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Hannibal's Visit to Gades: Silius Italicus 3.1-60

Punica 3 opens with Hannibal's visit to Gades to honor Hercules (Sil. 3.1-60). This event is mentioned by Livy (21.21.9), but covered in more detail by Silius. At the temple of Hercules, Hannibal contemplates images of the god's labors and marvels at the Atlantic tides. This paper examines this episode in the light of earlier epic visit to sites associated with the gods or the underworld, concentrating especially on Virgil and Lucan. The rich tradition of such visits includes examples such as Aeneas' encounter with the Sibyl at Cumae in *Aeneid* 6, Appius Claudius Pulcher's visit to Delphi in Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 5 and the consultation of the witch, Erichtho, by Sextus Pompeius in Lucan, *BC* 6.

Hannibal's visit to Gades initially suggests a parallelism with Virgil's hero. Thus the descriptions of Cumae in *Aeneid* 6 and of Gades in *Punica* 3 include a temple ecphrasis; note for instance the echo of Virg. *A.* 6.20 'in foribus letum Androgeo' at Sil. 3.32 'in foribus labor Alcidae'. However, there are also differences: Hannibal arrives at Gades after his victory at Saguntum, while Aeneas' visit to Cumae precedes his engagement in war in Italy. And Hannibal's involvement with Hercules is perfunctory when compared with Aeneas' observance of religious ritual at Cumae. Hannibal is also distracted by the temple images and by the tides at Gades (Sil. 3.45-6), whereas the Sibyl had warned Aeneas not to be diverted by the pictures at Cumae (Virg. *A.* 6.37).

Hannibal can also be contrasted with the Carthaginian Bostar, who is sent to consult the oracle of Ammon (Sil. 3.5-7), a journey which he subsequently narrates (3.647-714). As well as recalling Aeneas' travels in *Aeneid* 1 and Cato's march through the Syrtes in Lucan, *BC* 9, Bostar also evokes Aeneas at Cumae. Correspondences include the opening of the doors before the oracle is given (Virg. *A.* 6.81-2; Sil. 3.692-3), and a prophecy of a war in Italy (Virg. *A.* 6.83-97; Sil. 3.700-12). While Hannibal is distracted by the temple images and by the tides at Gades, his subordinate gives little heed to a miraculous spring at Ammon (Sil. 3.669-72), suggesting that the visit to Hercules' temple is little more than tourism. In this respect Hannibal recalls Lucan's Caesar, also interested in natural phenomena such as the source of the Nile (Lucan, *BC* 10.190-331). It is worth noting as well that Caesar himself visited Gades (Suet. *Jul.* 7.1).

The expectation of a parallel between Hannibal at Gades and Aeneas at Cumae is thus created and then frustrated. It is therefore no surprise that Hannibal's subsequent attack on Cumae itself ends in failure (Sil. 12.60-103).