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Tumultus ac trepidatio in urbe. Social Perceptions and Effects of War in Rome and Some Italic Cities in the Late 3rd Century B.C.

Summary: From the Second Punic War onwards, it is possible to identify significant episodes regarding war's effects on Rome and other Italic cities. Apart from their military defence system, the perception of a state of war, its implications and the consequent feelings experienced by citizens of these urban settlements is still an unexplored field, since modern historiography has chosen to focus on the mere war events instead of exploring these less evident, but equally important issues related to them.

Nevertheless, it is useful to examine the atmosphere caused by this state of emergency, such as *tumultus ac trepidationes*, *conplorati* and *metus* in cities which, being fortified centres, were the safest places for seeking refuge.

Accordingly, this study aims to describe these kinds of situations – physical, psychological and mental health conditions endured by inhabitants of *urbes* and *oppida* during wartime. Ancient written sources, particularly the third decade of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, and also Polybius will provide valuable historical information about these matters and the broader institutional, social and anthropological context of the Roman Republic at the end of the 3rd century B.C.E.

Keywords: City of Rome, Second Punic War, *Petelia*, *Casilinum*, *tumultus*, *trepidatio*, violence

Introduction: the first years of the Second Punic War in the Italic peninsula (218–217 B.C.)

The Second Punic War represents a crucial moment in Roman military history, during which the city-state had to confront a formidable threat from the side of the Carthaginian commander-in-chief Hannibal and his considerable military forces.[1] At the

1 See: Briscoe J. 2006, 44–80.

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beginning of this war, the Punic army, thanks to its cavalry, had already achieved an important victory on the Ticino River in 218 B.C. Shortly afterward, Hannibal prevailed once again against the Roman army, led by the consuls of that year, P. Cornelius Scipio and Ti. Sempronius Longus[2] on the Trebbia River. In the following year, the third straight rout for Rome, i.e. on the Trasimene's Lake in 217 B.C. represented a turning point both on the military and on the internal political front.

Therefore, from a historiographic perspective, it is possible to state that the impact of the Hannibalic War, even in its early stages, is recognizable, especially for what concerns the *urbs* par excellence, Rome, but also regarding other Italic cities. In particular, we are going to analyse the two examples of Casilinum and Petelia thanks to the literary and historiographic sources. Knowing how their military defence system worked can help us get a better picture of their urban military forces.[3] Nevertheless, perceptions and feelings are equally important to deepen the knowledge of these events linked to the Hannibalic War. Precisely because this is an unexplored field in historical research, it can offer a new and different point of view on these military events. As said shortly before, the sense of fear (*metus*) and danger, as well as the spread of a sense of generalised anxiety, can be seen as fundamental premises to specific political and institutional measures, also religious practices.

The year 217 B.C. is the *terminus post quem* this speech starts and it would not be otherwise. Hannibal's descent to the Apennines, to the centre and towards the south of the Italic peninsula became a reality and at the same time a terrible danger for the inhabitants of Rome. They realized the threat to the survival of their capital city and of the others Italic cities, and especially of the southern territories, which were their allies, although the Roman network was fragmentary.

Ancient literary sources on these historical events

Thanks to the surviving accounts of these events recorded by several ancient authors, it's possible to reconstruct these moments of collective agitation of the civic communities following the defeat on Lake Trasimene. The main literary source is the historian Livy's work the third decade *Ab Urbe Condita*, which contains much information about this subject, where he occasionally refers back to most ancient authors that he consulted. However, we must remember that Livy wrote his 'History' almost two centuries after the events of the Hannibalic War. For that reason, we must also refer to Polybius, who worked on his 'Histories' (*Ἱστορίαι*) only a few decades after the end of the Second Punic War and is the nearest author to these occurrences. Although

2 Broughton T.R.S. 1951, 237–238.

3 This is a research field not still explored properly. Several studies concern late Antiquity but regarding to this setting (Hannibalic War) scientific works are limited and they especially focus on the war's consequences. See: Toynbee A.J. 1965; Cornell T.J. 1996; Briscoe J. 2006, 44–80.

other ancient authors also mention the war with Hannibal, they concentrate on the description of the war itself, which are much later sources (such as Appian[4] from the 2nd century CE), or provide only very short contributions, so we will not take them into account in this analysis.

Psychological and physical effects of war between 217 and 212 B.C. The city of Rome

From the analysis of these historical sources, it is possible to draw several conclusions on the psychological, mental, and physical health conditions endured by inhabitants of Italic cities during the Second Punic War. Records refer to the lack of clarity in decision-making, the fear that dominated minds, and physical weakness caused by the scarcity of food inside urban settlements, which at that time were fortified centres and therefore the safest places for seeking refuge.

The communication of the Roman defeat at the battle of Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C. generated panic in the city of Rome since people found it hard to believe in another loss in such a brief time. Citizens rushed to the Forum – a political centre of the city – the public space where Romans gathered during emergencies and where the decisions were announced. Livy described with these words the moments of commotion:

> At Rome the first tidings of this defeat brought the citizens into the Forum in a frightened and tumultuous throng, while the matrons wandered about the streets and demanded of all they met what sudden disaster had been reported and how it was going with the army. And when the crowd, like some vast public assembly, turned to the *Comitium* and the senate-house and called for the magistrates, at last, as the sun was almost going down, Marcus Pomponius, the praetor, said, 'A great battle has been fought, and we were beaten.'[5]

He used the expression of *terror ac tumultus*, to describe dramatically the psychological effect that this third defeat had on the *populus Romanus* in the capital city.[6]

4 Appian 1912, 312–315. (Hann. 7).

5 'Romae ad primum nuntium cladis eius cum ingenti terrore ac tumultu concursus in forum populi est factus. matronae uagae per uias, quae repens clades allata quaeue fortuna exercitus esset, obuios percontantur; et cum frequentis contionis modo turba in comitium et curiam uersa magistratus uocaret, tandem haud multo ante solis occasum M. Pomponius praetor 'pugna' inquit 'magna uicti sumus''. Livy 1969, 220–225 (22.7.6–8). See: Briscoe J. 2016, 83ff. with footnotes.

6 We can find the Livian expression of tantum terror ac tumultus in the episode (21.25.3ff) that affects the Roman colony of Placentia before the beginning of the Hannibalic War. In the time, when Hannibal had not crossed the Alps yet, the Boi Gaul's tribe attacked this territory militarily. However, at that time the defence's facilities of Placentia were not able to ensure safety, because they were still under construction. So, it was an event so shocking, a sort of psychological trauma, that even the triumvirs, who were on site with the task of assigning lands, were obliged to shelter at Mutina (nearly coincident with the current city of Modena) with the crowds of peasants.

Yet these feelings did not result in unreasonable actions, the crowd headed to the Forum without hesitation.

A typical element of the Livian descriptions of Rome, in this war context, is the role played by women. Not positive at all, much more often than other citizens, they roamed the streets, creating confusion around the city and spreading a sensation of sadness and frustration. A public disorder seized Rome, until the official declaration of the defeat.

The Romans did not have time to act properly and improve the internal situation when another *clades* took place in the Umbrian region. According to Polybius:

> Three days after the news of the great battle had reached Rome, and just when throughout the city the sore, so to speak, was most violently inflamed, came the tidings of this fresh disaster, and now not only the populace but the Senate too were thrown into consternation. Abandoning therefore the system of government by magistrates elected annually, they decided to deal with the present situation more radically, thinking that the state of affairs and the impending peril demanded the appointment of a single general with full powers.[7]

What we learn from this account is that the news of this defeat was announced in Rome only three days after the news of the defeat at Lake Trasimene.[8] The mood of the *cives* was agitated, and even the senators were dismayed by what had occurred. However, it must be underlined that this feeling did not prevent the authorities from taking action; rather, it spurred them to intervene for the benefit of the entire community immediately. Ordinary matters were set aside to focus on the current crisis and decide on an extraordinary measure: the appointment of a dictator (the notorious Q. Fabius Maximus in 217 BCE), whom Polybius described with the phrase *αὐτοκράτορος στρατηγοῦ*, meaning a general with full powers.

However, in Livy's twenty-second book, the reference to these events is quite different:

This is an extremely important aspect regarding cities. Peoples and communities were used to seeking refuge in cities, because of their sense of protection, but these fortified centres were not immune to problems connected with their own features.

7 'ἐν δὲ τῇ Ῥώμῃ, τριταίας οὔσης τῆς κατὰ τὴν μάχην προσαγγελίας, καὶ μάλιστα τότε τοῦ πάθους κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ὡσανεὶ φλεγμαίνοντος, ἐπιγενομένης καὶ ταύτης τῆς περιπετείας οὐ μόνον τὸ πλῆθος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν σύγκλητον αὐτὴν συνέβη διατραπῆναι. διὸ καὶ παρέντες τὴν κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν ἀγωγὴν τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τὴν αἵρεσιν τῶν ἀρχόντων μειζόνως ἐπεβάλοντο βουλεύεσθαι περὶ τῶν ἐνεστώτων, νομίζοντες αὐτοκράτορος δεῖσθαι στρατηγοῦ τὰ πράγματα καὶ τοὺς περιεστῶτας καιρούς.' Polybius 2010, 232–233 (3.86). In the next passage, the Hellenic author describes Hannibal's route along the Adriatic coast: it seemed impossible that, at that stage of the war, he had the intention to march directly on Rome, as F.W. Walbank affirms (Walbank F.W. 1957, 421).

8 Additional accounts concerning what happened after this defeat are still in: Polybius 2010, 228–235 (3.85–6), see: Walbank F.W. 1957, 420–421; Cornelius Nepos 2014, 264–265 (Hann. 4.3); Valerius Maximus 2000, 368–371(9.12.2); Titi Livi 1971, 73–74.

> The news of this affair affected people variously: some, whose thoughts were taken up with a greater sorrow, regarded this fresh loss of the cavalry as trivial in comparison with their former losses; others refused to judge of the misfortune as an isolated fact, but held that, just as when a man was sick, any disorder, however slight, was felt more than a worse one would be by a healthy man, so now, when the state was sick and suffering, any untoward occurrence should be gauged not by its intrinsic importance but by the enfeebled condition of the commonwealth, which could endure no aggravation. And so the citizens had recourse to a remedy that had now for a long time neither been employed nor needed – the creation of a dictator […].[9]

In this relation, we can see the indecisiveness of the Roman citizens and their various impressions on the umpteenth defeat with grief, anguish and gaining awareness, even with a bit of insight, of the weak and compromised city. As the city could not tolerate further aggravation, a dictator was named by people – Q. Fabius Maximus, flanked by the *magister equitum* M. Minucius Rufus.[10] His first order was to strengthen the towers and town walls and to arrange garrisons in different places in the city to increase its military force.[11]

We could say that the situation was now more than critical and yet another staggering misfortune after *Cannae* clouded people's reasoning.[12] Politicians were not able to find solutions and decided to wait, since the war was being fought in the Apulian region, quite far from Rome (but not too far from Latium). Nevertheless, there was a military mobilisation in Rome in order to be prepared for the enemy's approach.

Livy reflected on this situation with the following words:

> But when, amid dangers at once so immense and so incalculable, they failed to think of even any tolerable plan of action, and were deafened with the cries and lamentations of the women, both the living and the dead – in the lack as yet of any announcement – being indiscriminately mourned in almost every house […]. To discover and ascertain these facts was a task, he said, for active youths; what the Fathers themselves

9 'eius rei fama uarie homines adfecit. pars occupatis maiore aegritudine animis leuem ex comparatione priorum ducere recentem equitum iacturam; pars non id quod acciderat per se aestimare sed, ut in adfecto corpore quamuis leuis causa magis quam <in> ualido grauior sentiretur, ita tum aegrae et adfectae ciuitati quodcumque aduersi inciderit, non rerum magnitudine sed uiribus extenuatis, quae nihil quod adgrauaret pati possent, aestimandum esse. itaque ad remedium iam diu neque desideratum nec adhibitum, dictatorem dicendum, ciuitas confugit […].' Livy 1969, 226–229 (22.8.2–5). See: Briscoe J. 2016, 84ff. with footnotes.

10 Broughton T.R.S. 1951, 243.

11 Further sources: Polybius 2010, 230–239 (3.86–8); Titi Livi 1971, 74–75.

12 With regard to the psychological effects of this riot, Livy 1969, 374–379 (22.54) says that never before had there been such panic and uproar (pauoris tumultusque intra moenia Romana), while the city was still safe. In addition, when he recounts other defeats, especially after the battle of Herdonia years later (212 or 210 BCE, Livy 1969, 284–289 (22–25), the tone of the story is basically identical, with the same linguistic and semantic terms, because the feeling could not be different from anxiety and alarm (i.e. pauor and luctus).

> must do, since there were not magistrates enough, was this: quell the panic and confusion in the City; keep the matrons off the streets and compel them each to abide in her own home; restrain families from lamentation; procure silence throughout the City; see that bearers of any news were brought before the praetors – every man must wait at home for tidings that concerned himself; – and, besides this, post sentries at the gates, to keep anyone from leaving the City, and make the people rest all hope of safety on the safety of Rome and of its walls.[13]

The *clamor* and the *lamentantium mulierum* led to greater exasperation, also for the fact that women screamed and shouted around the city as a manifestation of mourning. Nevertheless, the control of an organised city was of the utmost importance for the successful execution of a battle. Consequently, a new set of regulations was introduced, some of which pertained to *mulieres*. In particular, the senators would suppress any disturbance or panic (*tumultus ac trepidatio*). Women should be kept away from public spaces and compelled to remain within their homes. Restrictions were imposed on family mourning, as if they represented a risk for the public order. Citywide silence was imposed and, in addition, sentinels were placed at the gates to prevent anyone from leaving the city. They recruited two urban legions for this purpose. These legions are an exceptional military corps, which was formed mainly in extremely urgent war situations, from the last decades of the third century B.C. and at least until the third Macedonian war. In such delicate moments, very little room was left for negative feelings and instincts.

The people of Rome had to be rational and steadfast, and the senators demonstrated respect for their governmental duties more than ever.

In Polybius' account, references related to the emotional sphere are uncommon. For that reason, the example cited below is worth including in this study. In this passage, he tells of universal panic and consternation that spread among the citizens of Rome:

> When the news reached Rome, it caused universal panic and consternation among the inhabitants, the thing being so sudden and so entirely unexpected, as Hannibal had never before been so close to the city. Besides this, a suspicion prevailed that the enemy would never be approached so near and displayed such audacity

13 'cum in malis sicuti ingentibus ita ignotis ne consilium quidem satis expedirent obstreperetque clamor lamentantium mulierum et nondum palam facto uiui mortuique et per omnes paene domos promiscue complorarentur, […] haec exploranda noscendaque per impigros iuuenes esse; illud per patres ipsos agendum, quoniam magistratuum parum sit, ut tumultum ac trepidationem in urbe tollant, matronas publico arceant continerique intra suum quamque limen cogant, comploratus familiarum coerceant, silentium per urbem faciant, nuntios rerum omnium ad praetores deducendos curent, suae quisque fortunae domi auctorem exspectent, custodesque praeterea ad portas ponant qui prohibeant quemquam egredi urbe cogantque homines nullam nisi urbe ac moenibus saluis salutem sperare. ubi conticuerit [recte] tumultus, tum in curiam patres reuocandos consulendumque de urbis custodia esse.' Livy 1969, 348–351 (22.55.3, 6–8). See: Briscoe J. 2016, 146ff. with footnotes. About the following events see: Plutarch 1916, 172–173 (Fab. 18.2); Titi Livi 1971, 128–129.

> if the legions before Capua had not been destroyed. The men, therefore, occupied the walls and the most advantageous positions outside the town, while the women made the round of the temples and implored the help of the gods, sweeping the pavements of the holy places with their hair – for such is their custom when their country is in extreme peril.[14]

Polybius explains these feelings as due to the dangerous proximity of Hannibal. He was, in fact, at more or less three miles from the city of Rome. It cannot be an astonishing fact that there were many expressions of turmoil and anxiety in the city of Rome: the archenemy and all the terrible consequences for the Roman people that would have followed were sudden (*αἰφνίδιος*) and unexpected (*ἀνέλπιστος*). In this situation, it was necessary to organise the remaining military forces to defend the capital and its population. This, as stated by Polybius, was essential, especially after the likely defeat of the Roman army near Capua. These units would be the last bulwark between Hannibal and Rome. Additionally, the circle of city walls, restored after the defeat of Lake Trasimene, was an essential protective structure. In addition to this, military means in the city were quite abundant if we consider the presence of the urban legions, already mentioned above. But while the men were called to arms to guarantee the defence of the city, the women are represented as completely devoted to the Roman gods, sweeping the pavements of the holy places with their hair.

In this case, Polybius had probably consulted Greek literary sources, whose authors had difficulties understanding the Roman system of thought and, therefore, the complex nature of the Roman institutional structure and the diverse competences of Roman magistrates, compared to Greek institutional figures. Moreover, difficulty emerged also concerning the Roman religion. The episode recounted by Polybius can be found in the later Livian account. In Livy and, more generally, in Latin literature, the element of 'sweeping the altars with their dishevelled hair' is clearer in its narrative function, and also in its religious meaning. Hair symbolised strength and piety towards the Gods[15]. The fact that women swept the altars – and less probably the pavements, as in the Polybian description – made this action credible or, at least, more comprehensible in Livy than in Polybius. Even if it is known that this last author is one of the main sources used by Livy himself in the composition of his historiographical work.

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14 'οὗ γενομένου καὶ προσπεσόντος εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην, εἰς ὁλοσχερῆ συνέβη ταραχὴν καὶ φόβον ἐμπεσεῖν τοὺς κατὰ τὴν πόλιν, ἅτε τοῦ πράγματος αἰφνιδίου μὲν ὄντος καὶ τελέως ἀνελπίστου διὰ τὸ μηδέποτε τὸν Ἀννίβαν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἀπηρκέναι τῆς πόλεως, ὑποτρεχούσης δέ τινος ἅμα καὶ τοιαύτης ἐννοίας ὡς οὐχ οἷόν τε τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἐγγίσαι καὶ καταθαρρῆσαι μὴ οὐ τῶν περὶ Καπύην στρατοπέδων ἀπολωλότων. διόπερ οἱ μὲν ἄνδρες τὰ τείχη προκατελάμβανον καὶ τοὺς πρὸ τῆς πόλεως εὐκαίρους τόπους, αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες περιπορευόμεναι τοὺς ναοὺς ἱκέτευον τοὺς θεούς, πλύνουσαι ταῖς κόμαις τὰ τῶν ἱερῶν ἐδάφη: τοῦτο γὰρ αὐταῖς ἔθος ἐστὶ ποιεῖν, ὅταν τις ὁλοσχερὴς τὴν πατρίδα καταλαμβάνῃ κίνδυνος.' Polybius 2011, 12–15 (9.6.1–4). See: Walbank F.W. 1967, 125.

15 See: Walbank F.W. 1967, 125.

According to Livy's report, the psychological effects of war in Rome, especially shortly after the defeat at Cannae, are almost the same:

> To Rome a messenger from Fregellae, riding on for a day and a night, brought great alarm. Still greater confusion than at its first reception was occasioned by news of the danger spread by men who ran about, adding unfounded reports to what they had heard, and it stirred the entire city. The wailings of women were heard not only from private houses, but from every direction matrons pouring into the streets ran about among the shrines of the gods, sweeping the altars with their dishevelled hair, kneeling, holding up their palms to heaven and the gods, and praying them to rescue the city of Rome from the hands of the enemy and to keep Roman mothers and little children unharmed. The senate awaited the magistrates in the Forum in case they wished its advice about anything. Garrisons were posted on the Citadel, on the Capitol, on the walls, around the city, even on the Alban mount and on the citadel of Aefula.[16]

In this case, the messenger mentioned brought alarm (*terror*) inside the city, because his sight evoked the fear that he presumably did not bring positive news, and this had to provoke greater confusion than before. But, unexpectedly, Hannibal did not besiege Rome, neither in 216 B.C. nor in 212 B.C., and the reasons why he did not make it are still not unambiguous.

Again, the feminine element introduced by Livy aims to increase the atmosphere of disorder and chaos as a background of the scene. Women are portrayed in the act of engaging in continuous weeps and complaints not only in the private dimension of their houses but also in public spaces, i.e. in the streets, while on their way to certain shrines. This female reaction recalls a similar episode told previously by Livy (book 22). In both these episodes, it is possible to identify elements of public disorder related to the large number of women engaging in dirges. This is one of the numerous evidence that Roman people were prey to disorientation and despair. And yet it seems a bit weird that in this case, the Senate did not implement drastic measures to limit their freedom of movement and their tragic emotional displays, as it occurred instead in 216 B.C. when it seems they were forbidden to appear in public, being forced

16 'Romam Fregellanus nuntius diem noctemque itinere continuato ingentem attulit terrorem. tumultuosius quam allatam erat <uolgatum periculum dis> cursu hominum adfingentium uana auditis totam urbem concitat. ploratus mulierum non ex priuatis solum domibus exaudiebatur, sed undique matronae in publicum effusae circa deum delubra discurrunt crinibus passis aras uerrentes, nixae genibus, supinas manus ad caelum ac deos tendentes orantesque ut urbem Romanam e manibus hostium eriperent matresque Romanas et liberos paruos inuiolatos seruarent. senatus magistratibus in foro praesto est si quid consulere uelint. alii accipiunt imperia discedunt que ad suas quisque officiorum partes: alii offerunt se si quo usus operae sit. praesidia in arce, in Capitolio, in muris, circa urbem, in monte etiam Albano atque arce Aefulana ponuntur.' Livy 1963, 30–35 (26.9.6–10).

to stay at home, in an atmosphere of citywide silence. Rather, the Senate directed its efforts to more pragmatic and urgent measures for the safety of the inhabitants, like locating garrisons around the city's perimeter, in a military strain, that is repeated if we compare it with previous episodes.[17]

In this respect, two examples can be provided. The first is about military provisions taken for the city of Rome immediately after the terrible defeat of Cannae in 216 B.C.: urban walls and towers were strengthened and garrisons were arranged in different places of Rome, together with sentries placed in correspondence of urban gates.[18] The second is about a stunning military manoeuvre inside the city in the year 212 B.C. The consuls Q. Fulvius Flaccus and Ap. Claudius Pulcher[19] ordered the Numidian deserters on the Aventine Hill to join the rest of the Roman army outside the city to face the Punic army. Since people did not know about their presence within the city, their view caused *tumultum ac fugam*, making the crowd panic-stricken and causing a headlong stampede. People tried to save themselves by hiding in houses, but the whole episode was a misunderstanding. These soldiers were not enemies, but allies. In all the occurrences mentioned, the only means women had to help the citizens were prayers and rites prescribed by the Roman traditional religion. Furthermore, the description of 'sweeping the altars with their dishevelled hair, kneeling, holding up their palms to heaven and the gods', clearly recalls the account made by Polybius. Returning to the Livian narration, it evidences that the most important element in times of danger is rather the male one since political rights and collective decisions belonged to citizens only. Men were the true protagonists in political, institutional, economic and military affairs, with the partial exception of the religious sphere, in which women could have a more significant role.

Psychological and physical effects of war between 217 and 215 B.C. The cases of Petelia and Casilinum

Of course, the psychological effects of the Hannibalic War and the physical reactions to it were not limited to Rome. The people of Petelia, a Brutian metropolis[20] in today's Calabrian region, were almost the only Rome ally left among these peoples of this Italic area shortly after the battle of Cannae.[21] The defence of Petelia in the name

17 The episode is recalled in: Livy 1963, 34–39 (26.10).

18 See: p. 5 with footnotes of this study.

19 See: Broughton T.R.S. 1951, 267.

20 On its morphology as a μητρόπολις in the Strabo's Γεωγραφικά and its central role at local level and beyond see: Intrieri M.1989, 15–20.

21 Another city, which also remained an ally city of Rome, was Consentia (also laid in the same Bruttium region, which initially distanced itself from the rest of the other Bruttian cities that allied with Hannibal). The city was subdued by the general Himilco shortly thereafter. See: Livy 1966, 100–105 (23.30). On its changing alliance with Rome in the Second Punic War: Livy 1966, 340–345

of its loyalty to Rome and, at the same time, of its autonomy, is exemplary and very well-known in Antiquity.[22]

The will and strength of the Petelian resistance are demonstrated by the city's envoys' direct request to the Roman Senate for a Roman garrison. When it was announced in Petelia that the Senate refused the request, melancholy and dread (*maeror et pauor*) grew among the town's senators of the city:

> When this outcome of the embassy was reported at Petelia, such dejection and fear unexpectedly seized their senate that some proposed to flee, each taking any possible road, and to abandon the city, while others, since they had been deserted by their old allies, proposed to join the rest of the Bruttians and through them to surrender to Hannibal. But those who thought nothing should be done hastily or rashly, and that they should deliberate again, prevailed. When the matter was brought up in less excitement the following day, the optimates carried their point, that they should bring in everything from the farms and strengthen the city and the walls.[23]

Thus, different solutions were proposed: to some, it was necessary to abandon the city and to flee to another place (not mentioned in the sources).[24] Others, to preserve the city of Petelia and their lives, suggested a change of alliance and surrendering the town to Hannibal.

The most shared opinion was to not act precipitously, otherwise the regret for the decisions taken would have affected the continuation of the urban defence. Choosing a vehement way could provoke considerable damage beyond repair. The next day,

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(25.1); Livy 1971, 44–51 (28.11), 356–359 (29.38), 436–441 (30.19); Appian 1912, 390–393 (Hann. 56). For a more detailed description of the city see: Intrieri M. 1989, 31–32.

22 See: Levene D.S. 2010, 46–7, 53, 55. The close relation between Petelia and Rome began after the year 272 B.C., that is with the end of the Tarentine war (see: Costabile F. 1984). As a sign of recognition for its loyalty, Petelia could reopened its mint in 204 B.C. under the concession of Rome and at least until 89 B.C., issuing Roman bronze coins. Caccamo Caltabiano M. 1977, 11ff. More generally, on the history of the city and its origins as well as the archaeological evidence and its match with the current Pianette di Strongoli see: Intrieri M. 1989, 12–18, 22–26. Regarding to this archaeological side of Petelia: Greco E. 1980, 83–92.

23 'haec postquam renuntiata legatio Petelinis est, tantus repente maeror pauorque senatum eorum cepit ut pars profugiendi qua quisque posset ac deserendae urbis auctores essent, pars, quando deserti a ueteribus sociis essent, adiungendi se ceteris Bruttiis ac per eos dedendi Hannibali. uicit tamen ea pars quae nihil raptim nec temere agendum consulendumque de integro censuit. relata postero die per minorem trepidationem re tenuerunt optimates ut conuectis omnibus ex agris urbem ac muros firmarent.' Livy 1966, 68–71(23.20.7–10). Also Polybius 2011, 446–453 (7.1–3) in Athen; Valerius Maximus 2000, 162–165 (7.6.1); see: Titi Livi 1976, 20; Briscoe J. 2016, 187ff. with footnotes.

24 Very interesting discussion by M. Caccamo Caltabiano: 'Come immaginare possibili gli spostamenti di quella parte di popolazione costituita dai contadini e dalle loro famiglie, sprovvisti come certo saranno stati di adeguati mezzi di trasporto, in un momento di particolare pericolo, essendo le contrade meridionali percorse dai Cartaginesi e dai Bruzzii. Una tale soluzione meglio si adatta a una parte limitata della popolazione, quella meglio equipaggiata per affrontare un viaggio e soprattutto quella provvista di legami e di amicizie tali da garantire loro, in una situazione così precaria per tutti, un rifugio.' Caccamo Caltabiano M. 1977, 45–46.

indeed, when there was less confusion, it was decided to bring all produce in from the fields and strengthen the city and its walls, because the siege from the Carthaginians would be imminent.

The siege of Petelia had been long and exhausting – it lasted eleven months.[25] Eventually the city was conquered by Himilco, Hannibal's prefect in 215 B.C., because of the hunger of the townspeople. It is an episode fairly known in antiquity, because the Petelians – according to the Livian account – rather than yield to the Carthaginians, nourished themselves with leather, grass, roots, the soft parts of tree bark and strips of leaves:

> That victory cost the Carthaginians much blood and many wounds, and starvation more than any assault overpowered the besieged. For after they had consumed their food-supply in cereals and flesh, the familiar and the unfamiliar, of four-footed beasts of every kind, they finally lived on hides and grasses and roots and tender bark[26] and leaves stripped off.[27] And they were not overpowered until they had no strength left to stand on the walls and bear arms.[28]

We are facing one of the most terrible physical effects that war causes, not only in this moment but generally valid. Though this episode describes some action that helped to survive, men suffered anyway due to lack of strength and endurance, and in consequence, the urban military defences were cancelled. Dealing with this situation, it is probable that, at a certain point, the ruling class of Petelia requested a safe-conduct to Hannibal: for him, it would have been a favourable move to achieve control of the city peacefully.[29]

The last event that I intend to discuss in my paper refers to the *oppidum* of Casilinum located in the Campania region, corresponding to the current city of Capua[30] – a site that the Punic army perhaps did not intend to reach in its march during 216 BCE[31] but which ultimately shared the fate of Petelia.

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25 A similar endurance was possible thanks to the morphology of the place and to the city walls. Intrieri M. 1989, 15–16.

26 A better explanation in: Yardley J.C. 2003, 158.

27 The meaning here would be that: 'they stripped from the veins, stripped down or dissected and not stripped off trees'. Yardley J.C. 2003, 158.

28 'multo sanguine ac uolneribus ea Poenis uictoria stetit nec ulla magis uis obsessos quam fames expugnauit. absumptis enim frugum alimentis carnisque omnis generis quadrupedum suetae <insuetae>que postremo coriis herbisque et radicibus et corticibus teneris strictisque foliis uixere nec ante quam uires ad standum in muris ferendaque arma deerant expugnati sunt.' Livy 1966, 100–105 (23.30.2–4). Also, see: Petronius 1975, 378–379 (141.10); Silius Italicus 1961, 178–179 (12.431); Frontin. 2014, 304–305 (Strateg. 4.5.18); Appian 1912, 312–315 (Hann. 7); Valerius Maximus 2000, 70–71 (6.6 ext. 2); Titi Livi 1976, 28; Caccamo Caltabiano M. 1977, 11ff.; Briscoe J. 2016, 208ff. with footnotes.

29 See: Caccamo Caltabiano M. 1977, 48ff to deepen the destiny of the city in the final years of the conflict and for a comparison between Petelia and Locri during the Second Punic War.

30 See: Johannowsky W. 1975, 3–38.

31 Casilinum was, in fact, nearby other cities, such as Acerrae and Nola, the first of which was set ablaze by Hannibal. Vreese de, J. 1972, 22–26. Also see: Levene D.S. 2010, 46, 201–202, 210, 230.

Hannibal aimed to defeat and dismantle the network of alliances with the southern cities of Rome.[32] Events in Casilinum occurred almost simultaneously with the siege of Petelia. Casilinum was occupied by the Punic army after a long siege that ended in 215 BCE, demonstrating the strong and enduring resistance to the enemy. Trying to help the besieged people – not only the inhabitants of Casilinum but also hundreds of Praenestines, Romans, and Latins who had taken refuge there – the *magister equitum* for that year, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus,[33] successfully provided food supplies to the town. Livy provides a detailed account of this event:

> For it was established that some, unable to endure hunger, had thrown themselves from the wall, and that men stood unarmed on the walls exposing unprotected bodies to wounds from missile weapons. Gracchus, though indignant at this, did not dare to engage the enemy without the dictator's order, and saw that, if he should try openly to carry in grain, he must fight. As there was also no hope of carrying it in secretly, he filled many huge jars with spelt brought from the farms all around and sent word to the magistrate at *Casilinum* that they should catch up the jars which the river was bringing down. In the following night, while all were intent upon the river and the hope aroused by the Roman messenger, the jars set adrift in midstream floated down, and the grain was evenly divided among them all. This was done the next day also, and the third day. It was night when they were set adrift and when they arrived. In that way they escaped the notice of the enemy's guards. After that, the stream, now swifter than usual because of incessant rains, forced the jars by a cross current to the bank guarded by the enemy. There, caught among the willows growing on the banks, they were seen and it was reported to Hannibal. And thereafter by a closer watch they saw to it that nothing sent down the Volturnus to the city should escape notice. However nuts which were poured out from the Roman camp, as they floated down the middle of the river to *Casilinum*, were caught by wattled hurdles. Finally they reached such a pitch of distress that they tried, after softening them by hot water, to chew thongs and the hides stripped off of shields; and they did not abstain from rats and other animals and dug out every kind of plant and root from the bank beneath the wall.[34]

A philological integration's proposal of usus referring to Punicum abhorrens ab Latinorum nominum was made by T. Ricchieri (Ricchieri T. 2019, 89–97). Ricchieri notes the misunderstanding of a local guide that led Hannibal and the Punic army to 'Casilinum' instead of 'Cassinum' (Livy 1969, 242–245 (22.13.6), see: Ricchieri T. 2019, 89–93.

32 The Etruscans also fought alongside Rome to militarily support Casilinum's resistance against Hannibal's attacks. On the Etruscan Laris Felsnas and his military action during this conflict, see: Sordi M. 1989–1990, 123–125.

33 Specifically in the year 216 BCE, when M. Iunius Pera was elected dictator. The military command was entrusted temporarily to his magister equitum because the dictator had to return to Rome to retake the auspices. Broughton T.R.S. 1951, p. 248.

34 'nam et praecipitasse se quosdam non tolerantes famem constabat et stare inermes in muris, nuda corpora ad missilium telorum ictus praebentes. ea aegre patiens Gracchus, cum neque pugnam conserere dictatoris iniussu auderet – pugnandum autem esse, si palam frumentum

As a matter of fact, this was the Roman reaction after noticing men that had thrown themselves from the wall and men stood unarmed on the walls, exposing unprotected bodies to wounds from missile weapons.[35] It was a desperate answer to a situation where the besieged people had exhausted all options and were losing hope, even if winning control over the town's side on the river Volturnus enabled the defenders to gain some time. T. Gracchus had the brilliant idea of filling many huge jars with spelt brought from the neighbouring farms, because he had to respect the dictator's instructions that forbade him to take food supplies to the Petelians and other besieged people. In fact, a similar tactical move could have led to a fight with the enemy while the Roman commander-in-chief was absent on the military field.[36] The trick, according to which the Casilins had to fish the jars out of the river at night, actually worked because the jars set adrift in midstream floated down the river. The grain was evenly divided among them all at the time when the 'degree of hunger and exhaustion had reached the city. It perhaps surpasses everything that has been handed down about besieged and starving cities.'[37]

Conclusions

The aim of this study is to present a selection of ancient literary sources that, in my opinion, are the most suitable for recreating a specific urban and social atmosphere during the early years of the Hannibalic War. According to these accounts, warfare generated various social perceptions that were, in some cases, identical in the towns described by the authors and, at other times, completely different from one city to another. Additionally, war provoked psychological and physical reactions, which are two sides of the same coin. On one hand, the physical reactions are documented in

importaret, uidebat – neque clam importandi spes esset, farre ex agris circa undique conuecto cum complura dolia complesset, nuntium ad magistratum Casilinum misit ut exciperent dolia quae amnis deferret. insequenti nocte intentis omnibus in flumen ac spem ab nuntio Romano factam dolia medio missa amni defluxerunt; aequaliter inter omnes frumentum diuisum. id postero quoque die ac tertio factum est; nocte et mittebantur et perueniebant; eo custodias hostium fallebant. imbribus deinde continuis citatior solito amnis transuerso uertice dolia impulit ad ripam quam hostes seruabant. ibi haerentia inter obnata ripis salicta conspiciuntur, nuntiatumque Hannibali est et deinde intentiore custodia cautum ne quid falleret Uolturno ad urbem missum. nuces tamen fusae ab Romanis castris, cum medio amni ad Casilinum defluerent, cratibus excipiebantur. postremo ad id uentum inopiae est, ut lora detractasque scutis pelles, ubi feruida mollissent aqua, mandere conarentur nec muribus alioue animali abstinerent et omne herbarum radicumque genus aggeribus infimis muri eruerent.' Livy 1966, 62–69 (23.19.6–13). For more events about Casilinum in the first years of the Hannibalic War, see: Valerius Maximus 2000, 164–167 (7.6.2–3), 302–303 (9.1 ext. 1); Strabo 1923, 458–465 (5.4.10–11); Florus 2014, 92–115 (1.22)Frontin. 2014, 304-305 (Strateg. 4.5.18); also see: Titi Livi 1976, 18–19; Briscoe J. 2016, 185ff. with footnotes; Sordi M. 1989–1990, 125.

35 Before that, another episode regarding the siege of Casilinum occurred, but it did not have success: in Livy 1969, 277–281 (22.23) it is recalled when the device of silence was employed for persuading Hannibal that the city was deserted. His decision to open the city gates caused, instead, a fierce Roman military attack that overwhelmed him and his army.

36 Vreese de, J. 1972, 25.

37 Vreese de, J. 1972, 25.

the accounts analysed that mention Petelia and Casilinum; on the other hand, the community's feelings are shown to contribute to a greater awareness of the situation, particularly in the city of Rome. These social needs required inhabitants to act appropriately in these challenging circumstances, utilising institutional and political means and, thus, the direct action of the State to address emergencies and crises.

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