

## Olympus Has Fallen: Gigantomachy and the Battle of Cannae in Silius Italicus' *Punica*

Just before the Battle of Cannae Silius depicts giants engaged in gigantomachy and gives them the heroic adjective *magnanimus*: *magnanimos raptum caelestia regna Gigantas*, 9.307. While gigantomachy has been a focus of late in Silian scholarship (Schrijvers 2006; Chaudhuri 2014; Stocks 2014), this instance has received little notice. Silius engages with uses of *magnanimus* that evoke gigantomachy and Olympus as crucial symbols of Augustan *imperium*. With this adjective he aligns his giants with forces traditionally associated with Olympus. Ultimately, Silius' *magnanimos ... Gigantas* are a paradox that criticize the symbols of Augustan *imperium*.

I read Silius' passage against two Augustan representations of Roman *imperium* through these same symbols of gigantomachy and the correspondence between Olympus and Rome. First, Ovid's *ex Ponto* 4 (*sic adfectantes caelestia regna Gigantes*, 4.8.59) provides a clear and overlooked intertext. Although Ovid's *ex Ponto* 4 may contain latent criticism of Augustan *imperium* this reference to gigantomachy is part of a concise display of the correlation between gigantomachy and Augustan *imperium* in Augustan poetry. Silius' engagement with Ovid evokes this world of associations. Similarly, Silius engages with Vergil's articulation of Augustan *imperium*. Vergil aligns Aeneas and Jupiter through the adjective *Magnanimus*. Of the 12 total uses in the *Aeneid*, 5 depict both Aeneas and Jupiter: of Aeneas 5.17; 10.771; of Jupiter at 12.138, 12.875 and by Jupiter of Aeneas at 1.260: *magnanimus Aeneas*. The association between Aeneas and Jupiter is often seen as the bedrock for Vergil's representation of Olympus at Rome (*illa incluta Roma / imperium terris, animos aequabit Olympo*, 6.781-2 et al.) and an expression of Augustan *imperium* (Hardie 1986).

Silius engages with this tradition explicitly at numerous points, perhaps most notably in Jupiter's reference to Domitian's astral construction of the temple of Jupiter at Rome: *aurea Tarpeia ponet Capitolia rupe / et iunget nostro templorum culmina caelo*, 63. 23-4. Less obvious, however, is his Battle of Cannae. Hints of gigantomachy abound throughout the battle, from mountains fashioned into weapons (9.295-7, 466) and Jovian lightning (9.478), to the Olympic representation of Jupiter in Silius' depiction of Hannibal's potential entrance into Rome: *muros / quos intrare dabit numquam regnator Olympi*, 9.349-50. Silius sets these allusions to gigantomachy abreast his gigantomachic giants in the simile at 9.302-7, highlighting the symbolic valence of storming Olympus in the background of his battle narrative.

As Silius' giants assault the allusive *sedes* of Rome via Olympus, they are paradoxically given the Vergilian attribution of both the human symbol of that foundation, Aeneas, and the divine ruler of Olympus himself, Jupiter. As a result, Silius' giants disturb symbolic connections between Rome and Olympus, undercutting that connection as an expression of Augustan *imperium*. Ultimately, these giants even reveal Silius' bleak characterization of Rome's mytho-historical past (Ahl, Davis and Pomeroy 1986; Marks 2005).

#### Bibliography

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