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## The Punic motif in Claudian's *De Bello Gildonico*. A case of *memoria* and *exemplum* in Late Antique Latin literature\*

*Abstract:* *De Bello Gildonico* (*The War against Gildo*) is a composition in hexametres written by the Late Antique poet Claudian (c. 370 — c. 405). This paper discusses lines 76—91, which deal with the Carthaginian conflict. The passage highlights one of the main themes of the poetic work (loyalty in contrast to treason), thus contributing to its intra-textual coherence. From an ideological viewpoint the devices of *memoria* and *exemplum* conveyed by the Punic motif appear to be oblique comments on Claudian's political and military context.

*Key Words:* Claudian, Ennius, *exempla*, historical epic, *memoria*, Punic Wars, Silius Italicus.

### Introduction

In 397 a provincial governor of Roman Africa named Gildo cut off grain exports to the Vrbs. He did so on account of Eutropius, an influential Eastern Court adviser who was eager to weaken the other *pars imperii*. Eventually the Western Court managed to crush the rebellion and the grain supply was restored.<sup>1</sup> Soon after the end of this conflict, Claudian — an Alexandrian poet at the service of the emperor Honorius— finished and recited a composition in hexametres on the event, *De Bello Gildonico*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), p. 94. A previous rebellion against the Western Roman Court had already taken place between 372 and 375, led by Firmus, Gildo's brother. On that occasion, the latter cooperated with Rome and he was subsequently appointed governor of the province of Africa as a reward. For a full account of the conflict's background, see Stewart Irwin Oost, "Count Gildo and Theodosius the Great," *Classical Philology* 57, 1 (1962): 27—30.

<sup>2</sup> Claudian himself refers to the recitation of *De Bello Gildonico* in his preface to *De Bello Getico* (*Get. Praef.* 4—6).



This paper deals with Claudian's reworking of the subject matter of the Second Punic War and discusses the narrative and ideological functions of the motif within *De Bello Gildonico* alone (as a case study).<sup>6</sup> As far as methodology is concerned, our reading of these verses has been conducted in accordance with a heuristic type of approach to the text. This has led to Ennius' *Annales* and (mainly) to Silius Italicus' *Punica*.<sup>7</sup> The structuring *foci* of our discussion are the historical figures and the adjectival forms of place names that feature in the passage.

### *Gild.* 76–91

After the rhetorical question *Ideone tot annos | flebile cum tumida bellum Carthagine gessi?* (*Gild.* 76–77), the personification of Rome recalls the character of Regulus. In the preceding epic tradition, this historical character had received considerable attention and textual space in the sixth book of Silius Italicus' *Punica*, in which a veteran soldier named Maro recounts the valiant attitude of Regulus when captured by the Carthaginians (*Sil.* 6.318–320).<sup>8</sup> The latter offered to free him (a man past his prime) in exchange for young Carthaginian soldiers. Regulus managed to convince the senators to refuse to sign such treaty, since it would be clearly disadvantageous to Rome (6.479–491). Nevertheless, he abided by the agreement that he had made with his Punic captors (6.64) and returned to Carthage, despite the fact that such return was going to trigger his very own execution (6.472). By keeping his word even with his captors, Regulus embodies the epitome of *fides*. Not surprisingly, in some other passages of *Punica* he is associated with the corresponding deity (6.131–132; 467–471).

It goes without saying that both within and out of the narrative fiction of *Punica* the remarkable story of Regulus displays a moralizing purpose. This is particularly made explicit in the verses that close the episode of Maro and Serranus: *longo reuiescet in aeuo | gloria; dum caeli sedem terrasque tenebit | casta Fides, dum uirtutis uenerabile nomen, | uiuet; eritque dies, tua quo, dux inclite, fata*

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<sup>6</sup> Elaborations of the same motif in other compositions of Claudian's corpus or in the texts of his contemporaries are not examined here.

<sup>7</sup> In the course of the discussion, several references to *Punica* will be made, but it is worth noting that this paper does not deal with the reception of Silius Italicus by Claudian. The prose works of Polybius and Livy as sources for the Carthaginian theme are not addressed here either. For a recent study and discussion of the main ancient textual sources on the Punic Wars, see Craig B. Champion, "Polybius and the Punic Wars," in *A Companion to the Punic Wars*, ed. Dexter Hoyos (London: Wiley–Blackwell, 2011), pp. 95–110. Also in the same collective work, see the chapter by Bernard Mineo, "Principal Literary Sources for the Punic Wars," pp. 111–127.

<sup>8</sup> Text from the critical edition by Ludwig Bauer, *Sili Italici Punica. Volumen Prius. Libros I–X* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890).

| *audire horrebunt a te calcata minores* (6.546–550). Given that Regulus conducted himself in accord with the principles of *uirtus* and *fides*, he is a role model and merits the attribute of *gloria*. Maro's recount is addressed both at his interlocutor Serranus (son of the late Regulus) and at the attendees of the poem's recitation. Approximately three centuries after Silius Italicus' composed his epic, Claudian included this very same historical figure in the second rhetorical question uttered by the character of the personification of Rome: *Idcirco uoluit contempta luce reuerti | Regulus?* (*Gild.* 78–79). The name evokes the exemplarity of a loyal man who stands as the antithesis of the rebellious provincial that betrayed Rome by cutting off the corn supply.<sup>9</sup>

Attention is now drawn to the most prominent figure of the Punic conflict: Hannibal. Some passages of *Punica* present him as a rival of the same worth of Scipio: *Hanc segetem mete. composuit propioribus ausis / dignum te Fortuna parem. uult Itala tellus / ductoris saeui, uult tandem, haurire cruorem* (*Sil.* 16.615–617).<sup>10</sup> In *De Bello Gildonico*, the reference to the Carthaginian general begins with a mention of the Alpine expedition, namely with the phrase *ruptaque emissus ab Alpe* strategically placed after the trochaic caesura in verse 82, in the course of a rhetorical question that spans over four lines. With one single past participle in the ablative case such as *rupta* (in agreement with *Alpe*) Claudian manages to evoke in the mind of the audience the awe-inspiring deed of the Punic enemy.<sup>11</sup> The adjective *Poenus* opens verse 83 but the actual mention of the general's anthroponym is postponed until the sixth metrical foot of that line.

With respect to *Gild.* 81–83, Catherine Ware has argued that the personification of Rome is establishing a parallel between Hannibal and Gildo. She claims that the African rebel causes amidst his rivals the same type of fright that Hannibal would have struck his very own.<sup>12</sup> We deem Ware's study to be

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<sup>9</sup> During the previous rebellion the Western Roman Court had counted on Gildo to kill Firmus. Eventually Gildo was in turn killed by Mascezel.

<sup>10</sup> Text from the critical edition by Ludwig Bauer, *Sili Italici Punica. Volumen Alterum. Libros XI–XVII* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1892).

<sup>11</sup> For the ancient symbolism (with religious implications) of the act of shattering a rock, see Giovanni Brizzi, "Carthage and Hannibal in Roman and Greek Memory," in Dexter Hoyos, op. cit., pp. 483–498. Brizzi offers an enticing discussion about how Hannibal's crossing of the Alps largely shaped the characterization of the Punic general in Roman textual sources. The author links "one of the most famous deeds, the crossing of the Alps" with ideas of an anthropological nature about the mountain and sacredness during Roman Antiquity (the mountain was considered to be the preferred dwelling place of *numina*) and goes on noting that "precisely in this environment, through the grandeur of these places, [Hannibal] seems to express a kind of epiphany of power", p. 489.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Ware, "Gildo *tyrannus*: Accusation and Allusion in the Speeches of Roma and Africa," in *Aetas Claudiana. Eine Tagung an der Freien Universität Berlin vom 28. bis 30. Juni 2002*, eds. Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers et al. (München–Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2004), pp. 96–103.

an excellent one, but her specific view on this particular passage is not shared here. A parallel between the characters of Hannibal and Gildo on the part of Claudian does not appear to be plausible for the following three reasons, all of which are inferred from intrinsic textual evidence. In the first place, in other passages of *De Bello Gildonico* a series of conventional invective devices characterise the rebel Gildo *solely* as a slave of pampering, softness, and concupiscent, as well as an opportunist devoid of the moral quality of *pietas*. This is especially conspicuous in another part of the poem, in the speech delivered by the personification of the province of Africa (*Gild.* 139–200).<sup>13</sup> This type of characterization (stressing *mollitia* and *luxuries* only) is not attributed to Hannibal in the Roman epic texts,<sup>14</sup> and so it is highly unlikely that Claudian may have intended to deviate so dramatically from the preceding epic tradition as far as Hannibal's characterization was concerned.

One further reason to discard the possibility that Claudian may have wished to establish a parallel between Hannibal and Gildo in lines 81–83 is the remarkably different nature of their respective conflicts. The victory over the Carthaginians took place only after several decades of war, but Gildo's insurrection was crushed in just a few weeks. Such contrast is made explicit at different points in the composition. Indeed, the very proem hints at the swiftness with which Honorius' army managed to crush Gildo: *Robusta uetusque | tempore tam paruo potuit dementia uinci: | quem ueniens indixit hiems, uer perculit hostem* (*Gild.* 14–16), whereas the lengthy period of time that was necessary to defeat the Carthaginians is stressed in *Gild.* 76–77 (*ideone tot annos | flebile cum tumida bellum Carthagine gessi?*) and yet again in *Gild.* 87 (*Carthago ter uicta ruit?*).

Thirdly, it must be taken into account that at the time of the composition of *De Bello Gildonico* the political and military circumstances were such that a willingness on the part of Claudian to establish a parallel between Gildo and Hannibal seems to be highly improbable, for Gildo's defeat had not been an achievement of Claudian's patrons Stilicho and Honorius.<sup>15</sup> Instead, it had been a provincial man on the ground (Mascezel) the one who led the campaign and killed Gildo. Consequently, the court poet would not have felt inclined to present the denouement of the short-lived rebellion as a particularly meritorious one. Ware's article offers a noteworthy overall discussion of the

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<sup>13</sup> For a most rigorous and well-documented study of Gildo's characterization, see Florence Garambois-Vasquez, *Les invectives de Claudien. Une poétique de la violence* (Bruxelles: Latomus, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> For a recent study on the characterization of Hannibal as attested in several Latin sources, see Brizzi, *op. cit.*, 483–498.

<sup>15</sup> Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

character of Gildo, but an intended parallel between Hannibal and Gildo on the part of Claudian seems implausible to us for the reasons that have been stated. The vicinity of the two names (*Gild.* 83 and *Gild.* 86) and the fact that both of them feature in the same metrical foot in their respective verses, do not necessarily imply that the two characters are being presented as equally frightening. Rather, the Late Antique poet's intention may well have been to highlight Gildo's inferiority with respect to the Punic general and reassure and remind his audience that the provincial rebel did not cause fright.

With this remembrance of the Roman victory over a powerful and terrifying enemy like Hannibal, the personification of the City is stressing the empire's indubitable capability to confront and easily crush Gildo, by all means a far less frightening rival than the Punic general. At the analytical level of Pragmatics, one can conjure up a mental image of the public recitation and of the attendees' reaction of rotund and sound denial upon listening to the line in which the *Vrbs* asks herself whether she definitely defeated Carthage only to end up being abused by one character like Gildo several centuries later (*Gildonis ad usum | Carthago ter uicta ruit? Gild.* 86–87).<sup>16</sup> All seven rhetorical questions in the Punic passage clearly entail an implicit negative response.

Attention is now directed at Fabius. In *Punica* he appears characterised as a cautious man who tries to avoid situations of uncertainty (*Sil.* 1.679–684) and deploys a specific military tactic (7.91–95) that otherwise grants him the cognomen *Cunctator*. He takes pride in returning from the battlefield with no losses amidst his troops and claims that no Roman soldier shall perish under his command and guidance (7.225). In terms of military skill, he is compared to Hannibal (6.638–640) and the Punic general himself confesses to being anguished by Fabius' dangerousness (7.305–306). In *De Bello Gildonico*, Fabius is the anthroponym that follows Regulus in the sequence of historical figures that fought for Rome during the Second Punic War.<sup>17</sup> An analogous order occurs in book 6 of *Punica*, where the textual space dedicated to Fabius follows the treatment of the character of Regulus. This similarity interrelates with issues of literary models, hypo-texts, and inter-texts.<sup>18</sup> Claudian was a learned bilingual writer poet whose extant corpus is indicative of a vast liter-

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<sup>16</sup> The personification of Rome formulates this question when the outcome of the rebellion is still unknown within the fiction of the poem. On their part, the audience of Claudian's recitation already knew about the denouement of the conflict. For the dates of the rebellion and the composition, see Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–123.

<sup>17</sup> Specifically in *Gild.* 89, ten verses after the mention of Regulus.

<sup>18</sup> Cameron attributed a 'handbook origin' to the *exempla* found in *IV Cons.* 396–418. Moreover, on grounds of close verbal parallels, this author identified the text of Valerius Maximus as a model underlying *Get.* 138–141, *op. cit.*, pp. 338–339.

ary culture,<sup>19</sup> so it is not implausible to consider that *Punica* might have been a hypo-text for his specific reworking of the Carthaginian subject in *De Bello Gildonico*.<sup>20</sup>

As far as Marcellus is concerned, in *Punica*, in the course of a prophetic speech delivered by Jupiter, this character is mentioned after Fabius (*Sil.* 3.587) as part of an enumeration of generals that are bound to epitomise Roman *uirtutes* during the forthcoming<sup>21</sup> wars against Carthage. Jupiter's speech includes narrative segments where Marcellus is presented in the battlefield (12.166; 12.179; 12.198) and in the course of a *triumphus* (12.278–279). Jupiter also mentions his military achievement against Hannibal (12.420–423), his victory on Sicilian battleground (14.178–180), and his demise (15.336; 17.299). In *De Bello Gildonico*, the same character is mentioned in one single line along with Fabius (*Gild.* 89). The mention of both characters conveys the idea that a nation counting on two remarkable men like them among their ancestors does not flinch when confronted with a petty individual like Gildo.

This sequence of historical *exempla* closes with the mention of Sifax, a Numidian king that established an alliance with the Romans, whereby the latter would instruct the Numidians on military tactics in exchange for support (*Liv.* 24.48–49; 27.4; 28.7; 29.23). In *Punica* this local king initially abides by the alliance, but eventually he considers marrying Sofonisba, the daughter of Hasdrubal (*Sil.* 17.71–72). The Romans warn Sifax that such marriage would entail the end of the alliance, but the local king disobeys and marries the Carthaginian woman (17.629–630). Claudian, on his part, places Sifax spearheading an enumeration of notorious traitors to Rome: *haurire uenena | conpulimus dirum Syphacem fractumque Metello?* (*Gild.* 90–91). The mention of this character in *De Bello Gildonico* has an exemplifying purpose: the Romans do not tolerate outrages and so capital punishment is what awaits those who dare to betray Rome, an idea that is reinforced by the following statement uttered by Jupiter elsewhere in the poem: *Nec te, Roma, diu nec te patiemur inultam* (*Gild.* 204).

Finally we shall consider the passage's adjectival forms of place names that refer to crucial battlegrounds of the second Punic War and discuss their function as *exempla*. These are *Cannensibus* (*Gild.* 79), *Hispanum* (81) and *Siculum* (81). The Roman army experienced a particularly horrible defeat at Cannae,

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<sup>19</sup> On Claudian's knowledge of Greek and Latin literature, see Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 305–348.

<sup>20</sup> So could have been Polybius and Livy in the realm of prose, but the focus here is restricted to poetic works.

<sup>21</sup> It goes without saying that in this instance the adjective *forthcoming* evidently applies within the internal time of the fictional narrative.



as a result of which the setting became the symbol of disaster in Rome's military history. The words uttered by the character of Decius in *Punica* illustrate this symbolism of endurance, for he claims that the Roman soldiers are able to endure Cannae, the waters of lake Trasimene, and the memorable death of Paulus: *numquam angusta malis. capiunt, mihi credite, Cannas | et Trasimenna uada et Pauli memorabile letum* (Sil. 11.171–172). In Claudian's text the place and the historical event are referred to with the noun phrase *damnis Cannensibus* (Gild. 79). Both in *Punica* and in *De Bello Gildonico* the reference to the ghastly location appears to be an educative reminder of the Roman ability to overcome disasters. The deployment of either the place name *Cannae* or its corresponding adjectival form renders itself as productive in the texts of the two writers, in each case in accord with their respective historical contexts. Concerning *Sicilia* and *Hispania*, these were locations where major battles of the second Punic War took place and they actually fell under Roman rule. Silius Italicus deploys their corresponding adjectival forms in one single line in order to refer to the military losses amidst Roman troops during the ten-year period of the conflict: *Sicana nunc tellus, nunc litora Hibera cruorem* (Sil. 6.216). Claudian on his part places two analogous adjectives in one single line too (albeit in reversed order): *Hispanum Siculumque fretum uastataque tellus* (Gild. 81).

Further on battlegrounds and territory, the place name *Libya* features in the proem of *De Bello Gildonico* and is particularly evocative of *Annales* and *Punica*. The hemistich *iunximus Europen Libyae* (Gild. 4)<sup>22</sup> stresses the idea that *Libya* (area of *Africa Proconsularis*) has just been regained and reincorporated into Roman domains, after Gildo's short-lived rebellion. The term is therefore devoid of hostility. An opposite connotation is entailed by the same word in the internal narration of *Annales* and *Punica*, where *Libya* does connote hostility, since it refers to the territory of Northern Africa still under Carthaginian rule.<sup>23</sup> This connotative difference becomes certainly conspicuous when one reads line *iunximus Europen Libyae* in contrast with *Europam Libyamque rapax ubi diuidit unda* (Enn. Ann. 302, Sk.). Where Ennius had deployed *diuidere*, Claudian's wording includes a verb that falls within an antonymous semantic field: *iungere*.

The Second Punic War had signalled a turning point in Rome's history. Furthermore, it had largely determined the development of Roman epic, a development in which Ennius played a most significant role. He was person-

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<sup>22</sup> The place name *Libya* features in other passages of *De Bello Gildonico*, such as Gild. 52, 63, and 113.

<sup>23</sup> Silius Italicus likewise deploys the term as part of the characterization of Hannibal, in formulations such as *Libyae ductor* (Sil. 4. 39) and *ductorem Libyae* (Sil. 6. 661), to name but two instances.



ally invested in the treatment of the topic, not only because he had witnessed it, but also because his very own literary career developed under the auspices and patronage of the Scipio family, some of whose members had been the main protagonists of such conflict. Indeed the First and (especially) the Second Punic Wars constitute the subject matter of the book triad 7–9 of the *Annales*.

The ennian fragment cited above could have well constituted a hypo-text for *Gild.* 4. Claudian's choice of *iunximus* could well have been deliberately allusive, aimed at highlighting the contrast with the verb that his remote predecessor had once deployed. The writer from *Rudii* had certainly not fallen into oblivion in the fourth century, judging by the fact that explicit references to Ennius as an epic author are found in some passages of Claudian's corpus (*castrisque solebat | omnibus in medias Ennius ire tubes*, *Stil.* 2.11–12)<sup>24</sup> as well as in some of his contemporaries (*nisi quia Ennio ex Aetolicis manubiis captiua tantum chlamys data Fuluium decolorat?*, *Symm.* 1.20.2)<sup>25</sup>. The issue of whether such knowledge was direct or mediated is far from being conclusive. Whereas Birt argued for Claudian's direct knowledge of Ennius' *Annales*, Otto Skutsch made the case for the existence of inter-texts.<sup>26</sup> In any event, what the textual evidence indicates is that some dactylic echoes of the Republican poet were still resonating in the Roman literature of the fourth century. The glorious past was deemed by Silius Italicus to be an adequate choice of topic (less contentious than contemporary ones), when he decided to compose an epic work, during Domitian's regime. Verbal parallels between passages and Claudian's corpus and passages from *Punica* have been shown by a number of commentaries. To name but two examples, *Stil.* 26 evokes *Sil.* 5. 70–74 and *Stil.* 248–267 recalls the catalogue of African soldiers in Hannibal's army in *Sil.* 3.231–324.<sup>27</sup>

By the late fourth century the Second Punic War must have appeared too distant in time (around six centuries had passed) as to receive extensive separate treatment. Furthermore, as a court poet at the service of Honorius and

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<sup>24</sup> Critical edition by Theodor Birt. *Claudiani Carmina. Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctorum Antiquissimorum*, X (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892).

<sup>25</sup> Critical edition by Otto Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symachi quae supersunt* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1961).

<sup>26</sup> Otto Skutsch, *The Annals of Q. Ennius, edited with an Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 19–20. By the same author, see also *Studia Enniana*. London: The Athlone Press, 1968.

<sup>27</sup> W. Barr (1981), *Claudian's Panegyric on the Fourth Consulate of Honorius. Introduction, text, translation and commentary* by W. Barr, Liverpool, Francis Cairns, 1981 and U. Keudel, *Poetische Vorläufer und Vorbilder in Claudians De consulatu Stilichonis. Imitationskommentar, Hypomnemata Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben. Hypomnemata Heft 26*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970.

Stilico, Claudian was invested in dealing with contemporary matters. Still, the Carthaginian subject as a motif continued to be an identifiable and comprehensible one. It persisted in the Roman collective imagery and literary tradition, making part of a recognisable literary code, in this instance (the speech of a personified fourth-century Vrbs) at the service of political propaganda favourable to the court for which Claudian was producing his verse work in Latin.

### Function of the Punic motif in *De Bello Gildonico*

To look at the motif's function within the entirety of the composition is in our view more productive than attempting to fathom the exact nature of the evocations of preceding epic texts that we have encountered in *Gild.* 76–91. From a narratological viewpoint, the Punic subject stresses the contrast between treason and loyalty, which is of the main themes of the entire composition, one that intersects with the poem's propagandist agenda. We have seen that the mention of Regulus recalls the concept of *fides* in contrast with Gildo's treason,<sup>28</sup> and that Claudian further elaborates on such antithesis by mentioning Sifax. If Regulus epitomises the observance of *fides*, Sifax embodies the opposite, for he dishonours his own word.<sup>29</sup> It is precisely this contrast between Regulus and the binomial Sifax-Gildo stressing the theme of treason versus loyalty what generates intra-textual coherence in *De Bello Gildonico*.

From an ideological point of view, the remembrance of the Second Punic War by the personification of the Vrbs in her speech is not but the materialization of *memoria* with a specific *ad hoc* propagandistic agenda. The attendees to the recitation of the poem were being reminded that a nation with such a longstanding record of military achievements was not going to be intimidated by the rebellion of a disloyal provincial governor.

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<sup>28</sup> It is well known that the association of *perfidia* and the Carthaginian nation was firmly entrenched in the Roman collective imagery and literature. Silius Italicus was clearly not escaping that tradition, and so the topic of the Carthaginian perfidy is reoccurring in his epic text. For a recent discussion on the subject matter of this association of *perfidia* and Carthage in the Roman imagery, see Giovanni Brizzi, "Carthage and Hannibal in Roman and Greek Memory," in Dexter Hoyos, *op. cit.*, pp. 483–498.

<sup>29</sup> In the second half of the verse where Sifax is mentioned, there is a change of subject matter and the personified Rome starts to recount a different historical event: the War against Jugurtha, one more instance of treason and rebellion against Rome in which the topic of *fides* is likewise in play and in which the setting continues to be Africa. It must be noted, however, that the scope of Rome's speech is not restricted to African lands or to rebellious and disloyal governors. Carthage and Jugurtha are part of a much wider retrospective outline of her own history, for in her speech the personification of the Vrbs is revisiting a number of main military deeds of her past in chronological order.

The notion of *memoria* was well established in the imagery of the Roman elite. Historical deeds and figures became *exempla* that set high moral and military standards for the subsequent generations. These dynamics operated in prose and verse works as well as in epigraphic texts. An example of the latter case is the funerary inscription of Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (CIL VI 1285). At a strictly personal level, the account of performed duties and accomplishments exalts Barbatus as an individual, but from a social point of view the inscription conveys a pedagogical message for subsequent generations of males of the Roman elite.

An excellent instance of the ways in which the notion of *memoria* operated in Latin epic is, in our view, one passage of *Punica* where a Roman deserter called Cinna recounts to Hannibal the valiant ancestors of Clelius, the Roman whom the Punic general has just killed in combat (Sil. 10.478–502). It is a historical account embedded in a historical epic. Within the narrative fiction, Clelius' story is narrated to the Carthaginian general, whereas out of the narrative fiction the very same account — a reminder of the exemplary Roman *uirtutes* — is clearly directed at the audience of the recitation. Another instance of this type of ideology embedded in the literary tradition is provided by, precisely, the entire speech of the personification of the Vrbs in *De Bello Gildonico*.<sup>30</sup> The Late Antique Alexandrian poet had apprehended the pedagogical nature and function of *memoria* in the Roman national imagery and effected it in his composition through a variety of motifs, among which we find the Carthaginian one.

In *De Bello Gildonico* the device of *memoria* — materialised in the text through the Punic motif — is operating in close relation to the extra-linguistic context of the composition. Gildo's rebellion had been instigated by the *pars orientalis*, amidst a political conflict between the two *partes imperii*.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, the Carthaginian topic suited the agenda of Honorius and Stilico, for it was evoking a stage in Rome's history in which the enemy was an external one. Furthermore, the motif provided *exempla* aimed at conveying the ultimate idea that the Roman nation was capable of easily defeating Gildo, regain its territories and remain united and this aligned with the admonitions on the importance of preserving internal unity that are recurrent throughout the entire composition, such as the words that Theodosius the Elder directs at Honorius: *Iungantur spoliis Firmi Gildonis opima; | exornet geminos Maurusia laurea currus; | una domus totiens una de gente triumphed* (Gild. 343–345), to

<sup>30</sup> This is generally the case in the entire speech of the personification of Rome (Gild. 28–127), but our focus here is restricted to the Carthaginian subject alone.

<sup>31</sup> Further on this topic, see Oost, op. cit., and Cameron, op. cit., pp. 93–123.

name but one example. For all these reasons, the function of the Punic motif in *De Bello Gildonico* is somehow analogous to that of the story of Cinna cited above, namely an exemplary historical account within a (likewise) historical epic. Additionally, the Carthaginian conflict constituted one specific device in order to allow for continuity between the Republican past and the moment of composition and recitation of Claudian's text, something that aligned with the taste and values of influential sectors of the senatorial order during his times.

On the basis of the previous discussion, we subscribe to Dihle's claim that the Late Antique Alexandrian poet combines the Greek myth with events of Rome's Republican History, which he provides with mythical status, so that historical characters such as Camilus, Scipio and Cato become homologous to Achilles, Hercules, and Ulisses.<sup>32</sup> Building on Dihle's statement, it is argued here that in *De Bello Gildonico* the mythified historical event of the Second Punic War undertakes a moralizing function that Greek myths could not perform.

## Conclusions

Rome's conflict with Carthage was double faceted. Historically its denouement consolidated Rome as a political and military overarching power in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, it became a literary subject matter that handed down idealised military and moral standards to subsequent generations. Claudian engaged with that longstanding tradition in *Gild.* 76–91. A close reading of the passage contributes to a better understanding and appreciation of both the narrative qualities and the ideological agenda of *De Bello Gildonico*. By stressing some of the major themes of the entire composition, the reference to the Second Punic War contributes to cohere the text. As far as ideology is concerned, it appears to be an oblique commentary on the late fourth century political and military context, namely on the conflicts between the two *partes imperii*. While threats to territorial integrity occurred within and out of the borders of the Roman Empire (court intrigues; Goths in the West; Parthians in the East), the notion of *memoria* was still poignantly resounding in the realms of court literature, as a textual device serving specific agendas largely determined by the pressing circumstances of the time. Claudian's reworking of the Carthaginian motif as a functional narrative and ideological device indicates and illustrates that this specific subject matter continued to be meaningful and significant in imperial Latin literature until its very closure.

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<sup>32</sup> A. Dihle, *Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire. From Augustus to Justinian*, trans. A. Malzahn (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 589.

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