

Dual Legends: Hannibal and Scipio as Literary Foils in the Early Roman Historians

Andreola Rossi has (relatively) recently discussed Livy's depiction of the two leading generals of the Second Punic War, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus and Hannibal Barca, and how the historian constructs "parallel lives" of these two central figures that balance and inform Books 21-30 (Rossi: 2004). As the decade unfolds, it is revealed through their dialogue that the Roman and Punic general match each other in their successes, though they are mirror opposites of one another ethically, and create an apposite form for the structural unit. Their corresponding and conflicting prowess emerges not only on the battlefield but also in the other facets that mark a good politician, so that the full potential of the Carthaginian threat is realized (Adler: 2011; Chlup: 2009). They make a perfect pair for structuring the narrative of the war.

Hannibal is the proverbial boogeyman of the Republic's history (e.g., *parentibusque abominatus Hannibal*, Hor. *Ep.* 16.8; *Hannibal...erat ad portas*, Cic. *Phil.* 1.11; etc.), and Scipio is certainly a legendary Republican figure (Walbank: 1985; Scullard: 1970; etc.). But the particular mirrored use of the characters in Livy is not obviously an inevitable literary development and may be a Livian innovation; there are other prominent Romans pitted against the Carthaginians, such as Fabius Maximus Cunctator and Marcellus (Walsh: 1982). Indeed, even in Livy before the return of Scipio to Italy, Fabius is the one dealing with Hannibal, and he begins to resemble the enemy more and more while carrying out his delaying actions (Elliott: 2009), a similar development to that which will eventually land Scipio in disgrace (Rossi: 2004). There is no denying that both Scipio and Hannibal have prominent places in Roman history, but their place as literary correlatives is less absolute.

In this paper, I will explore the historical tradition before Livy to see if there is evidence of the literary technique of pairing Scipio and Hannibal and of using them to provide structural

balance to a historical narrative or to see if this is indeed a Livian innovation. I will especially focus on elements of legend that seem to have grown up around both figures and how that legendary material lends itself to the literary pairing in Livy. I will examine the fragmentary Roman historians before Livy, especially Coelius Antipater who wrote a monograph on the Second Punic War. As an intermediary for the lacunal Roman tradition, I will rely heavily on Polybius who, though in a highly rationalized mode, reveals the mythic conception of Hannibal and Scipio that has established itself even in the 2nd BC. Though Roman history before Sallust (and even after) is highly fragmentary and though surety is impossible, there are signs that suggest that Livy adapted his approach to structurally characterizing Hannibal and Scipio in the third decade of his history from existing literature.

Bibliography

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