not perform a *devotio*, then, but a *mactatio:* he sacrifices others,

38 Crixus' insistence on the word *captus,* manifest at 4,151 *(Capitolia capta)* and 4,279 *(captae ... urbi)* can thus be interpreted as a rival and provocative etymology, connecting *Capitolium* with *capere* instead of *caput*. On the symbolism of heads and decapitation in the *Punica*, see Marks 2008 (mentioning Quirinius only in passing at 70, n. 10).

not himself.[39] At this point, the narrator's focus turns again towards Crixus, who is still performing his *aristeia* (248–258), but then the two commanders meet for single combat. After reciprocal provocations, the spear of the Gaul misses, but Scipio's hits the target, instantly killing the Gallic commander (259–299).

If we see Quirinius' act as a form of self-sacrifice (if not a proper *devotio*), it follows that the episode ending with his death can be interpreted not simply as part of the narrative buildup culminating in Scipio's killing of Crixus, but also as contributing to the *consul*'s surprisingly easy success. Quirinius' death might thus ensure not just the survival of the Roman community on the long term, but also Scipio's on the short term. Scipio's recklessness does not have to turn into self-destruction — yet.

This interpretation can be reinforced, in my view, if the proposed relation between Quirinius' death and Scipio's success is compared to Scipio's conduct in the second, 'historical'[40] half of the battle (4,311–479), which begins with the main force of the Carthaginians, led my Mago and Hannibal, attacking the Romans (311–355). Scipio behaves recklessly again: after urging his troops to withstand the enemy attack in a speech, he gets on his horse and prepares to charge, threatening to kill his own men, and also himself, if they flee (401–416). A bit later we are informed that he is encircled by the enemy:

*Ductorem Ausonium telis Garamantica pubes*
*cinxerat et Tyrio regi nova dona parabat*
*armorum spolium ac rorantia consulis ora.*
*Stabat Fortunae non cedere certus et acri*
*mole retorquebat crudescens caedibus hastas,*
*iamque suo, iamque hostili perfusa cruore*
*membra madent, cecidere iubae, gyroque per orbem*
*artato Garamas iaculis propioribus instat*
*et librat saeua contortum cuspide ferrum.*

"Garamantian youths had ringed the Italian leader Scipio with their spears. They readied to make a new gift of the consul's stripped armor and head dripping blood still for the Carthaginian king. Scipio stood fast, determined not to yield to Fortune, and hurled back the spears with keen effort. His kills made him grow fiercer. And now his limbs were dripping, soaked with his own and the enemy's blood, and the crests had fallen from his helmet. The Garamantians hurried around him in a tight circle, jabbing their spears closer. One aimed a javelin with a savage point and hurled it at him." (4,445–453.)

This time, Scipio himself is the target of enemy soldiers who aim at presenting Hannibal with „rich spoils" (*armorum spolium*, 447), which Quirinius also

39 I. e., this would be a *devotio hostium* instead of a *devotio ducis;* on the distinction, cf. Versnel 1976.

40 Of course, there are still many fictional elements in the second half of the Silian battle narrative, like the triple duel (see above) or the divine intervention (on which see below).

wanted to seize, and also with Scipio's head (*rorantia consulis ora,* 447), again reminding us of Quirinius' death, his head cut off and taken away as spoil by Vosegus. In absence of a substitutive sacrifice like Quirinius' was (according to my interpretation) in the first half of the battle, now Scipio's own life and head are in danger. The *consul* is again in need of external help to survive, and again he receives it. This time, instead of a mortal with a name recalling that of a divinity (Quirinius), a god himself comes to Scipio's aid. His self-destructive frenzy worries even Jupiter himself, who sends Mars to save his life (417–444), because as *consul* he represents the whole community (as did Quirinius in his own way, through his name): "criminal Hannibal seeks more in the consul's single death than in the whole destruction of the fallen" (*plus petit improbus uno consulis exitio tota quam strage cadentum,* 423–424).

In Silius' fiction it will be Mars who incites the Younger Scipio to save his father. The god has to turn his initially self-destructive behaviour into destruction of the enemy. The youth panics at the sight of his father being wounded: "twice he had attempted to die before his father by turning his hand against himself; twice Mars had turned his anger against the Carthaginians" (*bis conatus erat praecurrere fata parentis conversa in semet dextra, bis transtulit iras in Poenos Mavors,* 457–459); as a result, he "sacrificed many souls, desired expiatory offerings, before his father's eyes" (*multasque paternos ante oculos animas, optata piacula, mactat,* 464–465). Finally, he brings his father to safety, carrying him on his shoulders like Aeneas did carry Anchises.[41]

Both the Elder and the Younger Scipiones are thus characterized in Silius' account of the Battle of Ticinus as current or future commanders who tend to act self-destructively, but unlike the many other examples of Roman self-destruction collected by Marks, they are both prevented from carrying out their self-destructive acts; instead, they sacrifice their enemies.[42] The Elder Scipio, as I see it, is saved from the consequences of his own recklessness first by the preemptive death of Quirinius; rather, he kills enemy soldiers as a form of sacrifice before killing Crixus himself. Then, in the second half of the battle, he is protected by the gods' intervention who compel his son to save him. The Younger Scipio, however, himself has to be saved from his own self-destruction, his aggressiveness targeted towards his enemies, whom he kills, again, as an act of sacrifice. The Scipiones are not allowed to die at the Ticinus, contributing to the final victory by their wounds only (*per vulnera regnum*, in the strict sense), because the historical record dictates that they should carry out further deeds in the war. The Elder Scipio will fight again at the Trebia, then lead a Roman

41 This section is full of Vergilian intertexts, even by Silver Latin standards; these connections are discussed e. g. by Marks 2005a, 115–122.

42 See also Cowan 2011 on 'the limits of *devotio*' and the valuation of survival in the epic tradition (including Silius, but focusing on Cannae rather than the Ticinus).

army in Spain until his death there. His son, as Mars congratulates him after he saves his father, is the one who will end the war victoriously (*Carthaginis arces exscindes Tyriosque ad foedera coges,* "you will raze Carthage's towers and compel the Carthaginians to observe the treaty", 472–473).

## Conclusion

I started this paper with a short discussion of the 'Ticinus-paradox', i. e. the simultaneous irrelevance and importance of the battle in narratives of the Second Punic War. Silius' solution, as we have seen, is the insertion of a fictional 'first half' of the battle. This lends the Ticinus episode more importance not only in terms of length: the changing of the Gauls' role is also highly relevant. Their presence as Roman auxiliaries would have been no more than a piece of relatively unimportant information provided by the historographic tradition. By turning them into the adversaries of the Romans, however, Silius is able to link the first battle of the war to an earlier great crisis, the Gallic sack of Rome. By overcoming Crixus and his troops, Silius lets his Romans repeat an earlier phase of their history, turning crisis into victory again. In the Battle of Ticinus, this victory is only short-lived, of course, but nevertheless foreshadows that the war against Hannibal is winnable on the long term.

How pervasively Silius tries to better integrate the Battle of Ticinus into the fabric of Roman history is also shown by the trio of Tullus, Remulus and Quirinius, whose names provide links to an even earlier phase of Roman history: the foundation and early kings of the city. The connotations, however, seem to be quite dark in this case. The military crises of the early years of the war threaten with the destruction of Rome, the end of Roman history. The ironic tension between the lofty names of the three Roman soldiers, recalling legendary kings and the founder of the city himself, and their quick deaths makes the contrast of (past) foundation and (imminent) destruction very much felt. 'Old and great names' like Tullus or Remulus will not be enough to win this war. The third member of the trio, Quirinius recalls by his name Romulus, who was able to circumvent death through apotheosis, and through motivistic parallels perhaps L. Sergius as well, a survivor of the war against all odds. Quirinius also dies quickly, but his case seems to offer some hope and point out the way forward. It will be through the self-sacrifice of Romans, recalling the traditional *devotio*, that their fellow countrymen will be able to overcome Hannibal in the end. Quirinius remains unsuccessful in carrying out his daring plan of seizing the *spolia opima* by killing Crixus; his death and beheading, however, seems to symbolically contribute to the immediately following success of the Elder Scipio against the Gallic chieftain, and also foreshadow how the *con-*

*sul*'s life will be saved again by external help (coming from Jupiter, Mars and the Younger Scipio) in the second half of the battle. The self-sacrificing Quirinius thus belongs, on the one hand, to the trio of soldiers who bear 'old names' and die quickly; on the other hand, he is also firmly connected in Silius' narrative to members of a family bearing a 'new name', the Scipiones, who have a less distinguished past than the Fabii Maximi or the Claudii Marcelli, but have already provided Rome with the future conqueror of Carthage, Scipio (Africanus).

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