THE OTHER AS SAME: NON-ROMAN MOTHERS IN SILIUS ITALICUS' *PUNICA*

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> *The genre pervasive[ly] associat[es] women with the "public" sphere, in their cultural and metaphorical relations to Roman imperialism, militarism, and colonisation.*
> —A. M. Keith, *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic*

IN THIS STUDY, I focus on the notions of Romanness[1] and otherness through the depiction of female, and more precisely motherly, power in Silius Italicus' *Punica*.[2] As portrayed in Silius' reconstructed, and to a certain degree idealized, past, and in his vision of a prosperous future, Romanness becomes an ever-changing feature, dictated by the center but also enriched from the otherness of the periphery; the two when conflated do not constitute a danger but a necessary condition for Rome's success and stability. This paper has profited from various discussions of the representation of *Romanitas* and ethnicity in Latin literature.[3] In studies of the *Germania* and the *Agricola* (O'Gorman 1993 and Rutledge 2000), for instance, light has been shed on the historian's textual strategy of transforming Germany and Britain into a Roman space, where one finds Roman values and ideology. At the same time, however, Tacitus' narrative reveals certain tensions, since there is a displacement of ideal morality from the Roman into the German

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1. In light of various discussions on what constitutes Romanness, the all-but-nonexistent *Romanitas* is used in this paper as the all-encompassing term for *virtus*, *fides*, and *pietas* (see, for instance, the use of the term by Galinsky 1981, Burck 1981, Adams 2003, and Dewar 2003).

2. Cf. Dixon's studies (1988 and 1992) of Roman mothers and family.

3. From an anthropological point of view, Wells (1999) has sought to restore the voice of the subjugated nations and to trace the influence wrought on the structure of Roman Europe (esp. pp. 99–121), by emphasizing the mechanisms working counter to the forces of "Romanization," mechanisms that mobilize an intermingling of cultural systems that results in the amalgamation of a vast, dynamic, empire (pp. 122–47). Moreover, Konstan, in a recent article on ethnicity and power in the Roman empire (2000), has commented on how geographics impinges upon the deconstruction of gender roles, by examining the polarities between barbarians and civilized people, on the one hand, and between male rulers and capable female leaders, on the other, in Strabo's *Geography*. Finally, Barchiesi looks at Rome and the provinces "as interactive matrices and energizing forces in literary communication" (2005, 405).

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territory. As the city itself has become alien to its inhabitants, the Romans now seek recourse to the periphery in order to find true *Romanitas*. In addition, in a recent study on Saguntum in the first two books of the *Punica*, William Dominik (2003) persuasively argues that it is non-Romans who become the true exemplars of *virtus*, *fides*, and *pietas* in the poem. In other words, these defining constituents of Romanness are situated at the empire's periphery, and not in the center itself. I contend that there are similar tensions and interactions in the *Punica*, and more specifically in Silius' enhancement of the role of those non-Roman women from the periphery (Africa) who exemplify the traditional Roman moral values and ethics.

In particular, I center my discussion around Imilce, Hannibal's wife from Spain, who comes forward at the end of Book 4 to stop the sacrifice of her baby son, and the mother of Masinissa, one of the most important of Scipio's allies, whose prophecy in Book 16 becomes the catalyst for a redefinition of the role of periphery. Imilce's voice encompasses the reasonable thoughts of a civilized Roman philosopher denouncing the *nefas* and the lack of *pietas*; at the same time, however, her voice of freedom is marginalized. By alienating herself from Carthaginian culture and by refusing to comply with traditional ancestral customs, Imilce is transformed into a bacchante and delivers a powerful speech whereby she condemns not only the *nefas* of the impending sacrifice but also Hannibal's unremitting, imperialist desires. When Imilce is figuratively relegated to the distant realm of Thracian bacchantes, her autonomous, yet hybrid, voice is assimilated to that of other distraught women of Roman literature (Dido, Amata, and the *matrona* in Lucan's *De bello civili* 1), whose self-destruction and doom foreshadow Imilce's own departure from the poem. After all, there is no space for Imilce to succeed in promoting a pure Roman ideological code of *pietas* and *fides* among the Carthaginians.

By contrast to Imilce, the aged mother of Masinissa, who remains unnamed in the poem, succeeds in promoting her son as a Roman ally, while her presence is highlighted as prosperous and conducive to the Roman victory over the Carthaginians by means of her confirmation of Scipio's divine power. Through his mother's intervention, Masinissa emerges as the upright African leader (as opposed to the hostile *other*, Hannibal) and espouses those components of Romanness that are promoted by Scipio himself, such as *virtus*, *pietas*, and *fides*. As the poem comes to a close, Silius' portrayal of female action reflects the successful shift of power in the Roman political scene, by Scipio's emergence as supreme commander. As we will see, this important change is sanctioned through female power (Masinissa's mother) and culminates with the image of the Roman priestess Claudia Quinta pulling the vessel of the Magna Mater, a goddess from the periphery. This is the passage where Romanness and otherness are joined with the purpose of redeeming Roman ethics closely associated with women. At the same time, the boundaries of *Romanitas* are being reshaped. To be sure, by the end of the poem, the (African) *other* is reshaped into the *same*, as the fluidities of non-Roman otherness and Roman sameness have become to a degree destabilized: through Hannibal's defeat, Scipio emerges as an

Africanus;[4] and the once-hostile continent now becomes Roman. Nevertheless, the seeming deactivation of one polarity (other vs. same) is realized by the reinforcement of another polarization, namely, of gender hierarchies, inasmuch as female figures are portrayed embracing all traditional Roman male values.[5]

1. *EDONIS UT PANGAEA*: IMILCE'S ART OF DISSUASION

At the end of the fourth book of the *Punica*, after having defeated the Roman armies at Ticinus and Trebia, Hannibal arrives at the site of Lake Trasimene. At this moment in the poem Silius inserts a fictitious episode, which illustrates the institution of the Carthaginian custom of child sacrifice.[6] A Carthaginian embassy convenes with Hannibal in order to ask his opinion concerning the vital issue of whether or not his son should be sacrificed for the fulfillment of ancestral Carthaginian rites (4.765–67):[7]

> mos fuit in populis, quos condidit advena Dido,
> poscere caede deos veniam ac flagrantibus aris,
> infandum dictu, parvos imponere natos.[8]
>
> The people, whom Dido founded when she landed in Africa, were accustomed to ask the gods for mercy through sacrifices and to offer up their children upon fiery altars, a custom horrible to tell.

In this episode at the end of Book 4, Imilce, Hannibal's wife, makes her second appearance. After parting with her husband in Book 3 (61–157), Imilce returns as a *persona dramatis* (4.779–802) and attempts to dissuade her fellow citizens from submitting this sacrilegious offering to the gods, an act that she describes as *nefas* (797). In her speech, Imilce directly addresses her absent husband, whom she ironically rebukes for his futile efforts to expand the power and dominion of his fatherland. Then, Imilce offers herself for sacrifice in the stead of her child (*me, me quae genui,*

4. As Tipping has correctly pointed out, "For an audience of the *Punica* familiar with Lucan's poem, Hannibal must be a (p)refiguration of what Romanity—at least in part—will become . . ." (1999, 276). Also, "This epic points to a pivotal moment in Roman history: the emergence from Republican multiplicity of the single leader whose individual authority recalled Rome's kingly beginning and anticipated its Imperial end" (2004, 370).

5. See Tipping 2004, 351: "Read as the belated central work of a trilogy of Roman epic that begins with the *Aeneid*'s proto-Romanity and ends with Rome's collapse into the *De bello civili*, the *Punica* promises to be . . . *the* epic of Rome, glorifying models of martial Romanity in victory over an external enemy at the height of the Republic."

6. Both Kißel (1979, 15) and Ripoll (1998, 280) comment on the portrayal of the Carthaginians as bloodthirsty. The episode has no parallel in the historical record. Silius' knowledge of this custom must derive from Ennius' *Annales* (cf. also Q. Curtius Rufus 4.3.23): *Poeni suos soliti dis sacrificare puellos* (frag. 214 Skutsch); see Wezel 1873, 20; Woodruff 1910, 383–85; Romano 1965, 88–90; Skutsch 1985, 381–83; Lucarini 2004, 112 n. 18. On the influence of Ennius on Silius, see Matier 1991. On the presence of Ennius as a combatant in *Pun*. 12.387–419, see Sechi 1947 and Pinto 1953.

7. In fact, Hannon, Hannibal's bitter enemy (*discors antiquitus*, 4.771), lurks behind this proposal; he is the person who has brought the motion into the Carthaginian senate for discussion and vote. For Hannon as the literary successor of Vergil's Drances, see Bruère 1971.

8. I have used the following standard editions: for the *Punica*, Delz 1987; for the *De bello civili*, Shackleton Bailey 1988; for Vergil, Mynors 1969; for the *Troades*, Fantham 1982; for the *Thebaid*, Hill 1996. I have used Duff's 1934 translation of the *Punica* with modifications. All other translations are mine.

vestris absumite votis, 798). Finally, Imilce's plea has an impact on the Carthaginian *patres*, who prefer to have the issue solved by Hannibal himself (803–7). In Italy, when the Carthaginian hero learns about the imminent sacrifice to take place in Carthage (808–29), he refuses to have his own child offered to the gods and proclaims that the donation to his country will consist of the impending slaughter of the Roman army at Trasimene, a sacrificial substitute.

In his portrait of Imilce, Silius draws on previous female epic characters. Imilce's behavior is emblematic of the *pathos* of a woman in grief, a feature well established in other literary sources.[9] More specifically, Imilce's portrayal as a frenzied woman accords with the representation of distraught women in Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan.[10] Dido, Amata, and Juturna in Vergil, as well as Lucan's raving *matrona* in *De bello civili* 1, have furnished Silius with the "mold" for the creation of Imilce's personality as it appears in the present episode (4.774–77):[11]

> asperat haec foedata genas laceratque crines
> atque urbem complet maesti clamoris Imilce,
> Edonis ut Pangaea super trieteride mota
> it iuga et inclusum suspirat pectore Bacchum.
>
> Their fear was heightened by Imilce, who tore her cheeks and hair and filled the city with woeful cries, as the woman of the Edoni, maddened by the triennial festival, speeds over the ridges of the Pangaean mountain and breathes forth Bacchus who dwells in her breast.

A close look at intertextual connections proves that Silius' primary model is Vergil. Both Anna in *Aeneid* 4 (673) and Juturna in *Aeneid* 12 (870–71), moved by sisterly love, disfigure their faces (*unguibus foedans ora*), while the latter also tears her hair as an act of mourning over the approaching death of her brother Turnus (*crinis scindit solutos*). Imilce's mourning alludes explicitly to such exemplifications of extreme pain and suffering. Moreover, the description of Imilce's grief, which fills the city with cries, artfully intertwines Vergilian and Ovidian models. Silius combines Amata's lunatic reaction after Allecto's intervention (*Aen.* 7.377: *immensam sine more furit lymphata per urbem*) with a line from *Georgic* 4 (515: *et maestis late loca questibus implet*), where the nightingale mourns for the loss of her brood. Further, he borrows phraseology from Ovid's portrayal of Althea losing her son, Meleager (*Met.* 8.447–48: *maestis clamoribus urbem / implet*).[12]

9. Micozzi (1998) examines the representation of *pathos* with regard to female figures in Statius, where we find similar descriptions of women suffering.

10. One cannot fail to recognize allusions to Catull. 64.61; Prop. 1.3.5–6; Ov. *Am.* 1.14.21; *Her.* 4.47 and 10.18; and *Ars am.* 1.312 and 3.710. Statius (*Theb.* 5.92–94) compares one of the Lemnian women, Polyxo, to a bacchante, yet there are no verbal allusions in Silius that confirm an interdependence.

11. See Bruère (1952, 223–24) for allusions to Vergilian figures. Brouwers (1982, 81–82) discusses the allusions to Lucan.

12. In these parallels, the compounds of *pleo* together with a description of sound or space are used to express distress; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.769, 3.313, 5.341, 7.502, 9.39. Bruère (1952, 226 n. 24) points to all the abovementioned allusions, yet he does not identify a possible echo of Stat. *Theb.* 1.592–93, where Psamathe reacts to the loss of her baby son: *ipsa ultro saevis plangoribus amens / tecta replet*.

In further pursuing the differences between Silius' portrayal of Imilce and that of other female characters, however, we must also investigate the innovations that Silius brings to his representation of a woman in grief and the reason for these alterations. In my analysis, I will first consider the impact that Vergil's portrayal of female figures has on Silius' representation of Imilce and then examine the influences from Lucan's epic poem.

Critics have laid emphasis on Silius' dependence on other authors and on the canonization of representations of distraught women by Silius' time. In particular, Richard Bruère (1952, 223) has shown the significant influence of Vergil's Amata, though he professes wonder that Silius also alludes to Lucan's *matrona*:

> Imilce is upset about her son, as Amata had been about her daughter, and the queen's Bacchic seizure surely suggested to Silius the comparison of Imilce to a Bacchante. . . . It is curious that after having derived the notion of comparing Imilce to a Bacchante from his recollections of Virgil, Silius borrows the expressions he uses in setting it forth from Lucan.

Allusions to Vergilian figures cannot be coincidental, especially allusions to Dido or Amata. It is not sufficient to identify allusions to previous literary works without investigating the reason behind certain choices Silius makes. For instance, if we consider that Dido is the founder of Carthage and that special reference is made to her by tracing the sacrificial custom back in time (*advena Dido*, 4.765), then we become apprised of a connection between Imilce and Dido. Taking into account Imilce's Bacchic reaction to her child's sacrifice, we may associate her situation with the frenzied aspects of Dido's portrayal in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*. More specifically, the adjective *furens* is three times applied to the predicament in which Aeneas' presence has put the raving queen of Carthage (*Aen.* 4.65, 69, 283).[13] Furthermore, two similes from the fourth book of the *Aeneid* establish in the reader's mind Dido as a delirious and distraught female figure: at 4.300–303, Dido is assimilated to a Thyias, who in an ecstatic state of mind celebrates the feast of Bacchus (*trieterica Baccho*, 302), and at 4.469, Dido's condition is compared to that of Pentheus as he stares at the frantic mothers performing their Dionysiac rites (*Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus*, 4.469). Moreover, Imilce's address to her absent husband and her loneliness in her confrontation with the Carthaginian elders offer yet another similarity to the abandoned queen of Carthage in *Aeneid* 4, as both women are forsaken by their male partners. Dido's presence in the background of this episode establishes and confirms the continuity between Vergilian female figures and Silius' Imilce.[14]

13. Cf. also *Aen*. 4.376, when Dido herself admits that she is possessed by *furor*: *heu furiis incensa feror!*

14. Consider also Amata's behavior, instigated by the Fury Allecto and contextualized within the frame of a Bacchic festival (*Aen*. 7.373–405). Amata turns into a bacchante and addresses the rest of the women with Dionysiac exclamations, such as *io matres* (7.400). Amata's determination to preserve her *maternum ius* (*si iuris materni cura remordet*, 402) resembles Imilce's decision to stop the custom of child sacrifice, particularly at a moment when her own child's fortune is at stake.

However, we should not ignore an important difference between Vergilian women and Imilce: Amata's frantic rout originates in Allecto's intervention and the poisonous infection that one of the latter's serpents instills in Amata's chest (*penitusque in viscera lapsum / serpentis furiale malum totamque pererrat*, *Aen.* 7.374–75).[15] By contrast, Imilce is not influenced by any external source of *furor*. The cause of her pain is the impending sacrifice of her child. Despite her outburst against the Carthaginian custom and its practitioners, Imilce is portrayed as a figure utterly reasonable, who denounces the futility of child sacrifice and uses clear and concise arguments in order to persuade the elders of the Carthaginian senate, a privilege not enjoyed by Roman women. What is more, Imilce's rhetoric proves her to be a woman who knows very well what is at stake and who tries to persuade the male audience accordingly. Such elements are absent from the representation of Amata's frenzy in *Aeneid* 7 or 12. The rationality that characterizes Imilce's portrait differentiates her from the irrationality of both Dido and Amata, who are completely out of control and give in to their grief.[16]

With this in mind, let us examine another source of influence on Silius' representation of Imilce, Lucan's raving *matrona*. The first book of the *De bello civili* comes to a close with a series of prophecies illustrating future disasters for the Romans. The last of these is articulated by a frenzied, anonymous *matrona* (*De bello civili* 1.674–80):

> nam, qualis vertice Pindi
> Edonis Ogygio decurrit plena Lyaeo,
> talis ‹inops animi subitoque instincta furore
> saevit› et attonitam rapitur matrona per urbem
> vocibus his prodens urguentem pectora Phoebum:
> "quo feror, o Paean? qua me super aethera raptam
> constituis terra? video Pangaea nivosis
> cana iugis latosque Haemi sub rupe Philippos. . . ."
>
> For, as a woman of the Edoni rushes down from Pindus' peak, filled with Lyaeus of Ogygia, so a matron, ‹bereft of reason and animated by a sudden fury, rages› and is

15. Cf. the similar case of Tisiphone and the Saguntine women in *Pun.* 2.543–680.

16. Fucecchi (1992) exploits the intertextual relationship between this episode and different scenes in Seneca's *Troades*. Just as Imilce did at *Pun.* 4.798, Andromache tries to persuade Ulysses to kill her instead of Astyanax, after having declared that she would do anything in order to protect her boy's safety (*Tro.* 672–77):

> qualis Argolicas ferox
> turmas Amazon stravit, aut qualis deo
> percussa Maenas entheo silvas gradu
> armata thyrso terret atque expers sui
> vulnus dedit nec sensit, in medios ruam
> tumuloque cineris socia defenso cadam.
>
> As the wild Amazon kills the Greek troops, or as a Maenad, struck by the god and armed with the thyrsus, terrifies the woods with her bacchic steps and, ignorant of herself, has given wounds nor has she felt any, so I will rush into your midst and, a companion of ashes, fall having defended this mound.

These lines render plausible Fucecchi's claim (1992, 54) that special emphasis is placed on both women as *servatrices puerorum*.

> swept through the astounded city, revealing with these words that Phoebus is motivating her heart: "O Paean, where am I borne? On what land do you place me, swept over the air? I see the Pangaean mountain white with snow-clad ridges and wide Philippi under Haemus' rock. . . ."[17]

Despite the common setting of both descriptions,[18] there is a substantial difference: Lucan names as the source of inspiration for his frenzied *matrona* both Bacchus and Apollo (*prodens urguentem pectora Phoebum*, 1.677), while in Silius there is no reference to Apollo himself as the source for Imilce's inspiration. In the *Punica*, Bacchus sets into motion the raving bacchante-Imilce, who is ready to pay due honor to the god up in the mountains of Thrace on the occasion of the *trieteris*. How, then, do we explain the emphasis placed by Silius on Bacchus and the elision of Apollo's power?[19]

In the different treatments of Apollo and Bacchus in Lucan and Silius lies the key point for our examination of Imilce, as the latter poet invites us to look more carefully into the nature of Imilce's character itself. In Silius' simile, though it is deeply influenced by his predecessors, Vergil and Lucan, Apollo's presence is not verbally evident. Yet, Imilce incorporates both elements, the Apolline and the Bacchic, and can switch from the prophetic to the frantic. Imilce is depicted as a potential bacchante-prophetess, who, though raving in her grief, delivers a speech abounding in reasonable arguments against human sacrifice. As I will show, the Apolline element in Imilce's character, though verbally absent, is intertwined with the Bacchic aspects of her nature to portray a powerful woman-prophetess, who does not hesitate to condemn the whole war and her husband's enterprises as *nefas*.

In order to synthesize our conclusions from this study of allusions, let us turn to Imilce's speech itself and the peculiarity of its content. Although she starts with an apostrophe to her husband, she continues with a denunciation of human sacrifice that does not have any immediate literary predecessors. Her discourse is artistically constructed around her arguments about the futility of human sacrifice, in particular that of her son. Imilce's speech, however, also has levels of irony: she opposes her husband's imperialism and conveys a subversive message concerning the usefulness of the war in general.

17. As Brouwers (1982, 81–82) has correctly pointed out, there is an abundance of Lucanian echoes: the setting for both metaphors is Thrace (*Edonis*, *Pangaea*, *Pun*. 4.776 ~ Luc. 1.675, 679), a traditional *locus* of worship for bacchantes; both Edonian women in the similes are inspired by Bacchus (*suspirat Bacchum*, *Pun*. 4.778 ~ *plena Lyaeo*, Luc. 1.675). In addition, words such as *urbem*, *pectore*, and *iuga* are used by Silius (4.775, 777) as reminders of Lucan's description (*per urbem*, *pectora*, *iugis*).

18. As Michler (1914, 36) notes, Statius also imitates Lucan's bacchante simile by incorporating it into his description of a frenzied Theban woman (*Theb*. 4.378–82):

> sparsis subito correpta canistris
> silvestris regina chori **decurrit** in aequum
> **vertice ab Ogygio** trifidamque huc tristis et illuc
> lumine sanguineo pinum disiectat et ardens
> *erectam attonitis implet clamoribus urbem* . . .

I have shown in boldface what Statius borrows from Lucan, while I have italicized Statius' imitation of Ovid's *Met*. 8.447–48. I think it is doubtful whether Statius imitates Ovid in the last line or echoes Silius' comparable phrase in 4.775: *atque urbem complet maesti clamoris Imilce*.

19. For the duality of Bacchus and Apollo in Lucan, see Masters 1992, 118–33.

More specifically, Imilce's speech is artistically constructed and rhetorically decorated: despite occasional exclamations (*io, heu . . . heu*), Hannibal's wife gives us the impression of a person who by using well-prepared arguments tries to persuade the Carthaginian elders and who does not give in to grief completely. For instance, Imilce does not faint at the end of the episode, a generic ending for such scenes of intense sorrow and dramatic tension.[20] Her speech is divided into two symmetrical parts, consisting of twelve lines each; she first addresses her husband (779–90), then denounces the vanity of human sacrifice and its destructive effects on the Carthaginian male population (791–802). By these twenty-four lines, Imilce manages to gain a deferral of the decision, now to be taken solely by Hannibal himself.

When Imilce urges her husband to continue his operations, she apostrophizes him by saying (4.779–90):

> "io coniunx, quocumque in cardine mundi
> bella moves, huc signa refer. violentior hic est,
> hic hostis propior. tu nunc fortasse sub ipsis
> urbis Dardaniae muris vibrantia tela
> excipis intrepidus clipeo saevamque coruscans
> lampada Tarpeis infers incendia tectis.
> interea tibi prima domus atque unica proles
> heu gremio in patriae Stygias raptatur ad aras.
> i nunc, Ausonios ferro populare penates
> et vetitas molire vias. i, pacta resigna
> per cunctos iurata deos. sic praemia reddit
> Carthago et tales iam nunc tibi solvit honores . . ."

> "O my husband, in whatever frontier of the world you are now stirring up war, bring your army back here. Here there is a more violent, a more pressing foe. Perhaps at this moment beneath the walls of the Dardanian city itself, you, fearless, receive the hurtling missiles with your shield; perhaps you are brandishing a dreadful torch and setting fire to the Tarpeian temple. Meanwhile, your first-born and only son, alas, is seized in the heart of his native country, for an infernal sacrifice. Go now, ravage the household gods of the Romans with your sword and march by ways forbidden to man. Go, break the treaty witnessed by all gods. Such is the reward you get from Carthage, and such the honors she pays you now!"

Imilce's apostrophe consists of ironic imperatives (787–88), addressed to Hannibal, whereby Imilce questions the usefulness and underlines the futility of the war that her husband has undertaken. Imilce raises serious doubts concerning the value of Hannibal's efforts to save his country by implicitly criticizing his exploits: the series of imperatives (*i*, *populare*, *molire . . . i*, *resigna*) lays emphasis on the value of Hannibal's war against the Romans. His wife questions the advantage that the war will have for his own country and for his family in particular. Thus Imilce delivers a speech against *nefas*

20. Cf. Verg. *Aen*. 4.391–92 (Dido), 8.584 (Evander); Ov. *Met*. 11.460 (Alcyone); Stat. *Theb*. 11.643 (Ismene).

in general. As we will see, *nefas* can be defined as strictly referring to the barbaric custom of human sacrifice and/or more broadly to the war against the Romans.

After having urged Hannibal to come back, Imilce turns to the Carthaginian elders. Well aware that there will be no response, since her husband is away, Imilce's *suasoria* now concentrates on another form of futility, namely, human sacrifice (4.791–802):

"quae porro haec pietas delubra adspergere tabo?
heu primae scelerum causae mortalibus aegris,
naturam nescire deum! iusta ite precatum
ture pio caedumque feros avertite ritus.
mite et cognatum est homini deus. hactenus, oro,
sit satis ante aras caesos vidisse iuvencos.
aut si velle nefas superos fixumque sedetque,
me, me, quae genui, vestris absumite votis.
cur spoliare iuvat Libycas hac indole terras?
an flendae magis Aegates et mersa profundo
Punica regna forent, olim si sorte cruenta
esset tanta mei virtus praerepta mariti?"

"Moreover, what sort of religion is this, that sprinkles the temples with blood? Alas, their ignorance of the divine nature is the chief cause that leads wretched mortals into crime. You ought to go and pray for things lawful with pious incense but eschew bloody and cruel rites. God is gentle and akin to human beings. To this extent, I beg you, let it suffice to see slain cattle before the altars. Or, if you are sure beyond all doubt that wickedness is pleasing to the gods, then slay me, me the mother, and thus keep your vows. Why rob the land of Libya of the promise shown by this child? If my husband's glorious career had been thus nipped in the bud long ago by the fatal lot, would not that have been as lamentable a disaster as the battle by the Aegates islands when the power of Carthage was sunk beneath the waves?"

The final segment of Imilce's speech portrays the speaker as a civilized person, in complete opposition to bloodthirsty Hannibal, her husband. As has been noticed, Imilce's denunciation of human sacrifice has its literary predecessors in the works of Cicero and Ovid in particular.[21] Imilce's speech, however, acquires a more general tone, since she does not borrow from the language of the previous authors or refer explicitly to the practice of human sacrifice. This generalization enables Imilce to carry an important message: she is being transformed into a civilized person, whose distinctiveness is underscored by the content of her speech. Hannibal's wife is metamorphosed into a carrier of Roman philosophical ideas against human sacrifice. Her denunciation of the act of child sacrifice itself as a *nefas* coincides with the

21. See Spaltenstein (1986, 329–30), who cites Cic. *Rep*. 3.15 and Ov. *Fast*. 1.337–38. Bruère (1952, 227 n. 27) also mentions the influence of Pythagoras' speech in Ov. *Met*. 15.173–75. There is another unnoticed parallel at *Met*. 13.461, namely, Polyxena's condemnation of the absurdity of human sacrificial offerings to appease the gods. The similarities that this passage bears with Lucretius' beliefs against human sacrifice (1.83–101) have been observed by Steele (1922, 325), although one cannot find specific verbal allusions. The idea of *scelus* in connection with human sacrifice is certainly Lucretian.

poet's own words at the introduction of the scene: the savage rite of the Carthaginians is *infandum dictu* (767). Imilce, a "foreigner" in the *Punica*, as the wife of the enemy, would normally be perceived by the Roman reader as an anti-Roman, a woman whose values cannot (and/or should not) be identical to a Roman woman's beliefs. Yet Imilce's presence in this episode confirms rather the opposite. She denounces the primitive sacrificial custom observed by her fellow citizens. Thus, her speech places her in the margin of Carthaginian society by rendering her a "foreigner" to her environment. To borrow from Victoria Pagán's terminology (2000) for certain Tacitean characters, Imilce's words constitute a "voice of freedom," inasmuch as she delivers a potentially dangerous message, while her position as an outsider renders her voice more palatable to a male, élite audience. In a sense, Imilce's "Roman" voice emerges in sharp contrast to Carthaginian standards, since for them civilization and religiosity have different meanings and connotations (lack of *pietas*, *fas*, and *fides*).[22] Not only does she use the methodology of Roman philosophical discourse, such as that of Cicero and, to a certain extent, of Lucretius concerning the hideousness of human slaughter, but she also acquires a voice similar to Lucan's, inasmuch as the latter uses the word *nefas* to condemn the insanity of the civil war in general.[23] In other words, Imilce's role in this episode is not that of a passive female figure who "surrenders" to the demands of the male heroes and, to a lesser degree, of the literary tradition.

As has become evident in our examination of the intertextual relationship between Imilce and her literary predecessors, the poet has fused several models in his portrayal of Imilce. What are Silius' intentions, however, in depicting Imilce, the enemy's wife, as both a non-Roman woman-bacchante and a Roman *matrona*? How can Imilce be presented as a woman overcome by *furor* and at the same time able to deliver a powerful, reasonable speech against human sacrifice?

In order to appreciate the blending of the Bacchic and the Apolline in Imilce's figure, let us look back to Book 3, where the poet digresses on her pedigree, related both to Apollo and Bacchus (3.97–107):

> at contra Cirrhaei sanguis Imilce
> Castalii, cui materno de nomine dicta
> Castulo Phoebei servat cognomina vatis[24]
> atque ex sacrata repetebat stirpe parentes:

22. See Ripoll (1998, 275–86) for an analysis of *pietas* in the poem. Ripoll (1998, 280) correctly distinguishes between the Roman meaning of *pietas* and the Carthaginian perversion of *pietas* (cf. Thomas 2001 for *perfidia*).

23. Imilce's plea to die instead of her child echoes similar requests in Vergil (Euryalus' mother in *Aen*. 9.494: *me primam absumite ferro*; see Hardie 1993, 51) and Seneca (Andromache in *Tro*. 680: *me sternite hic ferro prius*). Most importantly, however, Silius exploits Cato's appeal in Lucan (2.315–16) to be killed before *libertas* and the state perish: *me solum invadite ferro* (2.315). Imilce's position as a mother is similar to Cato's, since the great leader is called by Lucan *urbi pater urbique maritus* (2.388). Furthermore, Imilce condemns human sacrifice as *nefas*, while Cato criticizes the impending war between Caesar and Pompey as *summum nefas* (2.286).

24. I agree with Spaltenstein (1986, 189) that the phrasing of lines 98–99 is awkward; the city of Castulo could have been named after Castalius himself, not after his mother's name (presumably Castalia?).

tempore quo Bacchus populos domitabat Hiberos
concutiens thyrso atque armata Maenade Calpen,
lascivo genitus Satyro nymphaque Myrice
Milichus indigenis late regnarat in oris
cornigeram attolens genitoris imagine frontem.
hinc patriam clarumque genus referebat Imilce
barbarica paulum vitiato nomine lingua.

And to him [Hannibal] replied the descendant of Castalius from Cirrha, Imilce, whose city, Castulo, named after Castalius' mother, still preserves the name of Apollo's priest. Thus Imilce traced her pedigree to a sacred stock. At the time when Bacchus was conquering the Iberian people and attacking Calpe with his thyrsus and with the spears of his Maenads, Milichus was born of a lustful Satyr and the nymph Myrice; Milichus had held dominion widely in his native country, carrying in his forehead horns, looking just like his father. From him Imilce drew her nationality and noble blood, since the name [of Milichus] had been slightly corrupted in the barbaric tongue.

From Silius' description of Imilce's ancestors it becomes clear that there is a mingling of Apolline and Bacchic traits in Imilce's personality. And although Imilce's Apolline characteristics permeate the farewell scene in Book 3 by means of her prophetic ability to foreshadow Hannibal's failure (109–27), her Bacchic temperament is preserved for her in Book 4, where, as we have seen, she is compared to a frenzied woman.[25] Yet, is Imilce a true bacchante? Does Bacchus really inspire her speech? Or is her prophetic power manipulated by the poet, and to what effect?

By conferring upon Imilce the characteristics of a distraught woman, the poet, from the outset of the narrative, relegates Imilce, the outsider in Carthaginian society, because of her Spanish origin, to the distant realm of Thracian bacchantes, a place where *nefas* and orgiastic rites abound. In the reader's mind, this association with the Bacchic cult and direct allusions to other literary bacchantes (Amata, for instance) turn Imilce's voice into a hybrid, unclassified other. She is both Roman and non-Roman, a civilized figure and a foreign bacchante, an insider and at the same time an outsider. As soon as she delivers her message, her "voice of freedom" is marginalized and eliminated from the narrative.

In other words, her speech yields to us an image of a woman drawn to Roman philosophical ideas, a woman set against human sacrifice, who knows very well that her words, if interpreted correctly, can convey the message of danger. To be sure, Imilce's persuasive voice achieves a deferral of the sacrifice, at least for the time being. Yet does she manage to cancel the plans of fate? Hannibal himself seems to know that the outcome of the war is ambiguous, since he makes clear that he needs his son to continue war with the Romans in the future. The general also alludes to the sacrifice that will replace his son's sacrifice, namely, his victory at Trasimene. In a word, Hannibal cancels the sacrifice of his son, yet he substitutes for it another human slaughter (4.814–18):

25. For Imilce's powerful presence in Book 3, see Vinchesi 1999 and 2001, 62–63, and Augoustakis 2001, 10–35.

". . . at puer armorum et belli servabitur heres.
spes, o nate, meae Tyriarumque unica rerum
Hesperia minitante salus, terraque fretoque
certare Aeneadis, dum stabit vita, memento.
perge (patent Alpes) nostroque incumbe labori . . ."

"But the boy will be spared as the heir of my career in war. You, my son, are my hopes and the only safeguard of the Carthaginian affairs against the threat of Italy; remember to fight against the Aeneadae both on land and sea, as long as you live. Go forward—the Alps lie open—and apply yourself to my task. . . ."[26]

In Imilce's character, we can find the first witness of the "Romanization" of women-foreigners, an image fully shaped in the figure of Masinissa's mother in Book 16. However, although Masinissa's mother, as we will see, is successful in advising and directing her son's activities, Imilce cannot contribute substantially to the welfare of her country. Her ominous speech foreshadows future disasters, while her role as *servatrix pueri* does not permit her to undertake real action. Despite the Roman traits in her character, Imilce remains a bacchante, a woman who fails in her efforts to save her child from the destruction that the war will bring, despite her ability to foresee the ultimate defeat of Carthage.[27]

2. *Ne Bella Pavescas*: Mothers as "Educators" and the Regeneration of the Female

In an episode in *Punica* 16, we can see that mothers are positively represented as influential and beneficial for both the outsiders, non-Romans, and the Romans themselves. After telling of the Roman victories over Hannon and Hasdrubal at the opening of Book 16 (38–114), Silius relates the events of the alliance between Masinissa, king of Numidia, and Scipio (115–69).[28] The poet's creative art is at its height in his account of a divine omen, which allegedly makes Masinissa change sides and ally himself with the Romans (16.118–21):

huic fesso, quos dura fuga et nox suaserat atra,
carpenti somnos subitus rutilante coruscum
vertice fulsit apex, crispamque involvere visa est
mitis flamma comam atque hirta se spargere fronte.

Masinissa, tired out, was enjoying sleep, which the hard retreat and the darkness of night had made welcome, when suddenly a ruddy tongue of fire was seen to burn bright on the crown of his head. The harmless flame caught his curly hair and spread over his shaggy brow.

26. Yet cancellation of rites eventually entails destruction, as Hardie (1993, 51) has correctly pointed out: "Sacrificial substitution intersects with, and threatens to annihilate, generational replacement. Hannibal sees his son not as the one sacrificial victim but as the "one hope" of his family and of Carthage. . . . Hannibal's hopes that his son will take his place as great leader of his people (4.818: *nostroque incumbe labori*) will come to nothing"; cf. also Ripoll 1998, 68.

27. Silius mentions the wife and son twice in the rest of the poem: in 13.880, with reference to Hannibal's exile and death away from Carthage; and in 17.334, when Hannibal exhorts his soldiers at Zama.

28. See Marks 1999, 258–73, and 2005, 169–71, as well as Ripoll 2003a, for an analysis of 16.115–274.

A long tradition of similar episodes in pre-Silian literature could explain the presence of this scene in Book 16 (Marks 2005, 170 n. 21; and Ripoll 2003a, 97–102). More specifically, the Vergilian models of Ascanius' and Lavinia's burning heads undoubtedly stimulated Silius to create a comparable episode.[29] As Marks has observed (1999, 259), the omen justifies Masinissa's decision to change sides as morally right, one that enjoys the support and favor of the gods; according to Ripoll (2003a, 99), Silius exploits the omen to underscore the absence of calculating duplicity behind the Numidian prince's diplomatic decision.[30]

I would like to study a particular aspect of this episode, namely, the treatment of Masinissa's aged mother and her role in determining her son's decisions. After the appearance of the omen, she is asked to construe the will of the gods (16.124–32):

> at grandaeva deum praenoscens omina mater
> "sic, sic, caelicolae, portentaque vestra secundi
> condite" ait. "duret capiti per saecula lumen.
> ne vero, ne, nate, deum tam laeta pavesce
> prodigia aut sacras metue inter tempora flammas.
> hic tibi Dardaniae promittit foedera gentis,
> hic tibi regna dabit regnis maiora paternis
> ignis et adiunget Latiis tua nomina fatis."
> sic vates . . .
>
> But his aged mother, foreknowing the omens of the gods, said: "Be it so, o inhabitants of heaven! Be propitious and ratify your portent! May the light shine on his head for all ages! Do not, my son, do not fear such favorable signs of the gods; do not be afraid of the sacred flame on your brow. This fire promises you an alliance with the Dardanian people; this fire will provide you with a kingdom wider than your fathers ever ruled and shall add your name to the history of Rome." Thus spoke the prophetess . . .

The poet explicitly intertwines the prophetic power of Masinissa's mother with the prediction of prosperous events. The anonymous mother possesses the power of foreseeing the future (*deum praenoscens omina*, 124, and *vates*, 132). Yet the most significant part of her short speech is the intratextual connection it yields with Pomponia's speech to Scipio, to which I will turn for a moment.

In his descent to the Underworld in Book 13, Scipio has the chance to gaze at the panorama of past and future Roman history. Among the highlights of his journey is the meeting with his mother, Pomponia.[31] During

29. See Spaltenstein 1990, 405–6. It is not coincidental, however, that Silius chose to replace the father (Anchises) with a mother figure at this point, going back to the Livian tradition of Tanaquil (Livy 1.39.2–3). On the historical role of Masinissa, see Walsh 1965 and Decret-Fantar 1998, 103–15.

30. Ripoll (2003a, 111) places the episode in the historical context of Flavian policies concerning the Romanization of Africa.

31. There is extensive secondary literature on the Nekyia of Book 13. In particular, see De Luca 1937; Ramaglia 1954; von Albrecht 1964, 149–52; Juhnke 1972, 280–97; Reitz 1982; Billerbeck 1983; Ripoll 1998, 248–51; Marks 1999, 88–146, and 2005, 133–47; Hardie 2004, 151–53.

Scipio's "educational" trip, the Sibyl urges him to see his mother, who had died in labor (13.613–14):[32]

> ". . . sed te maternos tempus cognoscere vultus,
> cuius prima venit non tardis passibus umbra."
>
> "But it is time for you to learn your mother's face, whose shade comes first, not in slow pace."

The Sibyl's announcement emphasizes the importance of Pomponia's appearance and encounter with her son, a meeting during which the Roman mother will enlighten her adolescent son concerning the divine identity of his father.[33]

In her address to her son, Pomponia stresses the difficulty imposed on her during the day of her impregnation by Jupiter.[34] She is careful in explaining and insisting that Jove is Scipio's real father. Pomponia also lays emphasis on the fact that she was forced to surrender (*membra ligavit*, 638) and accentuates that her pregnancy has been necessary for the welfare of Rome.[35] Once she delivers Scipio, she is freed from the *aetherium pondus*. Thus, she becomes the carrier of divine will, without at the same time damaging her chastity and reputation as *univira*. In a word, Scipio's mother is converted into the medium for Rome's salvation, while she retains all the grandeur and majesty of a Roman *matrona*.

The most significant moment in Pomponia's speech lies in her exhortation to young Scipio. The Roman is urged to pursue war, because the victory belongs to him, in particular on account of his divine origins (13.634–36):

> ". . . verum age, nate, tuos ortus, ne bella pavescas
> ulla nec in caelum dubites te attollere factis,
> quando aperire datur nobis, nunc denique disce . . ."
>
> "But mark me, my son, and at last you shall learn what I am permitted to disclose—the secret of your birth; then you shall not fear any wars or may be secure that you shall raise yourself to heaven by your deeds."

Pomponia advises her son to be fearless and brave. The subjunctives in the negative purpose clauses used at this point in the narrative (*ne pavescas*, *nec dubites*) together with the imperatives (*age*, *disce*) formulate the basis of Pomponia's advice. She educates her son according to the interests of

32. Juhnke (1972, 286) points to the similarities between Scipio's meeting with Pomponia and Odysseus' with Anticleia in *Od.* 11.152–225; see also Kißel 1979, 169 n. 21, and Reitz 1982, 92. One should also keep in mind that there is a constant interaction with *Aeneid* 6 and the meeting between father and son there.

33. Venus' role in the *Punica*, albeit restricted, is significant for the completion of *fata* (see Kißel 1979, 170). For instance, consider the scene with Jupiter in 3.557–629 (Feeney 1991, 304) or her role in corrupting the Carthaginians in 11.385–409. For the scene in Book 3, see Czypicka 1987; Taisne 1992; Ripoll 1998, 509–15; see Marks 1999, 436–50, and 2005, 211–17, for further bibliography.

34. On the figure of Pomponia, see the analyses of Reitz 1982, 90–92, and Marks 2005, 137–39.

35. It has been recognized by all critics that behind the myth of Scipio's divine parentage lies the influence of the Alexander tradition; see Laudizi 1989, 126; Rocca-Serra 1990; Ripoll 1998, 248–51; Marks 1999, 106 and 116–38, and 2005, 142–47, for further discussion. Barchiesi (2001, 340) has most recently pointed out that such a genealogy is painted by Silius in Ovidian colors (also cf. Wilson's 2004 study), portraying a Venus "licenziosa, senza cui lui (sc. Scipio) non potrebbe essere l'indispensabile salvatore di Roma." As Barchiesi stresses, Scipio oscillates between Republican myth and Imperial apotheosis.

Roman affairs, because she is aware of the truth about Scipio's divine parentage and destiny.[36]

In particular, Scipio's address to his mother, which precedes Pomponia's speech, confirms the uniqueness of this encounter and the significance of the mother figure for the development of her adolescent son's character (13.621–25):

> ergo ubi gustatus cruor admonuitque Sibylla
> et dedit alternos ambobus noscere vultus,
> sic iuvenis prior: "o magni mihi numinis instar,
> cara parens, quam, te ut nobis vidisse liceret,
> optassem Stygias vel leto intrare tenebras . . ."
>
> So, when the ghost had tasted of the blood, and the Sibyl had informed her and given to both the opportunity to recognize each other's face, thus the young man spoke first: "O dear mother, as dear to me as a mighty god, how much would I have liked even to die and enter the Stygian darkness, for a sight of you! . . ."

Scipio's address to his mother as *magni mihi numinis instar* demonstrates Pomponia's sanctity and prophetic ability.[37] Through her death, she is able to retain all the characteristics of a chaste Roman wife and also to acquire a special place in the Underworld. Pomponia's ability to foresee the prosperity of her offspring differentiates her from other mothers in the poem who may possess prophetic power but foreshadow a negative rather than a successful outcome. By contrast, Pomponia furnishes her son with advice about the values he will need in order to overcome the enemy.

If we look comparatively at the two episodes where the mothers assume a protagonist's role, we can immediately recognize the resemblances. Aside from the similarity of Scipio's and Masinissa's age (both are called *iuvenes*, 13.622~16.132), there are other points of contact also.[38] First, both sons remain dutiful to their mothers and highly value their opinions.[39] Second, both mothers advise their sons to be fearless and predict renown for them. In particular, when Masinissa's mother states *ne pavesce prodigia* (16.127–28), this phrase reminds us of Pomponia's remark to Scipio *ne bella pavescas* (13.634). Just as Pomponia is well aware of Scipio's divine parentage, so Masinissa's aged mother possesses the prophetic ability that enables her to know precisely the will of the gods. This is the most important connection between the two scenes: Masinissa's mother is called *vates* (16.132), while Scipio addresses his mother as *magni mihi numinis instar* (13.623).

Moreover, as Marks (1999, 268–70) has correctly noticed, there is a significant difference between Silius' and Livy's accounts concerning Masinissa's change of political alliance during the war. In Livy (28.35), there is no divine intervention, no explanation of Masinissa's action, and no

36. Marks (1999, 101) discusses the didactic purpose of the Nekyia.

37. Helzle (1996, 274) has correctly remarked that this phrase differentiates Scipio from Odysseus in *Od.* 11.

38. On the role of age in Silius, see Ripoll 2003b.

39. See Marks 1999, 261, and 262 n. 24.

indication of his mother's presence. More specifically, Silius is our only source for Masinissa's mother's useful intervention to persuade her son.[40] In addition, Masinissa himself mentions his mother in his speech to Scipio and thus adds weight to her presence in the episode. During his address to the Roman general (140–53), Masinissa refers to his mother as *sacra parens* (140), whose good advice made him seek alliance with the Romans.

It is intriguing that the role of the mother is given the first place in the narrative. This choice is not coincidental. In the same speech to Scipio, Masinissa apostrophizes him as *nate Tonantis* (144), a phrase whose implications have not been suggested in the poem since Pomponia's revelations in Book 13 (Marks 1999, 260 n. 22). In other words, a foreign king is the first person to remind Scipio of his own mother's assertion earlier in the poem, namely, that he is the son of a god. By referring to his own, Numidian mother and at the same time alluding to Pomponia also, Masinissa marks the connection between the two episodes and affirms the importance of mothers for both his own and Scipio's development. Through the divine manifestation of his destiny and his mother's intervention, Masinissa finds his identity; by this time in the poem, Scipio has also been able to learn the truth about himself through his meeting with Pomponia. And yet Masinissa himself is the first to make the connection, which is to say, to acknowledge Scipio's divine origins and to address him with due honor.

This leads to another important aspect of Masinissa's mother's character that needs to be discussed. It should be surprising to see that Pomponia and Masinissa's mother, as a foreigner to Rome, complement each other by sharing the same ideals and values.[41] Masinissa's aged mother, though an outsider, is an atypical foreigner, inasmuch as she, as a prospective ally, becomes instrumental in promoting the Roman ideological code. She is an outsider who sanctions the center's political ideology by admitting Scipio's divine power. By this time, Rome has found its savior, the true Stoic hero, the man who has been chosen to impose peace and security in Roman affairs. Thus, traditional Roman values, once in danger of being irrevocably extinguished, are now regenerated, reinforced by new elements that stem from the periphery.[42]

In the last books of the *Punica* (13–17), this representation of Roman values of motherhood and womanhood reflects the reorganization of Roman affairs in the last years of the war on a political level. More specifically, Scipio becomes the catalyst for Roman political life; he incorporates youth, bravery, trustworthiness, and decisiveness, elements that lead to the final victory over Carthage. Yet it is not only the change in the male protagonist's

40. See Nicol (1936, 50–51), who considers her to be a historical person. Zonaras also mentions Masinissa's mother in a different context.

41. See Dräger (1995) for an examination of Jason's mother in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* 1, and how she is transformed into a Roman *matrona*.

42. A parallel change of political alliance involving women can be found in a well-known vignette on Trajan's column (scene 45), which has recently been reinterpreted (Smith 2002, 79) as portraying local provincial women torturing Dacians (and not Roman soldiers, as was heretofore maintained). These women seem to be on the side of Rome, just like Masinissa's mother.

behavior that can be observed in these later years of the war. The system of values that women exemplify has also changed.[43] Silius has us take particular note of symbols of chastity and loyalty among the female figures that emerge towards the end of the poem (Mezzanotte 1995, 369).

Let us look at the beginning of Book 17 in more detail. After the debate in the senate between Fabius and Scipio (16.600–700) concerning the destruction of Carthage,[44] and before the conclusion of the war with the battle at Zama, we learn about the advent of the Magna Mater at Rome (1–47).[45] According to a Sibylline prophecy, the importation of the cult of Cybele to Rome would chase away the enemy. P. Scipio Nasica is chosen to welcome the goddess to the city (5–15), until a crowd of women takes over the task of dragging the ship with ropes (*quae traherent celsam religatis funibus alnum*, 16–17). When the boat stops and refuses to proceed any further (*substitit adductis renuens procedere vinclis / sacra ratis subitisque vadis immobilis haesit*, 24–25), the priest of Cybele demands that the task be finished by a pure and chaste woman (17.27–32):

> "parcite pollutis contingere vincula palmis
> et procul hinc, moneo, procul hinc, quaecumque profanae,
> ferte gradus nec vos casto miscete labori,
> dum satis est monuisse deae. quod si qua pudica
> mente valet, si qua illaesi sibi corporis adstat
> conscia, vel sola subeat pia munera dextra."

> "All you unchaste, refrain from touching the ropes with guilty hands! Leave far away from here, far away, I warn you, and do not share in the sacred task; or the goddess may not be content with a mere warning. But if any woman has strength on account of her chaste mind, if any woman who stands here is conscious of a body unstained, let her, even with her right hand alone, undergo the pious duty."

Then, though her reputation is darkened by false reports (*non aequa populi male credita fama*, 34), Claudia Quinta undertakes the task and prays to the goddess (36–40). She concludes her speech in the following manner (17.39–40):

43. Consider, for instance, the difference in the behavior of the female population in Books 7 and 12. In 7.74–89, a group of women (*femineus chorus*, 76) prays to Juno for deliverance from Hannibal's "plague." In vain, they offer a *velamen* to the queen of the gods and other gifts to Pallas, Apollo, Mars, and Dione (82–87). Another massive presence of women is attested in Book 12, when the matrons offer their jewelry and precious belongings for the sake of preserving the well-being of public affairs (306–13). As Silius notes, the women's motive for such a forfeiture has been their willingness to partake in the *laus* that a victory against Hannibal would bring to the Roman people (*laudis poscere partem*, 307). Yet the behavior of women has changed since Book 7. Their hopes have been refreshed and therefore they have become more active partakers of action than submissive spectators of events. It is noteworthy that Silius is not following Livy in this particular episode of the women's contribution, for in Livy (26.36.5) it is the senate that orders that Roman citizens submit a public toll for the needs of the war. Moreover, Livy situates the event later than Silius. By emphasizing the willingness of the female population, Silius underlines the change that they have undergone and their eagerness for action.

44. See Marks 1999, 311–47, and 2005, 47–55, for an analysis of this episode.

45. For an analysis, see Casale 1954, 36–38; Bruère 1959, 243–44; von Albrecht 1968 and 1999, 301–16; Marks 1999, 347–50, and 2005, 240. Klotz (1933, 22–23) compares this episode to Livy's account (29.10.4–11.8 and 14.5–14); see also Nesselrath 1986, 223. Stehle (1989) discusses the political implications of the importation of both Cybele's and Venus' cults into Rome during this period and points out how female sexuality is deployed as a metaphor for Rome's power as a state.

". . . si nostrum nullo violatum est crimine corpus,
testis, diva, veni et facili me absolve carina."

". . . If my body has not been violated by any stain, you, goddess, come as a witness and prove my innocence through the vessel's easy movement."

Immediately after Claudia's intervention, the ship begins to move and everyone's hopes are restored that the end of the war approaches (41–47).

Scholars have correctly observed the significant role that chastity, piety, and morality play in the episode of the Magna Mater (von Albrecht 1968, 95, and 1999, 310; Marks 1999, 349). It has also rightly been maintained that the elevation of morale from Cybele's arrival at Rome corresponds to the military success later in the book, at Zama (Marks 1999, 350, and 2005, 240). I would like to suggest, *pace* von Albrecht, that Claudia herself takes a central place in Silius' narrative.

If we pay close attention to the description of the hesitation of the ship and of Claudia's intervention, we see that references to chains and ties are salient. The word *vinclum* is used to illustrate the refusal of the ship to surrender (*adductis renuens vinclis*, 24), while the ropes are fastened together in order to drag the vessel (*religatis funibus*, 17). Then, the priest of Cybele demands that no polluted hands touch the *vincula* (27); the contact of the *profanae* with the statue of the goddess would result in failure and corruption. These references to the chains reflect the moral "captivity" of the Roman people, from which the goddess supposedly will set them free. However, no polluted women may touch the ropes of the boat. Only Claudia can serve as intermediary to Cybele; when she entreats the Magna Mater to free her from the ignobility of her *crimen* (39–40), the priestess uses the imperative *absolve* (40). The verb is also used in connection with the *vincula* of the boat, since the goddess nods positively to Claudia's plea and surrenders to the power of the ropes. *Tum secura capit funem* is the phrase used after Claudia's speech (41) to demonstrate that Claudia is in control of the ropes and does not surrender to the vessel but rather actively drags it to the shore. What is more, the verb *absolvere* metaphorically reenacts the "moral" release that Claudia's reputation will enjoy. Both Claudia and the Romans are freed from their burdens, she of the *crimen*, Rome of the foreign enemy.

Claudia's successful intervention reflects the reorientation of *Romanitas* in the poem. By placing the Vestal at the opening of the last book, Silius opposes her character to other female figures in the poem. Claudia Quinta becomes the only female whose plea is answered. Not only is her name saved from ill reputation (*crimen*), but she is also transformed into an effective figure that can bring prosperity and moral regeneration to Rome. Claudia Quinta is the only woman in the poem who succeeds in both her private and public lives, becoming the embodiment of Roman values and ideas concerning womanhood.

There is another level to consider in the scene. When the vessel is on its way to its destination and just before Claudia's interference, the poet invites us to visualize the whole group of followers of the Magna Mater (17.18–22):

> circum arguta cavis tinnitibus aera, simulque
> certabant rauco resonantia tympana pulsu
> semivirique chori, gemino qui Dindyma monte
> casta colunt, qui Dictaeo bacchantur in antro,
> quique Idaea iuga et lucos novere silentes.
>
> All round the cymbals made a noise with their hollow tinklings, and at the same time the drums vied with the cymbals resounding with their hoarse note, and the choruses of the half-men, who worship her in the twin peaks of chaste Dindyma, who revel in the cave of Dicte, and who have known the heights of Ida and the silent groves.

On the one side, women only must drag the ship, while on the other side we see the followers of the goddess lining up with their characteristic and well-known equipment. The use of the verb *bacchor* in this case is characteristic of the new order the arrival of Cybele announces, the coexistence of an exotic cult with a purifying ritual. These novelties of the imported cult, viewed from a Roman perspective, eradicate the differences between center and periphery and make Romanness an ever-changing feature that can, and should, be reinforced from the outsider others.

We see that the poet introduces the figure of Claudia Quinta and juxtaposes her indisputable chastity to the presence of the goddess, who comes from outside the center and thus introduces new standards within the walls of the city (*Phrygia sede petitam / Laomedonteae sacrandam moenibus urbis*, 17.3–4). A Roman *matrona* as a priestess meets with the foreign deity and through a prayer makes a pact: the goddess lets the vessel be landed and approves of the woman's chastity and *pudor*. The outsider goddess becomes the catalyst for the annihilation of the Carthaginian other, the enemy par excellence, who could not be absorbed or acculturated and therefore had to be extinguished.

Thus, in Book 17, Silius chooses to portray Claudia as the embodiment of chastity and purity and places her at the climax of a series of female figures that have paved her way, such as Pomponia and Masinissa's mother. Clearly, the voice of women in the last books of the poem conveys overt male values and ideals with regard to motherhood and matronhood. Foreign (m)otherhood has become assimilated to the sameness of the Roman male ideal. Yet there is a price to be paid. Romanness itself becomes more flexible and pliable by the forces of the periphery. This reconfiguration of female morality according to male principles amply demonstrates the importance of female action for the completion of the war and the vital role of women in the Roman society as mothers, educators, and, most significantly, guardians of generational continuity.

In Silius' reconstruction of the glorious past and of events that took place more than 250 years before his time, the role of otherness and of the periphery becomes a catalyst for the welfare of the empire. Female power proves to be an important factor in the shaping of Roman identity. Moral values of the past are revived and underscored as paragons of prosperity and success. The system of these values (*pietas* and *fides*) is reinforced from the periphery by the incorporation of outsiders, as prospective associates, and by their assimilation to the ideological code dictated by the center. At

the same time, however, the notion of Romanness undergoes a significant change as it becomes mandatory for Romans to embrace otherness and to accept the terms of this coexistence, even if it betokens the destabilization and flexibility of polarities such as center and periphery, male and female.[46]

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46. Certainly, the final lines of the poem are open to interpretation, as the rise but also the future decline of the empire seemingly coincide. As Tipping (1999, 277) reminds us, "the final scene is a good example of the way in which, even as it constructs model Romanity, even as, perhaps, it assumes an apparent air of nostalgia, the *Punica* raises questions about those models that it presents, and so challenges any comfortable sense that the past was a Republican paradise."

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