

Searching for Ovid at Silius' Cannae

In the *Punica* Silius acknowledges directly and indirectly several literary figures, most of whom are poets (e.g., Cicero, Virgil, Ennius, Homer). He does not appear to acknowledge Ovid in this way, however. There is no reason why he necessarily should, but as Ovid's influence on Silius is not inconsiderable, it deserves considering whether Ovid, as a "flesh-and-blood" (literary) historical figure, is acknowledged in some way too.

A few examples indicate the presence of Ovid. One such instance is a passage in the catalogue of Roman troops and allies, which is given before the battle of Cannae. In the passage (8.495-510) Silius describes the Marsi and, at its end, says that they were joined by Paelignians and troops from Sulmo (509-510). The reference to Sulmo is itself suggestive, but what is even more noteworthy is an aetiology that Silius gives a few lines earlier in the passage, where he says that the Marsi got their name from Marsyas of Phrygia, who settled in Italy after he was defeated by Apollo in a music contest (502-504). Other ancient sources tell us that the Marsi took their name from a Phrygian leader or king named Marsyas, but Silius is the only one to identify that Marsyas with the musician Marsyas, who was famously defeated by Apollo. This connection must have to do with Ovid. Thematically, one might compare them, both being punished artists, and the proximity of the Sulmo reference to this aetiology further recommends the connection.

Another salient moment is the story of Satricus and Solymus, a father-son pair from Sulmo (9.66-177). For one, there is the family's connection to Sulmo, a connection that is described in conspicuously Ovidian terms (9.70-76 = *Fasti* 4.77-82). Second, Ovid's name is suggestively inscribed in the text by an acrostic in lines 136-140: *nasus* (> Publius Ovidius *Naso*). Third, there are Ovidian elements in the wider context that set an Ovidian tone for the episode. For example, the "lead up" to Cannae begins in book 8, when Juno has Anna instruct

Hannibal to march to Cannae; the goddess' intervention occasions the story of Anna Perenna (44-201), which owes much to *Fasti* 3.523-710. Immediately preceding the Satricus-Solymus episode, Rome's other consul at Cannae, Paulus, refuses to fight Hannibal on the day on which he is in command and warns Varro against doing so the next day (1-65); part of Paulus' speech to his fellow consul there (56-65) alludes to *Ibis* 237-248, where Ovid says he was fated to be Ibis' detractor (note esp. *fata cano uates* (9.61) = *fata canet uates* (*Ibis* 246)). The *Ibis* parallel and the context in which it appears, the conflict between Paulus and Varro and, thereafter, the double deaths of Satricus and Solymus, then encouraged me to consider parallels between members of these pairs (Satricus-Solymus; Varro-Paulus; Ibis-Ovid): Satricus, Varro, and Ibis, for example, are all "Libyan" in one respect or another; Varro and Ibis are both noted for their envy and exhibit it by "barking" in the forum; Varro, when he later returns to Rome in *Punica* 10, is compared to a victim of a shipwreck, just as Ovid compares himself to such a victim in *Ibis* 17-18.

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