

**REMINISCENCES OF
ENNIUS IN
SILIUS ITALICUS,
PART IV, PP. 355-424**

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REMINISCENCES OF ENNIUS IN SILIUS ITALICUS

I. PREVIOUS THEORIES CONCERNING THE PUNICA

C. Silius Italicus and his description of the Second Punic War have received comparatively little recognition either in ancient or in modern times. He was praised by Martial¹ and was mentioned by Pliny² and a few of his other contemporaries;³ then, with but one or two exceptions, no further reference to his name and no allusion to his poem can be found until the fifteenth century, when the discovery of a manuscript⁴ of the *Punica* awakened a slight interest, but led to very few systematic and critical investigations. Another manuscript,⁵ discovered in the following century, brought no greater results. In the latter part of the nineteenth century sufficient interest was shown to question the sources and the historical credibility of the poem, but since then little more has been said concerning it, and the text of the latest edition⁶ is still far from well established.

¹ Epigr. 4, 14; 6, 64; 7, 63; 8, 66; 9, 86; 11, 48; 11, 49.

² Epis. 3, 7.

³ Tac. Hist. 3, 65; Epictet. Diss. 3, 8, 7; cf. also Charisius, Instit. gram. (Keil, Gram. Lat. 1, 125, 16).

⁴ Cf. H. Blass, *Die Textesquellen des Silius Italicus*, Jahr. class. Phil., sup. 8 (1875-1876), pp. 161-250.

⁵ From this edition by L. Bauer (Leipzig, 1890-92) all quotations in the following pages are taken.

With regard to the sources of the *Punica*, two general theories were promulgated. One was that Livy was the writer from whom Silius had gained most of his information and that such variations as appeared were traceable either to another account or to the poet's own imagination; the other was that the predecessor to whom Silius was indebted was not Livy, but one of the early annalists, possibly Fabius Pictor, transmitted through the *Annals* of Ennius.

The latter theory, proposed and vigorously maintained by Max Heynacher,¹ has met with but little favor. His position was approved, according to the testimony of Ludwig Bauer,² by Sieglin and Vollmer, and when his second treatise³ appeared in 1877, it received the following commendation from E. Baehrens: "in welcher ebenso umsichtigen wie fleissigen Arbeit der genaue Beweis geführt wird, dass Livius nicht die Hauptquelle des Silius war, sondern dass auch ein älterer Annalist, vielleicht Fabius Pictor, von ihm benutzt ist, somit also den *Punica* des Silius eine höhere Bedeutung als Geschichtsquelle zukommt, als bisher angenommen wurde." But with the exception of these three scholars, no others appear to have sanctioned this view.

On the other hand, Joannes Schlichteisen,⁴ Ludwig Bauer,⁵ J. S. van Veen,⁶ and Anton Arendt⁷ strongly op-

¹ Ueber die Quellen des *Silius Italicus*, Ilfeld, 1874.

² Das Verhältnis der *Punica* des C. Silius Italicus zur dritten Dekade des T. Livius, Erlangen, 1883, p. 4, n. 2; p. 59.

³ Ueber die Stellung des *Silius Italicus* unter den Quellen zum zweiten punischen Kriege, Nordhausen, 1877.

⁴ Jahresbericht über die römischen Epiker, Bursian's, Jahresber. 10 (1877), p. 62.

⁵ De fide historica *Silii Italici* quaestiones historicae et philologicae, Königsberg, 1881, p. 128.

⁶ Op. cit.

⁷ Quaestiones *Siliana*e, Leyden, 1884, pp. 60, 78.

⁸ *Syrakus* im zweiten punischen Kriege, Königsberg, 1899, pp. 110, 113, 114.

posed this belief in an annalistic source and advocated the former theory. Editors and investigators prior to Heynacher all maintained that the influence of Livy upon Silius was pre-eminent; even E. Wezel,¹ who considered that this phase of the matter had been treated sufficiently and sought rather, by means of many selected passages, to prove the additional influence of several other earlier authors, only proceeded to this course after first devoting a few pages to the primary claims of Livy. In fact the majority have held the position noted by Arendt (p. 114): "dass Livius Hauptquelle für Silius ist, dass dieser aber daneben noch andere Quellen eingesehen hat."

Among these other sources, Ennius is expressly mentioned by Wezel (chap. II), Bauer (p. 59), and van Veen (p. 7). The two latter make the general statement that Ennius exerted no small influence upon the work of Silius, but they do not discuss the question in detail. Wezel, however, devotes an entire chapter to an enumeration of passages from the *Punica*, which he thinks were suggested by lines from the *Annals* of the early poet. He has, I believe, detected some genuine similarities, but he has been justly criticised² for an over-zealous selection of fancied resemblances, many of which are, in truth, more imaginary than real.

Quite different from this theory of manifest indebtedness to Ennius are the opinions of G. Cosack, of Schlichteisen, and of Blass. Cosack's³ view of the matter is thus stated

¹ *De C. Silii Italici cum fontibus tum exemplis*, Leipzig, 1873, pp. 3, 4.

² Cf. Schlichteisen, p. 9; van Veen, p. 7; H. Blass, *Anz. v. E. Wezel de Silii Italici cum fontibus tum exemplis*, *Neue Jahrb. f. Phil. u. Paed.*, vol. 109 (1874), p. 510.

³ *Cosack's Quaestiones Silianae* (Halle, 1844), I have been unable to consult, but his opinion has been clearly stated by later scholars.

by van Veen (p. 10): "Quod ad fontes attinet, pro certo ponit, eum saepissime Livium esse secutum, Ennium contra, etiamsi fortasse Annales cognoverit, in carmine elaborando non adhibuisse." Schlichteisen, after a careful discussion of those parts of the third, fourth, and fifth books of the poem that are traceable to the poetical invention of the author and those that are traceable to other historical accounts, sums up his decision (p. 128) in favor of Cosack's view, attributing to Livy the greatest influence and adding: "Annalium scriptores vetustos eum quasi duces narrationis secutum esse minime apparet vel, si nonnumquam inspexit, certe demonstrari non potest." Blass says (p. 506): "Dass Ennius von Silius gekannt und gelesen worden sei, glaube ich gern. Etwas anderes ist es aber, ob nach dem Stande unserer Kenntnis sich das beweisen lasse. Ich mag es nicht absolut verneinen, halte aber doch die Beweise für sehr problematisch."

Anton Kerer,¹ while not explicitly denying the influence of Ennius, shows by his ardent effort to prove indebtedness to Livy in the first four books of the *Punica* that he leaves no room for the claims of Ennius. In fact he and Heynacher, though arriving at entirely different results, were evidently led to their conclusions by similar fallacious reasoning, due to the influence of the so-called single source theory, which was at one time maintained so persistently in regard to writers of Roman history and was not successfully refuted until the last decade.

Wezel, too, shows the effect of this theory in yet another way. He does not claim for the *Punica*, as a whole, dependence upon any one previous writer, but recognizes its debt to many; yet he usually detects the influence of these predecessors only in separate passages, one apart from the

¹Ueber die Abhängigkeit des C. Silius Italicus von Livius. Bozen, 1880-81.