Silius Italicus and Tacitus

Scholars have long studied the influence of epic on historiography (Foucher 2000), including the presence of Vergil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Bellum civile* in Tacitus's *Histories* and *Annals* (Syme 1958 *passim*; Baxter 1971; Lauletta 1998 *passim*; Ash 1999 *passim*; Joseph 2012a-b), but they have not paid very much attention to the equally important presence of Silius Italicus's *Punica*. Recently, Manolaraki and Augoustakis 2012 have argued for the influence of Silius's Hannibal on Tacitus's Germanicus in the *Annals*. In this paper, I would like to argue that an even stronger case can be made for Silius's influence on the *Histories* and, in particular, on the narrative of the war in book 3. In addition to a possible allusion to the *Punica* in *Annals* 4.33.4 (Woodman 2009: 37, comparing Juvenal 10.163-167), Tacitus actually mentions Silius by name in *Histories* 3.65.2 because of his role, along with Cluvius Rufus, as mediator in the negotiations between Vitellius and Flavius Sabinus. Furthermore, Silius includes many allusions to the civil war of A.D. 69 in his *Punica* (McGuire 1995; Mezzanotte 1995 ≈ Mezzanotte 2016), and so it would make sense for Tacitus to use Silius, especially across three key passages in *Histories* 3: 3.25, the death of Julius Mansuetus at the hands of his own son during the second battle of Bedriacum; 3.34.1, the "obituary" for Cremona; and 3.70-75, the siege of the Capitol. (Incidentally, Wellesley 1972, the standard commentary, does not cite Silius apart from his appearance in 3.65.2.) In this paper, I will briefly examine each of these three passages in order to illustrate Silius's sustained influence on Tacitus in terms of structure, language, and theme. In the conclusion, I will offer some ideas and suggestions for further explorations of Silius's presence elsewhere in Tacitus's works.

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