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# “DIC SI QUID POTES DE SEXTO ANNALI”: THE LITERARY LEGACY OF ENNIUS’S PYRRHIC WAR<sup>1</sup>

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According to Quintilian, when Cicero was asked in court to comment in response to a hostile witness called Sextus Annalis,<sup>2</sup> he launched into the opening line of the sixth book of Ennius’s *Annales* (164): “Quis potis ingentis oras evolvere belli,” “Who can open up the mighty realms of war?”

Virgil admired this line and incorporated it into his internal proem to the *aristeia* of Turnus at *Aeneid* 9.528:<sup>3</sup> his learned commentators, Macrobius (*Sat.* 6.1.18) and the augmented version of Servius, recognized its Ennian origin, as did the grammarian Diomedes.<sup>4</sup> But how many of Virgil’s countless readers would have known where this archaic sounding verse

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1 There can be no student or lover of Ennius who is not heavily indebted to Otto Skutsch for the scrupulous, learned, and modest scholarship of *The Annals of Q. Ennius* (Oxford 1985), but I would like to record here my personal gratitude for both his salutary severity and his patient support and guidance when I was a struggling graduate student. In offering these comments on Book 6, I have gone beyond him only in explaining and interpreting the texts at a lower and more accessible level than his great edition.

2 Quint. 6.3.86: “Dissimulavit Cicero, cum Sex. Annalis testis reum laesisset et instaret identidem accusator: ‘dic, M. Tulli, si quid potes de Sexto Annali’; versus enim dicere coepit de libro Enni Annali sexto” (“Cicero was pretending to misunderstand when the witness Sex. Annalis was harming the defendant and the prosecutor repeatedly urged him to ‘speak M. Tullius, if you have anything to say, about Sextus Annalis’ . . . for Cicero began to cite lines from Ennius’s sixth book of *Annals*”).

3 On this and other Virgilian borrowings from Ennius, see Wigodsky 1972.55. To add to the archaic or heroic effect of this passage, Virgil incorporates the Ennian monosyllabic ending *summa . . . opum vi* (cf. Ennius *Ann.* 151, 405) at 9.532 (Wigodsky 1972.43–44).

4 See Servius *Auctus* at 9.526, Diomedes *GL* 1.386 Keil.

originated? The testimonia for this opening line neatly represent the three main types of source for what survives of the *Annales*: Cicero (here indirectly),<sup>5</sup> Virgil, as commented upon by his ancient critics, and the separate grammatical and antiquarian traditions of lexicography.

In aiming to “dicere si quid possum de sexto Annali,” I have two goals: to reconstruct what we know of this important book from the approximately forty lines identified and preserved,<sup>6</sup> and to show what kind of use was made of this text by the different citators and how they have contributed to our inadequate knowledge of this great epic. As Werner Suerbaum notes (1995.51), Knut Kleve’s exciting identification of *PHerc.* 21 as containing Ennius’s Book 6 has brought no fundamental changes in our knowledge of the text: it has, however, shown that two passages of the *Annales* which the indirect tradition left *incertae sedis* actually occur in this book, of which one (*Ann.* 469–70) uses the topos of inexpressibility to add the emotional intensity of expectation to the narrative, and the other (*Ann.* 555–56) confirms Jupiter’s active involvement and is likely to have followed soon after *Annales* 203.<sup>7</sup>

We know too little about Rome’s war with Pyrrhus, and neither the tedious rhetorical elaborations of surviving excerpts from Dionysius<sup>8</sup> nor the strange romanticised biography of Plutarch (who depends partly on the third-century Hieronymus of Cardia<sup>9</sup> and partly on Dionysius of

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5 This example (which presupposes that a significant proportion of the audience would recognize the Ennian quotation) is uncharacteristic and should be contrasted with the other four substantial excerpts of *Annals* 6 which Cicero quotes (and identifies) for their moral and rhetorical content. The context of Cicero’s witticism cannot be recovered, but if he spoke in court, it is likely to have been earlier than the treatises in which his other quotations occur. Cicero was conscious that contemporaries collected his witticisms (cf. *Fam.* 7.32 to Volumnius Eutrapelus and *Fam.* 15.21 to Trebonius). It is likely that Quintilian was able to draw on more than one collection.

6 This can only be approximate because Skutsch has included in his fragments of Book 6 a line and a half (173–74) printed by Vahlen in Book 16. We will discuss below the disputed frag. xii (191–94).

7 These are *PHerc.* 21 pezzii V 2 and 3. See Kleve 1990.8–9, discussed by Suerbaum 1995.40–43, who notes that the fragments confirm the special pathos with which Ennius treated this war (45).

8 The excerpts concerning war with Pyrrhus preserved from Book 19.8 to the end of Book 20 derive from two collections, a ms. of material about embassies (*Peri Presbeion*) and a miscellaneous ms. from the Ambrosian library in Milan.

9 On the Pyrrhic material in Hieronymus, see Hornblower 1981.138–43. Plutarch quotes Hieronymus at 17.7, 21.12, and 27.8 (Hieronymus frags. 11, 12, and 14 Jacoby).

Halicarnassus,<sup>10</sup> and spends far too much time on rivalries between post-Alexandrian *condottieri*) can compensate for the loss of Livy's twelfth and thirteenth books. To paraphrase and summarize the *periochae*: after Rome invaded Tarentine territory to prosecute her wars against the Samnites in 281, the democrats of Tarentum called in Pyrrhus of Epirus, who offered to arbitrate with Rome. After rejecting Pyrrhus's offer, Valerius Laevinus, one of the consuls of 280, confronted him in battle at Heraclea and was badly defeated, but persevered, achieving a modest victory near Capua. When the senate sent Fabricius and two other elders to negotiate the recovery of the prisoners, Pyrrhus offered to return them without ransom, probably on condition that the Romans would agree to make peace. However, despite this generous act, when his envoy Cineas came to Rome, the senate was shamed into refusing to make peace by the denunciation of the blind Appius Claudius, and Cineas left empty handed.

The following year, Pyrrhus defeated the consuls P. Sulpicius and P. Decius Mus at Ausculum, but although the Roman casualties were greater, the loss of men to Pyrrhus's expeditionary force was so great that he declared he could not afford another such victory.<sup>11</sup> It was probably in this year that Fabricius sent Pyrrhus's treacherous doctor back to the king and warned him of the treachery. But Pyrrhus found his victory so costly in manpower that he left Italy, gratefully accepting an invitation to join the intra- community fighting in Sicily. He would soon find himself unwelcome in Syracuse and returned to Italy to campaign again against Rome, which defeated him at the battle of Beneventum in 275.

Ennius's sixth book, dealing with Rome's first engagements against a Greek commander, was obviously read with more attention by Romans of the later republic and empire than any book between the first Romulean narrative and the triad dealing with the two Punic wars (*Ann.* 7–9). This first Greek penetration of Italy might serve as a test case for the popular question: what would have happened if Alexander himself had turned his attention westwards? Could Rome have withstood him? Livy chooses to debate this

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10 Although Polybius (12.4b), Cicero (*Fam.* 5.12.2), and Dionysius (1.6.1) all mention the monograph on the wars of Pyrrhus by his older contemporary Timaeus, Plutarch never mentions it, and Pearson 1987.49–50 and 255–59 notes that Hieronymus, Phylarchus, and Duris were all writing histories of the same period about the same time as Timaeus: since all three are lost, it is not possible to tell what material the others took from Timaeus.

11 Plutarch attributes this remark to the aftermath of Ausculum, but Orosius (4.1.15, representing the lost narrative of Livy) to the first battle, Heraclea.

issue at length after Rome's terrible defeat by the Samnite ambush at the Caudine forks,<sup>12</sup> which surely means that he did not raise the issue in the lost Pyrrhic books, but Plutarch did. For Ennius, it seems, the confrontation with the supposed descendant of Achilles offered more promise when interpreted in moral and patriotic than in tactical terms.

We must always guard against assuming that the excerpts which have come down to us (forty lines are probably less than five percent of Ennius's sixth book) are representative of its author's choice of subject, rather than his readers' response, and I shall try to avoid this error by concentrating on what our Roman sources valued in their reading of this book. This is why fragments quoted from Skutsch's text will be grouped here for discussion according to their Roman sources, rather than in the approximate chronological sequence that he has given to them.

Let me start then with Cicero, whose quotation *quis potis* . . . has naturally been taken as Ennius's proem not only to the sixth book but to his separate narrative of the Pyrrhic war. But caution is needed. We do not know the chronological limits of this or adjacent books.<sup>13</sup> It is almost certain that Ennius dealt with Pyrrhus's second expedition into Italy and the victory of Beneventum in Book 6, but no identifiable excerpt of the *Annals* deals with those events. More seriously, as T. J. Cornell argues (1986a) in his review article welcoming Skutsch's great edition, the eight rather generic lines identified as coming from Book 5 do not make it possible to determine whether Ennius completed his treatment of the Samnite wars within that book or included some of the campaigns in the sixth book with the war against Pyrrhus. It might not seem difficult per se to follow Cornell's suggestion of translating this opening line: "Who is capable of unrolling the mighty realms—or confines—of warfare?" rather than "of this war," but while *bellum* can be used generically for warfare in Lucretius, as Cornell

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12 This was in 320, immediately after Alexander's death; but Livy also placed his debate strategically where it would have most effect in offsetting the humiliation of the Caudine surrender.

13 Thus Vahlen 1903.clxx–clxxi infers the contents of Books 4 and 5 from the assumed end of 3 with the Gallic siege of Rome and beginning of 6 with the Italian expedition of Pyrrhus. On 6, he notes (clxxiv): "sexti annalis narrationem per fila quaedam retexere atque poetae vim et ingenium sentire sinunt fragmenta . . . Pyrrho enim, nec vero aliis rebus praeter Pyrrhum hic liber dicatus est" ("The fragments allow us to retrace the narrative of the sixth book along certain threads and to feel the power and intellect of the poet . . . for this book is devoted to Pyrrhus and not really to any other material besides Pyrrhus"). He prints only one fragment not included in Skutsch's edition of 6 (relegated by Skutsch to *frag. spuria* 1).

pointed out in his follow-up to Skutsch's reply,<sup>14</sup> it could hardly denote a series of separate wars. Nor does it seem likely that Ennius would choose to sound such a drum roll before narrating (or continuing) the Samnite wars, rather than at the moment of Rome's first conflict with an army from mainland Greece.

But there is a stronger, if indirect, historical argument for suggesting that the sixth book may have included earlier warfare: this is the excerpt from a speech by a Roman commander committing *devotio*. This prayer is cited by Nonius 150.5 as from *Ennius Annalium liber VI* (*Ann.* 191–94):

diui hoc audite parumper:  
Ut pro Romano populo prognariter armis  
Certando prudens animam de corpore mitto,  
<Sic>

O gods, harken a moment to this, how I deliberately with  
foreknowledge surrender the soul from my body battling  
under arms for the Roman people.<sup>15</sup>

One aspect of the problem is that tradition disputes that there was a *devotio* at the battle of Ausculum by the youngest of the three Decii Mures. If it took place, it failed, for the Romans were defeated; it may even have failed in another way, since there is evidence that Decius (minimus), the consul of 279, lived on after the battle.<sup>16</sup> Would it not be more likely that this prayer of self-sacrifice belongs to Decius's father, the victorious commander at Sentinum in 295? Ennius must have narrated this successful *devotio* in his account of the famous victory. Indeed, he is likely to have narrated both the preceding self-sacrifices of Decius's grandfather at the river Vesperis and father at Sentinum: are we to imagine that he composed three recognizably similar ritual prayers before each of the *devotiones*? This is why Paulus Merula, as Skutsch reports,<sup>17</sup> thought it necessary to change the book number in Nonius to *liber V*, so as to put this quotation into the

<sup>14</sup> Cornell 1987, replying to Skutsch 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

<sup>16</sup> See Skutsch 1985 ad loc., citing Broughton 1951–52.1.202 n. 2 for the suffect consul Decius at the battle of Volsinii in 265. Cf. also Cornell 1987.515, disputing the reliability of the only source, Aurelius Victor *de Viris Illustribus* 36.2.

<sup>17</sup> I do not have access to Merula's edition and quote him from Skutsch's reports.

previous generation of Samnite wars. We might even argue that since Nonius is quoting this formula of self-sacrifice for the rare form *prognariter*, he would have cited either its earliest incidence or its most glorious occasion, at Sentinum; but that is to suppose that Ennius was adhering to the same formulation for each *devotio*. And Livy, who narrates the devotions of both the grandfather in 340 and father in 295, offers quite different language, which is thought to be of his own creation.<sup>18</sup>

Now Cicero tells us twice that all three Decii, father, son, and grandson,<sup>19</sup> devoted themselves before battle, but while Livy offers a full narrative of the first two self-sacrifices, there is no separate account of any *devotio* by the grandson at Ausculum. One possibility canvassed by both Skutsch and Cornell is that Decius minimus (who must have been under dreadful moral pressure to repeat the family trick) offered himself in *devotio*, but it was either rejected by the gods (this would presumably show itself immediately through some portent), or thwarted by Pyrrhus.<sup>20</sup> Such a rejection is compatible with both his survival and the defeat,<sup>21</sup> but would also discourage historians from celebrating the act.<sup>22</sup> Yet no one would be surprised that Cicero chose to maximize the rhetorical impact of these self-sacrifices (after his exile, he often saw himself in this light),<sup>23</sup> and it

18 See Livy 8.9.6–8, 10.28.15–18. Skutsch's arguments are reinforced by the detailed discussion of *devotio* and the historicity of the successive self-sacrifices of the Decii in Oakley 1998.477–80. Oakley considers the *devotio* at the river Vesis quite possible, that of Sentinum to be certain, and the likelihood of any *devotio* at Ausculum extremely remote.

19 Cf. *Fin.* 2.61, *Tusc.* 1.89. But there are at least three occasions when Cicero speaks only of the first two Decii: *Sest.* 48, *Parad.* 1.12, and *Off.* 3.16.

20 See Skutsch 1987.514: "He tried to lend it weight and credibility by detailed treatment because he either invented it, or was supporting an obscure variant." Cf. also Cornell 1987.515: "It is still possible that Decius did follow the family tradition and actually performed a *devotio* at Ausculum; but if so it did not produce the desired result (i.e., a Roman victory). That would explain why the *devotio*, if it happened, was not publicized after the event, and why it did not pass into the historical tradition."

21 Skutsch 1987.514 denies that Ausculum was a Roman defeat, Cornell 1987.515 affirms that Pyrrhus won the battle; they cite different authorities, but whoever remained master of the field at the end of the day, it was this battle that convinced Pyrrhus he could not afford another "victory."

22 Cf. Skutsch's earlier comment (1972b.15) on historians' omission of the failed *devotio* of Decius Mus at Ausculum.

23 Cicero speaks either explicitly or implicitly of his own *devotio* in *Sest.* 48 (after an allusion to the Decii) and in *Dom.* 145: "meque atque meum caput ea condicione devovi . . . hanc ego devotionem capitis mei cum ero in meas sedes restitutus, tum denique convictam esse et commissam putabo" ("I devoted my person and my status on these terms . . . I shall only think this act of self-devotion complete when I am restored to my own home

is perhaps no more surprising if Ennius, too, wanted to give the youngest Decius Mus the same heroic act as his father at Sentinum in 295 and his grandfather in the previous generation of wars. We cannot know how Ennius described the battle of Ausculum, hence how or whether he would have felt it necessary to explain away an unsuccessful *devotio*.

So far we have considered this fragment and Cicero's allusions to *devotio* only in relation to the historical record, not to Ennius. On the other hand, if we turn to the other occasions where Cicero expressly quotes Ennius's Pyrrhic narrative,<sup>24</sup> we find they are concerned not with battle but with rhetoric and a gentleman's code of warfare. In *de Divinatione* 2.116, the rhetoric of Ennius's oracle "aio te Aeacida Romanos vincere posse" ("I declare, son of Aeacus, that you the Romans can defeat," *Ann.* 167) offers scope for Cicero's skepticism on the theme of divination. He has already disputed the historicity of the Delphic reply to Croesus given by Herodotus. Now he disputes more strongly the Ennian oracle given to Pyrrhus on both historical and psychological grounds: Apollo never spoke in Latin and had ceased to give oracles in verse before the time of Pyrrhus; besides this oracle is unknown to the Greek sources. But in any case, even the unimaginative descendants of Aeacus would not have been taken in by this crude ambiguity, although (*Ann.* 197–98):

stolidum genus Aeacidarum:  
Bellipotentēs sunt magis quam sapientipotentēs

The brutish clan of Aeacus's descent are powerful in war  
rather than in wisdom.

Skutsch was understandably critical of the notion that these lines were Ennius's own judgment on Pyrrhus's failure to read the oracle, arguing persuasively that Cicero would not have bothered to cite Ennius's criticism if these lines had already served that purpose in the original text. He suggests either construing them as the derisive comment of a third party at a later point in the narrative or assigning them to Pyrrhus himself, mockingly quoting another's evaluation of his family (in negotiation, for example),

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[and position]"). In *Fam.* 6.6.6, where he compares himself to Amphiaraus, he cites a tragic fragment containing the formulaic *prudens et sciens*, equivalent of *prognariter*.

24 On Cicero's knowledge and use of Ennius, see Skutsch 1985.26–30 and Zillinger 1911.97–107.



while asserting the greater importance of his military arts.<sup>25</sup> It is clear why the contrast between unimaginative military expertise and intellectual acumen appealed to Cicero's own preference for words over warfare and his resistance to Roman glorification of military leaders. But if Cicero saw reason to believe Ennius had invented this oracular response, he certainly did not think less of him for his invention; by the same token, his own attitude to rhetorical prose history,<sup>26</sup> let alone poetry, might lead him to find three *devotiones* better than two for his own argument, and we could expect them for the same reasons in Ennius.

It is natural for Cicero to savor passages that either demonstrate rhetorical power or explicitly praise it. (Plutarch, too, in his life of Pyrrhus, singles out the eloquence of the Thessalian envoy Cineas for praise: "Eloquence carries all before it," *Pyrrhus* 14.1–2.) Oratory had become increasingly important in international dealings, as states and empires relying on mercenary soldiers aimed to avoid unnecessary conflict: for Pyrrhus, who had set himself up as a professional *condottiere*, it was a matter of policy to spare his forces through timely negotiation and to change sides in the direction where his interests lay. The Romans were clearly formidable adversaries, and he hoped to reach an alliance with them either in person or through Cineas. This is the occasion of another Ciceronian citation, a famous instance of deliberative *dissuasio*: Appius Claudius Caecus's impassioned rebuke of the senate for considering negotiations with Pyrrhus (*Ann.* 199–200):

Quo vobis mentes, rectae quae stare solebant  
Antehac, dementes sese flexere †via <sup>27</sup>

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25 Gratwick 1987 may be right to insist that the speaker is, in fact, Pyrrhus, but his proposal of *sapientipetentes* is over-ingenious, inventing an unattested form that actually spoils the symmetry of the antithesis.

26 The classic illustration of this is *Brut.* 42, where he invites Atticus to quote a melodramatic end for Themistocles: "quidem concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis, ut aliquid dicere possint argutius" ("Certainly rhetoricians are allowed to falsify in their historical writings so as to express something more effectively").

27 As in *oras* . . . *evolvere*, which combines opening a narrative as unrolling a book and beginning and end seen as spatial boundaries, so *rectae stare* uses a different image—that of standing upright in resistance—from *de via flectere*, the more common image of deviating from the straight and narrow course of reason or justice (e.g., *Verr.* 2.5.176: "si qui tantulum de recta regione deflexerit," "if anyone has deviated only a little from the straight course").

Where have your minds, which formerly used to stand up  
straight, mindlessly turned away from the path?

Skutsch offers a range of epic parallels for this kind of reproof, from Hecuba's denunciation in the *Iliad* to the recurring *quis furor* of Virgil and Lucan.<sup>28</sup> Cicero has quoted the lines as an incomparable illustration of the authority of veteran statesmen (*Sen.* 16), and adds that Ennius has expressed in verses the argument of Appius's speech, which is still available. Earlier references in *Brutus* 55 ("possumus Appium Claudium suspicari disertum, quia senatus iamiam inclinatum a Pyrrhi pace revocaverit," "We may guess that Appius Claudius was eloquent, since he dissuaded the senate from the peace treaty with Pyrrhus which they had all but accepted") and 61 ("nisi quem Appi Caeci oratio haec ipsa de Pyrrho . . . forte delecta(n)t," "unless someone is charmed by this same speech of Appius Caecus about Pyrrhus"), confirm that he knew a text believed to be Appius's actual speech, but it seems less likely that either Plutarch or Appian consulted this text for their versions.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, both seem to represent the same rhetorical topos cited from Ennius by Donatus on Terence *Phormio* 821: "sed ego hic animo lamentor," "But here I am lamenting from my heart" (*Ann.* 201). Cineas's failure in this negotiation is represented by a single succinct line of Book 6, quoted by Varro in his *de Lingua Latina* for the original sense of *orator* as "envoy, intercessor": "orator sine pace redit regique refert rem" ("The envoy returned without the peace treaty and reported the affair to the king," *Ann.* 202; Varro *LL* 7.41).

Although we are digressing from Book 6 itself, it is relevant to the common intellectual and rhetorical values of Ennius and Cicero to recall

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28 *Il.* 24.201–02: "Alas, where has the wisdom gone for which you were famous in time before, among outlanders and those you rule over?" Cf. *Aen.* 2.42: *quae tanta insania, cives* ("What is this great madness, fellow citizens?") and 5.670: *quis furor iste novus* ("What is this new onset of frenzy?"). Cf. also Lucan 1.8: *quis furor, o cives*. Once again, Gratwick 1987.169 offers an adventurous conjecture: "quo vobis mentes rectae? quae stare solebant / antehac, dementes sese flexere viai?" He may be right to argue for retaining the genitive *viai* and construing it with *dementes* rather than *flexere*, but the fact that he needs to gloss his rewriting with a (somewhat strained) translation, "Whither are your minds aimed? (The minds) which ere now were wont to be constant, have they reversed themselves unmindful of their way?" speaks for the improbability of this new punctuation of the text.

29 Cf. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 19.1–4, Appian *Sam.* 10.2–6 (taken from the collected excerpts *Peri Presbeion*).

an Ennian passage describing how the onset of war devalued eloquence at Rome and privileged the soldier's steel (*Ann.* 8.247–53):

*proelia promulgantur;*  
 Pellitur e medio sapientia, ui geritur res;  
 Spernitur orator bonus, horridus miles amatur;  
 Haud doctis dictis certantes, nec maledictis  
 Miscent inter sese inimicitias agitantes;  
 Non ex iure manu consertum, sed magis ferro—  
 Rem repetunt regnumque petunt—uadunt solida ui

[When battles are declared] wisdom is driven from public life and business achieved by violence. The good speaker is despised, the rough soldier embraced. Then men contest with each other, not conducting their enmities in learned or abusive language. They set out with brute force to engage not according to the law but rather with the steel—they claim restitution and seek domination.

It is hardly surprising that this commentary on the abandonment of the process of law and eloquence in favor of force of arms led an existence independent of the main text. It is partially cited three times by Cicero, and only given in its complete form two centuries later by Gellius, one of Ennius's most enthusiastic readers and advocates in the age of archaism.<sup>30</sup> Like Terence in his prologues, Ennius achieved in his poetry a level of rhetorical power only found in prose a century later with Cicero's speeches.

It is also natural for Cicero to turn to Ennius for his illustration of Scipio Aemilianus's portrait of the ideal statesman in *de Re Publica* 3.6. The impressive *laudatio* of Manius Curius as a model of Roman valor and morality "quem nemo ferro potuit superare nec auro," "whom no man could overcome whether by steel or gold" (*sed. inc.* 456), may not have occurred in the narrative context of his refusal to be bribed by Pyrrhus but on the occasion of his death, or even cited later as an exemplum. Hence Skutsch has kept it among the unassigned fragments, but he is strongly inclined to

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30 Cf. Gellius 20.10.4. Cicero quotes only the first three lines at *Mur.* 30, and lines 252–53 in letters to the lawyer Trebatius (*Fam.* 7.13) and to Atticus (*Att.* 15.7) about the jurist Servius Sulpicius. Not only was Gellius apparently able to consult the complete text of the *Annales*, but he reports in 18.5.1–2 a public recitation of the *Annales* at Puteoli.

assign it to Book 6. Ennius was clearly fond of the symbolism of the two metals, gold and steel, but perhaps with a more positive valuation of steel than we find in Cicero himself.

Like Polybius (6.56.1–5), Cicero prized the belief that earlier Romans were incorruptible—the same code of values demonstrated in the praise of Curius's integrity will recur in the longer excerpt from Pyrrhus's speech offering the return of the prisoners.<sup>31</sup> Both Greek and Roman sources present Pyrrhus as a model of chivalry and noblesse oblige, but Pyrrhus was not only a Macedonian king, he liked to claim he was descended from Achilles,<sup>32</sup> conspicuous for his magnanimity in restoring Hector's body to Priam. Cicero quotes Pyrrhus's speech in *de Officiis* 1.38 as an example of the kind of restraint possible in a conflict not for survival but for supremacy (*imperium*). Here, he says, is "regalis sane et digna Aeacidarum genere sententia," "a statement truly royal and worthy of the clan of Aeacus." It was also magnificent rhetoric, with its powerful balanced and antithetical clauses (*Ann.* 183–90):

Nec mi aurum posco nec mi pretium dederitis:  
Non cauponantes bellum sed belligerantes  
Ferro, non auro uitam cernamus utrique.  
Vosne velit an me regnare era quidve ferat Fors  
Virtute experiamur, et hoc simul accipe dictum:  
Quorum uirtuti belli fortuna pepercit  
Eorundem me libertati parcere certum est.  
Dono—ducite—doque uolentibus cum magnis dis.

I am not asking for gold, nor should you be giving me  
a ransom: let both sides determine life and death not by  
bargaining but by waging war, by steel not gold. Let us  
test by valor whether mistress Fortune wills you or me to  
rule, and take note of this too: if the fortune of war has

31 The saying was attributed to Alexander that gold could defeat an enemy impervious to the steel of warfare; cf. Dionysius 20.6 on the gold of a king and Hor. *Odes* 3.16.9–15: "aurum per medios ire satellites . . . amat . . . vir Macedo et subruit aemulos / reges muneribus" ("Gold delights to pass through the midst of bodyguards, and the Macedonian undermined rival kings with gifts").

32 Cf. Hornblower 1981.195. He also modeled himself on other Homeric heroes; cf. his quotation of Hector (*Il.* 7.242–43) in Dionysius 20.6.1: "Yet great as you are, I would not strike you by stealth, watching for my chance, but openly, so if perhaps I might hit you."

spared any men's valor, I am resolved to spare their liberty. I make a gift of them—take them away—and I give them with the goodwill of the great gods.

The last line quoted by Cicero—surely the last line of Pyrrhus's own speech—is striking in the metrical form and solemn language of *volentibus cum magnis dis*, a *spondeiazon* ending in a monosyllable, to create a clash of accent and ictus in both the fifth and sixth feet. Ennius has other spondaic hexameter endings, and cultivates the effect of final monosyllables (cf. 202 and 203 discussed below), but the combination, achieved with an inversion of the standard *cum dis volentibus*, is exceptional. Are Virgil's two instances of final *magnis dis*, at *Aeneid* 3.12 and 8.679 imitations of Ennius? As R. B. Lloyd points out (1956), neither Servius nor Macrobius recognize in *penatibus et magnis dis* any borrowing from his epic predecessor, and there is a good reason. The metrical pattern is the same in both poets, and Virgil may have consciously adapted "Ennius's peculiar rhythm . . . spondaic and monosyllabic in ending" (Lloyd 1956.39), but the reference is completely different. Both Aeneas and Augustus are depicted with the Penates, known as *DI MAGNI* from the inscription on their temple on the Velia, whereas Pyrrhus here can intend only the most general sense of *magnis dis*.

The other problem generated by this line is the syntax binding *volentibus cum magnis dis* to the main verbs. Citing Plautus *Miles* 1351 and *Persa* 332, Skutsch argues for taking it with *ducite*, and linking *doque* only to the preceding *dono*. Here I agree with Sander Goldberg<sup>33</sup> that the adverbial phrase must continue and complete the meaning of *doque*. I would add that it is precisely the declaration of divine support (*volentibus cum magnis dis*) that gives point to the general verb of giving (*do*) after the more specific verb of making a gift (*dono*). "I make you a gift of them—take them away—and it is with the great gods' goodwill that I give them." The whole speech, with its ideology of liberty as the reward of valor vouchsafed by both Fortune and the gods, must have been a favorite with teachers of rhetoric well before Cicero used it to make his moral argument in *de Officiis*.

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33 Goldberg 1995.101–02; see also 24–25, where he argues that Virgil not only makes Aeneas less generous than Pyrrhus at *Aen.* 10.532–33 ("belli commercia Turnus / sustulit ista prior . . .," "Turnus was first to abolish these exchanges in war"), but uses the image to draw his readers' attention to the contrast between Pyrrhus and the Trojan hero. Gratwick 1987.168 offers another ingenious but unhelpful conjecture: *do, non ducitis, doque*.

We cannot expect other sources for the citations to come with so much interpretive context: Macrobius, indeed, although he has preserved six excerpts from Book 6, is content to set his Virgilian examples and their Ennian models baldly side by side without comment. But something can be gained for our understanding of Ennius from a more intertextual approach to the Virgilian echoes and their contexts for hints of possible similar contexts in his Ennian models. We saw that the opening line of Book 6 with its *ingentis oras . . . belli*, was echoed by Virgil in a quasi-Homeric proem appealing to Calliope to help him record the *aristeia* of Turnus in Book 9. Similarly, as Skutsch suggests (1985.336 ad loc.), when Virgil reused the second half of “balantum pecudes quatit, omnes arma requirunt” (*Ann.* 169) for the Italian rush to war in *Aeneid* 7.625, Ennius, too, may have been describing a rush to arms—that of the Romans as Pyrrhus marched northwards into Apulia—by invoking a simile of shepherds reaching for arms when their “bleating flocks” are attacked by the wolf.

Another Macrobian citation (*Ann.* 173), “†Decimo tamen induvolans secum abstulit hasta” apropos of *Aeneid* 12.493, *hasta tulit*, has been restored to Book 6 from a distortion in the text that converted “Ennius in sexto ‘Decio tamen’” to “Ennius in sexto decimo.” The hurtling spear which Virgil has borrowed from Ennius belongs in a battle scene,<sup>34</sup> like the lacunose *Ann.* 195–96: “aut animo superant atque asp < >rima / < >fera belli spernunt” (the line is damaged and can only be roughly translated: “or they are victorious through courage and despite the <savage ferocity> of the war”), and has been plausibly associated with an episode at the battle of Heraclea, where Pyrrhus’s companion Megacles exchanged armor with the king. Misled by the borrowed armor, a Roman ally called Dexoos or Dexios (Plutarch’s mss. disagree at *Pyrrhus* 17.4) kills Megacles and falsely reports to the commander that he has killed Pyrrhus, temporarily disrupting the combat. It is another mark of Skutsch’s caution that he feels it necessary to obelize Decio in this line.

The most familiar of Macrobius’s citations of Virgil against his Ennian model is the parallel between *Aeneid* 6.179–82 and Ennius *Annales* 175–79 cited in *Saturnalia* 6.2.27. This famous woodcutting scene was developed by both Ennius and Virgil from the felling of Mount Ida for the

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34 Virgil’s *incita* . . . *hasta* stands in for *induvolans*, Ennius’s archaic by-form of *involans*, comparable to his by-form *induperator* at 78, 322, 347, and 577 (see Skutsch 1985 at 78). Cf. also *induperantum* (*Ann.* 412).

funeral pyre of Patroclus.<sup>35</sup> Neither Ennius nor Virgil imitated the simple Homeric narrative prototype,<sup>36</sup> but Virgil clearly shows his admiration for Ennius's lines. Since Virgil first imitates elements in Ennius's treatment, then goes on in *Aeneid* 11.135–38 to imitate both Ennius and his own earlier version, I will quote all three Latin texts, italicizing Virgil's echoes of both Ennius and himself (*Ann.* 175–79):

Incedunt arbusta per alta, securibus caedunt,  
 Percellunt magnas quercus, exciditur ilex,  
 Fraxinus frangitur atque abies consternitur alta,  
 Pinus proceras peruortunt; omne sonabat  
 Arbustum fremitu siluai frondosai.

They stride through the lofty trees and fell them with axes;  
 they strike down mighty oaks, the holm-oak is hacked  
 down, the ash is shattered, and the lofty pine laid low,  
 they throw down slender pines: every bush of the leafy  
 woodland resounded with the din.

*Aeneid* 6.179–82:

Itur in antiquam siluam, stabula alta ferarum.  
 Procumbunt piceae, *sonat* icta *securibus ilex*  
*Fraxineaeque* trabes cuneis et fissile robur  
 Scinditur, aduoluunt ingentes montibus ornos.

They enter an ancient forest, the deep lairs of wild beasts:  
 pitch pines tumble and the holm-oak resounds with axe  
 blows, ash logs are split with wedges, and the oak easy to  
 splinter, they roll up huge rowans from the mountains.

*Aeneid* 11.135–38:

ferro *sonat* *alta* bipenni  
*Fraxinus*, evertunt actas ad sidera *pinus*,

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35 On this passage as a “test case for comparison and contrast between Virgil’s and Ennius’s Homer-imitation,” see Hinds 1998.12–14.

36 *Il.* 23.114–20 cites only one kind of tree (the high-branching oaks). There is no rhetorical distribution or assonance but a simple enumeration of process: the felling, the mighty crash of the trees, and the splitting of the trunks before they are carted away by pack mules.

*Robora nec cuneis et olentem scindere cedrum  
Nec plaustreis cessant vectare gementibus ornos.*

The lofty ash resounds with the double axe; they overthrow pines that have thrust themselves skywards; they are not slow to split oakwood and the fragrant cedar with wedges nor to convey rowans on groaning wagons.

Skutsch and other scholars before and after him have rightly praised Virgil's artistry, but there is also, as Skutsch brought out in his early paper,<sup>37</sup> much to praise in Ennius. Where Virgil varies the syntax of his enumeration, Ennius, too, moves from active to passive verbs and varies the relation of his tricola of active (*incedunt . . . caedunt, / percellunt*) and passive phrases (*exciditur . . . / frangitur . . . consternitur*) to the metrical units, enriching each colon with assonance that matches verb to noun (*percellunt quercus, exciditur ilex, / fraxinus frangitur*). He has also created a ring composition from *arbusta* (175) to *omne . . . arbustum* (178–79) which Virgil does not imitate. Both Homer and Virgil in *Aeneid* 6 had introduced the tree-felling as preliminary to a hero's funeral; in *Aeneid* 11, the occasion is the burial of massive Italian battle casualties. Ennius's passage, too, is most likely the constructing of funeral pyres for the heavy casualties of either Hera-clea or Ausculum.

Ennius loved to evoke the movement of the stars to indicate the passage of time; one such line assigned by Macrobius (6.1.8) to Book 6 is “*vertitur interea caelum cum ingentibus signis*,” “Meanwhile, the sky revolves with its mighty constellations” (*Ann.* 205), echoed by Aeneas's narrative of the fatal night of Troy's fall at *Aeneid* 2.250: *vertitur interea caelum*. Such a celestial marker, especially with *vertere*, surely suggests that this change in the natural rhythm of the skies foreshadows a change of fortune: the night before a decisive battle, perhaps the night between the two successive battles at Heraclea. It could mark either the defeat of Ausculum or, possibly, the victory of Beneventum (Vahlen 1903.clxxviii), and Skutsch has placed it towards the end of the book.

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37 Compare Skutsch's analysis of Ennian structure in 1972b.22: “If one compares Virgil and others in the corresponding scenes, one sees that they aim at variety rather than that archaic stateliness . . . we simply have to recognize a different artistic attitude.” There is also a sensitive analysis in Gratwick 1982.71–72.



There may be a similar motivation behind the Ennian allusion to Jupiter preserved by Macrobius (*Sat.* 6.1.10): “tum cum corde suo diuom pater atque hominum rex / effatur,” “Then the father of gods and the king of men speaks with his heart” (*Ann.* 203–04), as the model for *Aeneid* 10.2, when Jupiter opens the council of the gods; but Virgil has echoed only the formulaic title “diuom pater atque hominum rex.” At first sight, *effatur* suggests that Jupiter is speaking aloud, either to a similar council of the gods (Ennius seems to have had such a council in Book 1), or in a divine dialogue with Juno at a turning point in the Hannibalic war. But as Skutsch has shown, *effari* need not describe speech, and *cum corde suo* certainly suggests soliloquy or silent deliberation.<sup>38</sup> Once again, it is likely that Jupiter appears in the sixth book in order to intervene and, surely, to change the course of the war in favor of Rome and her allies. The best such change, and one which could be seen as the product of Tyche/Fortuna or divine providence, was when Pyrrhus received and accepted the invitation to fight in Sicily—hence Skutsch puts it near the end of Book 6, rather than at its opening as Vahlen had done.

The antiquarian Festus (and his epitomator Paulus) have preserved much of the lore of Varro and the Augustan Verrius Flaccus on Roman religion and institutions, but in the case of Ennius’s sixth book, Festus’s contribution is concerned with language: the form *nauos* (the positive antithesis of *ig-nauos*) and the unusual masculine gender of *stirps*: his citations at 168, 412, and 364 Lindsay seem to have provided two lines from Ennius’s introduction of Pyrrhus: first “navos repertus homo, Graio patre, Graius homo, rex,” “A vigorous man was found, a Greek man of Greek parentage, and a king” (*Ann.* 165), then “nomine Burrus<sup>39</sup> uti memorant a stirpe supremo,” “Pyrrhus by name, as they report, of highest descent” (*Ann.* 166). The first is particularly suggestive, both through its striking rhythm in which there is a clash of ictus and accent on every word after *nauos* in the first foot, and an arresting final monosyllable, and for its implications. Skutsch interprets *repertus* as “found (as an ally) by the Tarentines,” and suggests that *rex* may not have stood emphatically alone “and a king to boot” but continued

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38 For *effari*, he compares Sen. *Phaedra* 1004; for a similar verb of speech combined with *cum corde suo*, *Ann.* 553 (*sed. inc.* xcv): “effudit voces proprio cum pectore sancto” (“He poured out utterances with his own holy heart”). This sounds weird, but so does the Latin—we expect *from* his own holy heart.

39 The form Burrus has now been identified by Kleve 1990 in pezzo VI.2 of the papyrus as occurring in the last verse of Book 6 (cf. Suerbaum 1995.51).

in enjambment, for example *rex / Epiri*. Fragment iii could follow almost immediately, but what followed *stirpe supremo*? Surely a reference to Achilles by name or to his descent, perhaps even *Aeacidarum*?

If Festus's citation, *>ntus in occulto mussabat*, "< ? > was muttering secretly" (Festus 384 Lindsay = *Ann.* 168), for the rare verb *mussare* seems too short to offer a context, the expressiveness of the verb and its recurring contexts provide a substantial clue to how Ennius must have used it. Both *mussare* and its frequentative *mussitare* occur regularly in Roman comedy of muttered or suppressed slave protests: Livy uses *mussare* to describe the silent discontent of the senators after Scipio's speech (28.40.21) and the frequentative for the protests of the enslaved Roman people against Tarquinius Superbus (1.50.3). Virgil applies the verb to the angry buzzing of his bees (*G.* 4.188), but it is much more to the point that the verb does not appear in the *Aeneid* until Book 11, where it is twice used of the discontent of Latin senate and people (345, 454), then twice again in 12, first of Latinus, now reduced to a subordinate position ("in te oculos referunt, mussat rex ipse Latinus," "They turn their eyes towards you, and King Latinus only mutters," 657), then in the simile comparing the onlookers of the duel between Aeneas and Turnus to the submissive herd of the fighting bulls (718). These recurring uses would tend to suggest to readers a growing oppression and loss of liberty of speech on the Latin side. *Mussare* is a political verb, and must in Ennius, too, have spoken of popular discontent, most likely of either Tarentines or Syracusans with Pyrrhus.

The text of *Annales* 170–72 ("Proletarius publicitus scutisque ferroque / Ornatur ferro. muros urbemque forumque / Excubiis curant," "By official order, the men without property are equipped with shields and fierce steel. They see to the walls and city and market square with watch-duties") is provided by both Gellius (16.10), in a detailed quasi-historical discussion of the Roman underclass at first excluded from the army then drafted by Marius as *capite censi*, and by Nonius 155.19; but just as Nonius seems to derive his quotation from Gellius, so Gellius is certainly reporting an older antiquarian's scholarly investigations.<sup>40</sup> What it means for Ennius is that he reported the emergency declared at Rome when even the underclass were drafted as reserves to guard the city in face of Pyrrhus's progress

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40 On Gellius's knowledge of Ennius, see Skutsch 1985.30–31; on Nonius, "who had no text of the *Annals*" and derived most of his citations either from glossaries or from Gellius, Skutsch 1985.38–40.

northwards, which may also be the context of *omnes arma requirunt* in *Annales* 169 discussed above.

I have left to the last the only fragment derived from an actual historical narrative, the epigram reported by Orosius (4.1.14) as dedicated by Pyrrhus in the temple of Tarentine Jupiter after the battle of Heraclea (*Ann.* 180–82):

qui antehac  
Inuicti fuere uiri, pater optume Olympi,  
Hos ego ui pugna uici uictusque sum ab isdem

Best Father of Olympus, those men never yet defeated  
I defeated by force in battle, but was also defeated by  
them.

Where did Orosius find this? Not in the temple of Tarentine Jupiter, nor would Pyrrhus have publicized his sense of defeat in this fashion or made it a reproach to the father of the gods. If the father of Olympus brings a whiff of Homeric epic, the epithet *optume* recalls the Roman Jupiter Optimus Maximus—and *invicti* surely confirms a Roman author. Vahlen's apparatus acknowledges that the lines could not be compressed into an epigram (hexameter plus pentameter) or even two hexameters, and Skutsch has acted upon this, moving the metrically awkward *qui antehac* to form the sixth foot of a preceding line. Did Orosius find it in Livy? If so, surely Livy must have been quoting Ennius? It certainly smacks of Ennius, and if it is his work, it would explain why this dedicatory epigram is couched in Ennius's epic meter of continuous hexameters. Should we not also consider the actual tale of the epigram as the invention of Ennius, and add it to the other two instances of the poet's fictive powers: the fictive oracle and the possibly fictive *devotio*? Given the address to Jupiter—who as we saw, must finally have intervened later in this book—what other context is possible for the king's admission of defeat?

According to Plutarch (*Pyrrhus* 8.5), Hannibal declared that Pyrrhus was the best of all generals in experience and skill (*empeiria kai dei-notêti*); he placed Scipio second and himself third. For the Greek-educated poet of Rudiae near Tarentum, the tale of Pyrrhus must have been familiar from his elders, but told perhaps with different loyalties before he learned to adapt his south Italian perspective to the prevailing ideology of Rome. Here was the self-styled descendant of Achilles and first Greek to invade

Italy, but also a Hellenistic king controlling the phalanx and the Asiatic weapon of elephants, holding his own against the Romans, already imperial lords of central and (most of) southern Italy and Sicily by the time of Ennius's birth. Plutarch quotes Pyrrhus as saying before Heraclea: "The battle order of these barbarians is not barbarous, but we shall find out the reality" (*Pyrrhus* 16.7). No doubt this was how Greeks after the victories of Philip and Alexander, whether Greeks from the mainland or from Magna Graecia, saw the rising imperial power. But beside the scope and scale of warfare, the contest could easily assume epic stature because it entailed a second contest in chivalry and humanity on both sides. Only the greater scale and danger of the Punic wars was able to eclipse a conflict (and its poetic narrative) that deserved lasting commemoration.

Two final thoughts on the larger historical and ideological context. For Romans who did not know the account of Hieronymus of Cardia or care to read Timaeus's special (and lost) monograph or have access to Fabius Pictor's Greek history, Ennius's account may have been both the earliest and the fullest version of events. It is not surprising that it had such a strong moral and cultural impact. Pyrrhus's Italian expedition was a landmark for Polybius (cf. 1.6.5, 2.20.6, 2.41.11) because it was the first confrontation of the Macedonian phalanx with the Roman legion. Ennius must have seen it pragmatically in the same terms illustrated by Livy's Alexander-digression in Book 9; what would have happened if Alexander had turned west and attacked Rome's sphere of influence? Ennius showed that pragmatically Roman discipline and endurance could fend off even Pyrrhus's highly trained professional army. And ideologically, when the self-styled descendant of Homeric Achilles met the Romans—whether in negotiations or in other issues of good faith and clean fighting—the Romans and their epic poet made sure that the record of their *fides* more than matched the Homeric standard.

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## THE FRAGMENTS OF *ANNALS* 6 AND THEIR SOURCES

- i. 164: Quint. 6.3.86 (Cicero); Macr. 6.1.18, Servius *Auctus* on *Aen.* 9.526; Diomedes *GL* 1.385 Keil.
- ii. 165: Festus 168 Lindsay.
- iii. 166: Festus 412, 364 Lindsay; Nonius 226.32.
- iv. 167: Cic. *Div.* 2.116, Quint. 7.9.6 (others).

- v. 168: Festus 384 Lindsay, Paulus Festus 131 Lindsay.
  - vi. 169: Macr. 6.1.54 on *Aen.* 7.625.
  - vii. 170–72: Gell. 16.10.1, Nonius 155.19.
  - viii. 173–74: Macr. 6.1.53 on *Aen.* 12.492–93 (Vahlen 416, not included in 6).
  - ix. 175–79: Macr. 6.2.27 on *Aen.* 6.179–83.
  - x. 180–82: Orosius 4.1.14.
  - xi. 183–90: Cic. *Off.* 1.38.
  - xii. 191–94: Nonius 150.5.
  - xiii. 195–96: Schol. Ver. on *Aen.* 5.473.
  - xiv. 197–98: Cic. *Div.* 2.116 (cf. iv above).
  - xv. 199–200: Cic. *Sen.* 16.
  - xvi. 201: Donatus on Ter. *Phorm.* 821.
  - xvii. 202: Varro *LL* 7.41.
  - xviii. 203–04: Macr. 6.1.10 on *Aen.* 10.2.
  - xix. 205: Macr. 6.1.8 on *Aen.* 2.250.
- Add 469–70 (*sed. inc.* xxv) (= 561–62 Vahlen): Brev. Expos. Virg. *G.* 2.43; cf. Suerbaum 1995.40.
- Add 555–56 (*sed. inc.* xcvi) (= 542–43 Vahlen): Serv. on *Aen.* 1.31; cf. Suerbaum 1995.43–44.