

THE BOW OF ODYSSEUS, HERACLES' CRIME, AND THE GIGANTOMACHY IN THE ODYSSEY¹

Abstract:

This paper focuses on a mysterious reference in the depiction of the provenance of the fateful bow of Odysseus in *Od.* 21.26, which is usually translated as '[the man called] Herakles, guilty of monstrous actions' or else as '... Heracles aware of great deeds'. Instead of traditionally linking this allusion to Heracles' killing of Iphitos or the story of Heracles' involvement in the theft of the mares of Iphitos' father by Autolykos, Odysseus' grandfather, it is argued that the reference here is to the participation of Heracles in the cosmic battle of the Olympian gods against the Gigantes. Accordingly, the line should be translated as follows: 'Heracles, witness to great deeds'. As such, *Od.* 21.26 would provide us with the earliest attested mention of the Gigantomachy in Greek literature. If so, alongside other passages in the *Odyssey* such as 12.69–70 (mentioning 'Argo, who is in all men's minds'), this reference might have been triggered by the poet's eagerness to include an allusion to a freshly pre-Homeric poem widely circulating among his envisaged audience.

Keywords:

Homer, Iliad, Odyssey, Odysseus, bow, Hesiod, Theogony, Heracles, Iphitos, Autolykos, Gigantomachy, Gigantes, Argonautica, epic poetry

My reason for humbly offering Adam a short paper on Homer's *Odyssey* is very specific. We first met when I was reading the *Odyssey* under his supervision in an undergraduate class of Greek history at the Institute of History of the Univer-

¹ When writing this paper, I profited from criticism and advice by Benedetto Bravo, Gunnell Ekroth, Margalit Finkelberg, Robert L. Fowler, Kacper Lepionka, Vinciane Pirenne Delforge, Janric van Rookhuijzen, and Jenny Strauss Clay. It goes without saying, though, that all the mistakes and misunderstandings are mine. This paper was read and discussed, in October 2021, at the seminar of Mikołaj Szymański and Jan Kwapisz at the Institute of Classics, University of Warsaw. I wish to extend my thanks to the hosts and to my public.

sity of Warsaw. It was my freshman year and the Polish *annus mirabilis* 1988/89. Thirty-odd years on, looking back to those happy months, which combined academic and civic joy, brings to mind Livy's proem and his declared reward for doing ancient history in less propitious, but equally eventful, times: *ego [...] hoc quoque laboris praemium petam, ut me a conspectu malorum, quae nostra tot per annos vidit aetas, tantisper certe, dum prisca illa tota mente repeto, avertam [...]* (Liv. 1 pr. 5).

*

- ἐνθα δὲ τόξον κεῖτο παλίντονον ἡδὲ φαρέτρῃ
 ἰοδόκος, πολλοὶ δ' ἔνεσαν στονόεντες οἵστοι,
 δῶρα τὰ οἱ ξεῖνος Λακεδαιμόνι δῶκε τυχήσας
 Ἴφριτος Εὐρυτίδης, ἐπιείκελος ἀθανάτοισι.
 15 τῷ δ' ἐν Μεσσήνῃ ξυμβλήτην ἀλλήλοισιν
 οἴκῳ ἐν Ὀρτιλόχοιο δαΐφρονος. ἦ τοι Ὀδυσσεὺς
 ἦλθε μετὰ χρεῖος, τό ρά οἱ πᾶς δῆμος ὄφελλε:
 μῆλα γὰρ ἐξ Ἰθάκης Μεσσήνιοι ἄνδρες ἄειραν
 νηυσὶ πολυκλήϊσι τριηκόσι' ἡδὲ νομῆας.
 20 τῶν ἔνεκ' ἐξεσίην πολλὴν ὁδὸν ἦλθεν Ὀδυσσεὺς
 παιδνὸς ἐών: πρὸ γὰρ ἦκε πατὴρ ἄλλοι τε γέροντες.
 Ἴφριτος αὖθ' ἵππους διζήμενος, αἱ οἱ ὄλοντο
 δώδεκα θήλειαι, ὑπὸ δ' ἡμίονοι ταλαεργοί:
 αἱ δὴ οἱ καὶ ἔπειτα φόνος καὶ μοῖρα γέγοντο,
 25 ἐπεὶ δὴ Διὸς υἱὸν ἀφίκετο, καρτερόθυμον
 φῶθ', Ἡρακλῆα, μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων,
 ὃς μιν ξεῖνον ἐόντα κατέκτανεν ὦ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
 σχέτλιος, οὐδὲ θεῶν ὄπιν ἠδέσασα' οὐδὲ τράπεζαν,
 τὴν ἦν οἱ παρέθηκεν: ἔπειτα δὲ πέφνε καὶ αὐτόν,
 30 ἵππους δ' αὐτὸς ἔχε κρατερώνυχας ἐν μεγάροισι.
 τὰς ἐρέων Ὀδυσῆϊ συνήντετο, δῶκε δὲ τόξον,
 τὸ πρὶν μὲν ῥ' ἐφόρει μέγας Εὐρυτος, αὐτὰρ ὁ παιδὶ
 κάλλιπ' ἀποθνήσκων ἐν δώμασιν ὑψηλοῖσι.
 τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ξίφος ὅζῳ καὶ ἄλκιμον ἐγχος ἔδωκεν,
 35 ἀρχὴν ξεινοσύνης προσκηδέος: οὐδὲ τραπέζῃ
 γνῶτην ἀλλήλω: πρὶν γὰρ Διὸς υἱὸς ἔπεφνε
 Ἴφριτον Εὐρυτίδην, ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισιν,
 ὃς οἱ τόξον ἔδωκε. τὸ δ' οὐ ποτε δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 ἐρχόμενος πόλεμόνδε μελαινάων ἐπὶ νηῶν
 40 ἡρεῖτ', ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ μνήμα ξεῖνοιο φίλοιο
 κέσκετ' ἐνὶ μεγάροισι, φόρει δὲ μιν ἥς ἐπὶ γαίης.²

² *Od.* 21.11–41. The text reproduced here is that of the OCT edition (ed. Thomas W. Allen), save for lines 25–26 whose awkward punctuation I change according to a suggestion by Benedetto Bravo. Besides, in line 36, I adopt Peter Von der Mühl's acc. dual. ἀλλήλω, instead of gen. ἀλλήλων adopted in Martin L. West's and Helmut van Thiel's editions.

[...] and there the backstrung bow was stored away, and the quiver to hold the arrows. There were many painful shafts inside it. These were the gifts from a friend whom he met in Lakeldaimon, Iphitos, son of Eurytos, one like the immortal gods. These two, in Messene, had encountered each other in the house of Ortilochos, at the time when Odysseus went there on an errand enjoined by the whole community. For men of Messene had come in ships with many oarlocks and lifted hundred sheep from Ithaca, also the herdsmen with them, so Odysseus traveled far on the embassy while still a boy, sent by his father and the rest of the elders. Iphitos was there in search of his horses, twelve mares he had lost; hard-working mule colts were with them, nursing. These mares presently were to mean his doom and murder, at the time when he came to the son of Zeus, strong-hearted, the man called Herakles, guilty of monstrous actions,³ who killed Iphitos while he was a guest in his household; hard man, without shame for the watchful gods, nor the table he had set for Iphitos, his guest; and when he had killed him he kept the strong-footed horses for himself in his palace. In search of his mares, Iphitos met Odysseus, and gave him the bow, which once the great Eurytos had carried, and left it afterwards to his son when he had died in his high house. Odysseus gave him in return a sharp sword and a strong spear, to begin their considerate friendship, but these two never entertained each other; before that, the son of Zeus killed Iphitos, son of Eurytos, one like immortal gods, who gave Odysseus the bow. But Odysseus never took it with him when he went to war on the black ships, but always it was stored away in his halls, in memory of a dear friend; but he carried it at home in his country.

(tr. Richard Lattimore)

Od. 21.13–41 may serve as a sobering reminder of how little is known about the traditional background of the *Odyssey*. This passage provides us with an intriguing ‘genealogy’ of the famous bow of Odysseus, acquired by the youthful hero in a friendly gift exchange with Iphitos (son of Eurytos, king of Oichalia) when they met in Messenia in the house of Ortilochos, both serving on diplomatic missions from their fathers and their peoples. Because of the incongruous ‘mythical chronology’ of this episode and because of its alleged incompatibility with all we know about Odysseus from the *Odyssey*, it is sometimes considered an inter-

³ In lines 25–26, I cannot follow R. Lattimore’s translation reproduced here. I will discuss their interpretation in the following. For the time being, see the previous note.

polation. On the other hand, presenting the reason why it had been left on Ithaca and the provenance of the bow, so crucially important for the plot of the poem, seems simply indispensable.⁴ Regarding the ‘mythical chronology’ of this episode, its fundamental problems lay with the appearance of Heracles, clearly an older contemporary of Odysseus here.⁵ In the following, I will only be concerned with a single but much-debated line, which in my opinion may provide us with a rare insight into the literary, and not just traditional, context of the *Odyssey*.

In line 26, we read of Ἡρακλῆα, μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων, translated by Richard Lattimore as ‘[the man called] Herakles, guilty of monstrous actions’. In their commentary *ad loc.* (7th edn.), K.F. Ameis and C. Hentze translate ἐπίστορα as ‘den Mitwisser, Mitschuldigen frevelhafter Thaten’. The *LSJ*⁹ lexicon s.v., with reference to this line, has ‘privy to a thing’, whereas Franco Montanari’s *Brill Dictionary* (Montanari 2015) gives, accordingly, ‘knowing, informed, aware’. For Jenny Strauss Clay, Heracles is ‘called here a doer “of great deeds” or “enormities”’.⁶ As far as I can see, the commentators and the lexica take this word as referring to the story at hand, namely to Heracles sacrilegiously killing Iphitos while offering him ritual hospitality (*Od.* 21.27–30),⁷ or else, they speculate about the relationship between this monstrous murder and Odysseus’ grandfather Autolycus. On this interpretation, the μέγала ἔργα would denote a previous theft of the mares by Autolycus, to which Heracles would be an accomplice.⁸

⁴ Russo, Fernández-Galliano, Heubeck 1992: 150. For a formal analysis and a narratological commentary on this episode, see de Jong 2001: 506–508. Cf. also Hölscher 2000: 67–72; West 2014: 137 and 278, for the artificial character of Odysseus’ association with the myth of Iphitos. For the bow of Odysseus here, see the revealing analyses by Strauss Clay 1983: 89–96. In her interpretation, the parallel occurrences of the bow of Odysseus and that of the bow of Heracles, in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, subtly ‘convey a message that touches a central nerve of the *Odyssey*: that its hero, *polytropos* Odysseus, the man of *metis*, represents a radically different kind of Epic hero’ (Strauss Clay 1983: 96). Namely, radically different than ‘the dark violent brutality of Heracles’ (Strauss Clay 1983: 95). In that, the brutal appearance of Heracles in this episode, for all the intentional blurring of the traditional epic chronology, is crucial to the poem far beyond the importance of the bow of Odysseus, the ultimate tool of the hero’s vengeance.

⁵ Cf., e.g., *Il.* 11.690, where Heracles is associated with the adventures of the youthful Nestor.

⁶ Commenting on this passage in Finkelberg 2011: 2.345 (s.v. ‘Herakles’: 344–346). In Strauss Clay 1983: 90, she translates it, however, as ‘privy to great deeds’. Similarly, in Galinsky 1972: 11.

⁷ For a broader mythical context, see S. *Trach.* 254–280; cf. Fowler 2013: 332–333 with notes.

⁸ Ameis–Hentze 1889: *ad loc.*; Russo, Fernández-Galliano, Heubeck 1992: *ad loc.* This interpretation goes back to Lehrs 1865: 109, who compares μέγала ἔργα here with *Od.* 3.261 (μέγала ἔργων as *scelestum facinus*) and explains μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων, *non cum veteribus [...] magnorum laborum gnarum [...], sed in crimine* (sc. Autolyki, qui equas surripuerat, deinde Herculi vendiderat) *consciousum*. The story is found in Ps.-Apollodoros (*Bibliotheca*, 2.6.2 [129], with comm. *ad loc.* by Scarpi 2000). Cf. also Pherekydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 82b and F 82a (now in *BNJ* 3, with comm. by W.S. Morison) and in Fowler 2000: 318–319 and Fowler 2013: 332–333 (in general, cf. also Fowler 2013: 706–715) as well as D.S. 4.31.2. For μέγала ἔργων as a negative notion, see also, e.g.,

At this juncture, we ought to take notice of a serious problem. While the word ἐπίστωρ is not otherwise attested before the Hellenistic period, ἴστωρ means in Homer simply 'judge' or 'arbiter' (*Il.* 18.501; 23.486). Therefore, on the one hand, this compound sounds like a grave understatement, or even deliberate euphemism, when applied to Heracles' horrendous deed of killing his guest-friend.⁹ On the other hand, when applied to Heracles' complicity in Autolykos' stealing of the mares and combined with μέγала ἔργα, it is an awkward, nay absurd, exaggeration. In the latter case, it should be noted, we also detach line 26 from its immediate context.

Worse still, in its Hellenistic occurrences in Apollonius Rhodius, ἐπίστωρ is just 'privy' or 'witness' to something, in the *Argonautica* 4.16 and 89. And there is no doubt, I think, that this is precisely how Apollonius understood this striking Homeric hapax. This is why, one may infer, the scholiasts (V.) somewhat indecisively explained ἐπίστορα as μεγαλοῦργόν, but also as ἐπὶ μέγалоις ἔργοις ἱστοροῦμενον, ἐπιστήμονα, so it can be understood both in a pejorative and in a neutral context of 'great deeds'. As Manuel Fernández-Galiano hesitantly puts it in his commentary, 'on the one hand [...], [it] might mean that Heracles was "skilled in" or "accomplice in" (rather than "author of") evil deeds; on the other, it might refer to his Labours', only to return ultimately to the myth of Autolykus and desperately conclude that '[t]he myth is confused and inconsistent'.¹⁰

I have no doubt that we should rely on the instincts of Apollonius Rhodius, an avid and erudite reader of Homer. All in all, reading ἐπίστωρ in the *Odyssey* in a neutral or a purely descriptive context seems all but unavoidable. If so, one cannot refer the line under discussion here directly to the story of the killing of Iphitos, nor, say, to the Labours of Heracles himself. One can only try to explain it – *ignotum per ignotum* – by an allusion to the mythical story of Autolykus, still related to Odysseus and his family. But this would be a straining explanation, since, for Apollonius Rhodius, ἐπίστωρ is not 'accomplice' any more than 'perpetrator' (guilty or not). It is just 'witness'. Therefore, one should try to discon-

Od. 11.272, as well as Hes. fr. 33a. 26 M–W, in this case referring again to Heracles (I owe this reference to Jenny Strauss Clay).

⁹ As Galinsky 1972: 12 puts it, 'This is one of the most devastating indictments of Herakles in literature, exceeded only by Sophocles and the shrill bias of the church fathers, and most subsequent writers took care to make him a more civil fellow'. However, as Margalit Finkelberg kindly suggests me *per litteras* (June 25, 2021), in the *Homeric Hymn to Heracles* (15), l. 6 (πολλὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἔρεξεν ἀτάσθαλα, πολλὰ δ' ἀνέτλη, with a *varia lectio* in several manuscripts: πολλὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἔρεξεν ἀτάσθαλα ἔξοχα ἔργα) '... is cast in a perfectly traditional language, which shows that the hexametric tradition was not short of means when it wanted to describe Heracles' reprehensible behaviour, whereas the Greek of [*Od.* 21.25–26 – M.W.] suggests nothing reprehensible at all'.

¹⁰ Russo, Fernández-Galiano, Heubeck 1992: *ad loc.*

nect the words *μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων* from their context and look for another clue. The most obvious hypothesis would be to understand it as a telling epithet of Heracles, traditional or not, but at any rate self-explanatory for the envisaged audience of the *Odyssey*. I believe that this last path of enquiry is the only sensible one at our disposal.

If one looks for a mythical episode featuring Heracles not only as its main character but also in his capacity as ‘witness (or “knower”) of great deeds’, I think one obvious solution is the participation of the hero in the cosmic war of the Olympic gods against the Gigantes.¹¹ From Pseudo-Apollodorus, we learn of the conflict itself and of the role Heracles played in it (*Bibliotheca*, 1.6.1–2 [34–38]) as well as of the place of this episode within the mythical story of the hero (2.7.1 [138 *ad fin.*]).¹² True, in this version, Heracles is instrumental to the victory of the gods over the Gigantes. According to an old prophecy, these monsters cannot die at the hands of gods alone but only if the latter ally themselves with a mortal man (1.6.1 [35]). However, the hero is but one of the fighters involved. Notwithstanding his memorable triumphs over Porphyryon and especially over Alkyoneus and his role in finishing off a series of anonymous enemies of Zeus, the climactic battle is fought by the Olympians themselves – Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus, Hecate, Hephaestus, Athena, Poseidon, Hermes, Artemis, and even the Moirai.¹³ Their actions, especially the feats of Zeus, Athena, and Poseidon, define the cosmic dimension of this struggle, bordering on the clash of elemental forces (1.6.1–2 [36–38]). However important in the light of the ‘old prophesy’, Heracles’ role looks subordinate in the classical treatment of this mythical episode. And despite this role, as the sole mortal called up into the divine army for this monumental conflict deciding the fates of the universe, he certainly fully deserves to be called *μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων*.

The reason why this obvious solution has not been, if I am not mistaken, hitherto seriously considered to elucidate our line of the *Odyssey* is rather simple. The Gigantomachy, at least in its full-blown form, is usually supposed to be a relatively late addition to the store of Greek mythical traditions,¹⁴ unlike the

¹¹ For this motif, see Vian 1988: esp. nos. 66–17, 98, 104, 109, 112–123, 154–156, 302, 308, 311–312, 314. Another possibility, excluded on purely chronological grounds, would be to take the solemn *μεγάλα ἔργα* as alluding to Heracles’ initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries (for a much later iconography of this theme, see Boardman 1990: esp. nos. 1401–1410). Kacper Lepionka points out to me yet another possibility, namely *Il.* 5.592–404. But see below.

¹² See the relevant commentaries *ad locc.* in Scarpi 2000.

¹³ The preponderance of the Olympians and the auxiliary role of Heracles in the Gigantomachy is clear when comparing the sheer number of their respective representations in art from the archaic and classical periods. See in general the catalogue in Vian 1988.

¹⁴ For both the literary and the artistic tradition of the Gigantes and the Gigantomachy, see the concise and exemplary treatment in Gantz 1993: 1.445–454 and in detail in Vian 1988: esp. 191–192. Cf. also below, n. 32.

Titanomachy, which is well attested already in Hesiod's *Theogony*.¹⁵ By contrast, the Gigantes do not feature prominently in early Greek poetry. True, they are mentioned several times in the *Odyssey*, but always in passing as if they were well-known to the public but not necessarily as archenemies of the gods crushed in a cosmic war.¹⁶ A scholiast to the *Odyssey* was even struck that Homer did not say more about the Gigantes and did not know of their monstrous and snake-like appearance (Σ *Od.* 7.59). In Hesiod, they are briefly mentioned (*Th.* 50–51) and only brought up (*Th.* 185–186) on the occasion of their emergence from the blood of the castrated Ouranos.¹⁷ Pedantically put, still in Pindar (*Nem.* 4.27 and *Isthm.* 6.31–35), Heracles' main rival in the Gigantomachy, Alkyoneus, is not even associated with the Gigantes, and his defeat is most probably not linked with a more sweeping conflict, let alone a cosmic war. However, in Pindar's *Nemean* 7.90, we hear of Heracles 'who defeated the Gigantes', and in his *Nemean* 1.67–69, the hero's part in the battle between them and the gods is explicitly mentioned.¹⁸ Furthermore, in the famous lines of fr. 1.21–22 W² of Xenophanes, the earliest unambiguous reference to the Gigantomachy in Greek literature, we find a direct hint at the poems about the 'battles of the Titans or the Gigantes, or of the Centaurs', and such poems are straightforwardly characterised as 'fictions of our ancestors' ($\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ $\pi\rho\omicron\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega\nu$). Therefore, the Gigantomachy must have been the object of more or less developed poetic narratives before the mid-sixth century.¹⁹

All in all, scepticism regarding a (relatively) early tradition about the Gigantomachy, or at least a Gigantomachy, seems unwarranted.²⁰ All the more so that, as Timothy Gantz brilliantly observes, in Hesiod's *Theogony* (50–52), an allusion to the 'race of men and the powerful Gigantes' as belonging to the joyful repository of the Muses 'might be taken to mean that the epic repertoire contained a story of the latter'.²¹ And indeed, as early as in the *Catalogue of Women*, Heracles is represented as the one who 'slew overbearing Gigantes' (fr. 43a.65 M–W). Now, on the papyrus, there is a gap at the beginning of this line. Reinhold Merkel-

¹⁵ Hes. *Th.* 207–210, 389–396, 629–735, 811–821, 881–885, with West 1966: esp. 200–201, 340–363.

¹⁶ *Od.* 7.56–60, 206, 10.118–120. However, on these passages, see also below, p. 436–437.

¹⁷ Even here, line 186, introducing their warlike appearance and character, is often considered to be interpolated (*fort. recte*, according to Martin L. West in his OCT edition). Incidentally, in his commentary, West 1966: *ad* 186, this scholar seems less suspicious of these lines.

¹⁸ Cf. also *Pyth.* 8.12–18, referring to Porphyryon.

¹⁹ Thus also Vian 1988: 191.

²⁰ Or rather, as West 2011: 365 n. 36 puts it: '[t]here must have been an early *Gigantomachy*, to account for the wealth of allusions to the subject in literature and art [...], but it was apparently not transmitted to later times. There is no evidence that the Giants' Revolt had a place in the narrative of the *Titanomachy*, as some have supposed'.

²¹ Gantz 1993: 1.446. Cf. already Friedländer 1913: 4. In West 1966: *ad* 50, the commentary on '[i]n what way men and Giants might have been combined in the Muses' song' is very speculative and not entirely convincing. See also below.

bach suggested to supplement it with [ἐν Φλέγρηι δ]έ, no doubt based on Pindar's (*Nem.* 1.67–69) and Ps.-Apollodorus' (1.6.1 [34]: ἐν Φλέγραις) location of the battle between the Olympians and the Giants. This is a brilliant, bold, but somewhat risky idea, so the ultimate proof of the existence of some developed version of the Gigantomachy at so early a date is still missing. However, in the same poem, Heracles is explicitly referred to as 'warder off of disaster (ἀρῆς ἀλκτῆρα) from gods and men' (fr. 195.29 M–W [= *Aspis*, 29]; tr. T. Gantz), which can hardly allude to anything else than the cosmic threat for both races from the Gigantes.²²

Moreover, in the final sections of Hesiod's *Theogony* (950–955), one encounters lines depicting the eternally happy fates of Heracles on Olympus. On this occasion, Heracles is referred to as ὀλβιος, ὃς μέγα ἔργον ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνύσας, 'blessed, who has accomplished a great deed among the immortals...' (l. 954). Martin L. West, in his commentary on this passage, opts for associating this 'great deed' with 'Heracles' assistance in the Gigantomachy'.²³ The less likely alternative being 'the whole series of labours', but this would require taking ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν with ναίει, a 'very awkward' hyperbaton.²⁴ And the same objection, let me add, goes for yet another possibility, even less likely, namely taking μέγα ἔργον as alluding to the hero's deification through his dramatic and self-inflicted death on pyre. Besides, the poet clearly dissociates here Heracles' 'painful tasks' (l. 951) from his 'great deed among the immortals' (l. 954).²⁵

The lines 947–955 were probably athetized by Aristarchus and M.L. West considers the mention of Heracles' deification here 'an indication of lateness'.²⁶ The ornate reference to the hero's translation to Olympus may be relatively late. Still, the wording of line 954, the condensed allusion to Heracles' involvement in the Gigantomachy, sounds not only traditional but must have been entirely self-explanatory to the envisaged audience of this passage. Granted, 'having accomplished' a μέγα ἔργον is not the same as 'witnessing' ἔργα μεγάλα, but the nature and the function of the line in the *Odyssey* under discussion seem analogous. It looks like an allusion to an otherwise well-known episode, emblematic of, or even defining, the mythical persona of Heracles, and as such, it stands out

²² Cf. Gantz 1993: 1.446.

²³ West 1966: *ad loc.* Cf. Gantz 1993: 1.446.

²⁴ West 1966: *ad loc.* Without this hyperbaton, to take this line as referring to the Labours, as several scholars have seen, one would need to emend ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν into ἐν ἀνθρώποισι (F.A. Paley) or into ἐν θνητοῖσιν (F. Osann). *Contra* see, however, Pirenne Delforge, Pironi 2016: 275–277.

²⁵ G.W. Most, in his Loeb edition of Hesiod, cautiously translates this line as follows: 'happy he, for after having accomplished his great work among the immortals he dwells unharmed and ageless for all his days'.

²⁶ West 1966: 416–417; cf. also West 1966: 221.

in its context in the poem.²⁷ Thus, in the words καρτερόθυμον | φῶθ', Ἡρακλῆα, μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων, 'a strong-hearted | man, Heracles, witness of great feats' (*Od.* 21.25–26), the 'great feats' alluded to seem to be the monumental actions of the Olympians in the Gigantomachy.

*

If this hypothesis is plausible enough, our line of the *Odyssey* will acquire an unusually important status. Whatever the actual form and details of the traditions about the Gigantomachy might have been at the time, our line may be compared with the famous passage in Book 12: [...] οἷη δὴ κείνη γε παρέπλω ποντοπόρος νηὺς, | Ἀργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ' Αἰήταο πλέουσα, '[t]hat way the only seagoing ship to get through was Argo, who is in all men's minds, on her way home from Aietes' (*Od.* 12.69–70; tr. R. Lattimore). As Albert Heubeck puts it, '[t]he passage is the most important evidence for a pre-Homeric Argonautica as a source and model for Odysseus' adventures in ix–xii'.²⁸ And strikingly, '[t]he difficulties of 55–72, which cannot be removed by excision of individual lines [...], arise mainly because the poet conflates two concepts from mythological geography [...]'.²⁹

In addition to Heubeck's observations, I think that the reason for this 'conflation' can be detected in the phrase Ἀργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα, namely that the poet was eager to include this divergent and all in all unrelated element in Circe's guidelines for Odysseus exactly because of the importance of some (pre-Homeric) Argonautica poem, clearly widely-known, as he assumed, among his envisaged audience.

I would argue that it must have been the same for the story of the bow of Odysseus in Book 21, also suspected of being alien to our *Odyssey* in its current form on the grounds of its narrative difficulties in the context (see above). Here again, I posit, besides the necessity of presenting the provenance of the bow, the poet decided to include the story of Odysseus, Iphitos, and Heracles, because of the significance of a renowned poem, whose traces can be detected in the words καρτερόθυμον | φῶθ', Ἡρακλῆα, μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων. There is, however, an important difference between the two cases. Whereas it is evident that the mention

²⁷ I would not go as far as to claim that the decision of the poet to include this line in the *Odyssey* was facilitated by the fact that already at so early a date the tales of Heracles' participation in the Gigantomachy especially focused on his magisterial use of the bow (as they do already in Pindar and in Greek iconography since the beginning in the sixth century BC), but this seems a remote possibility, although, as Jenny Strauss Clay observes (*per litteras*, June 28, 2021), Heracles is obviously better known for his bow rather than for his club in the *Odyssey* (as also in *Od.* 8.224 and 11.607–608). Cf. Heubeck, West, Hainsworth 1988: ad 8.224.

²⁸ Heubeck, Hoekstra 1989: ad 12.55–72, where substantial bibliography of this subject is briefly noted, featuring the ground-breaking dissertation by Meuli 1921. In general, cf. Merkelbach 1969: esp. 199–208. Recently, see also West 2011: 277–312 and West 2014: 30, 119–122.

²⁹ Heubeck, Hoekstra 1989: ad 12.55–72.

of 'Argo, who is in all men's minds' alludes to an Argo-epos, or Argonautica, it is not clear whether the expanded story of Iphitos' bow was supposed to refer the audience of the *Odyssey* to a poem focusing specifically on the Gigantomachy or to some 'theogonic' epos featuring the Gigantomachy, or else to an epos about Heracles himself.

At first, the latter possibility seems the most plausible one, but at this juncture, one should perhaps consider a substantial difference between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as regards the Gigantes. Whereas there is no mention of them in the *Iliad*, they appear several times in the *Odyssey*. In *Od.* 7.56–60, in a vital passage providing the genealogy of the Phaeacians,³⁰ we learn of Periboia, 'the fairest in form of women' (γυναικῶν εἶδος ἀρίστη), who 'lay in love with Poseidon' and 'engendered Nausithoös the great-hearted', the ancestor of the Phaeacians. Periboia was 'the youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedon, | who in his time had been king over the high-hearted Giants. | But he lost his recklessly daring people and himself perished' ([...] ὃς ποθ' ὑπερθύμοισι Γιγάντεσσιν βασιλευεν. | ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ὤλεσε λαὸν ἀτάσθαλον, ὤλετο δ' αὐτός, 7.58–60). In 7.205–206, the king of Phaeacians Alkinoös claims that Cyclopes, Phaeacians themselves, and their relatives, 'the savage tribes' of the Gigantes, are 'very close to gods' (ἐπεὶ σφισιν ἐγγύθεν εἰμὲν ὥς περ Κύκλωπές τε καὶ ἄγρια φύλα Γιγάντων). Finally, in Odysseus' account about his doomed attack on the Laestrygones, these monstrous giants, summoned by their king Antiphates against the troops of the hero, swarm up in thousands 'not like men, like Giants' (οὐκ ἄνδρεςσιν ἐοικότες, ἀλλὰ Γίγασιν, 10.120). Besides some interest in the physical appearance of the Gigantes as suggested by their female representatives, Periboia, 'the fairest in form of women', and especially Antiphates' wife, 'a woman | as big as a mountain peak' and whose sight filled Odysseus' men with horror (10.112–113),³¹ these three passages have not attracted enough scholarly attention. And all three seem highly relevant to our problem of the nature of Homer's allusion to the Gigantomachy in Book 21.

On the one hand, the references to the Gigantes in the *Odyssey* are skillfully interwoven into the genealogy of the mythical tribe crucial to the poem, the Phaeacians. Whatever their prior tradition, the poet of the *Odyssey* no doubt developed and embellished it to suit the requirements of the plot. Associating them with the Gigantes was probably his invention. Of course, the obscure passage in

³⁰ The lines 56–68 have been athetized by several scholars because the incestuous marriage of Alkinoös and Arete was considered suspect (thus, e.g., Kirchhoff and Von der Mühl); cf. Heubeck, West, Hainsworth 1988: ad 54–66. I consider this objection pedantic. In many ways, including the special socio-political status of Arete, the mythical Phaeacians on their remote island are clearly exempt from the rules of the 'regular' heroic world in the *Odyssey* and closer to such beings as the eternally happy family of Aiolos, whose six daughters were married to his six sons (*Od.* 10.1–12). Moreover, this very objection would be even more valid for a later interpolation.

³¹ E.g. Gantz 1993: 1.445–446.

7.58–60 about Eurymedon, who 'lost his recklessly daring people and himself perished', may or may not be considered alluding to the Gigantomachy,³² but given my previous argument, I think there are good chances it does. Additionally, the indefinite adverb ποθ' (= ποτέ), 'once upon a time', in 7.59 seems to carry some weight and thus perhaps to suggest a particular story the audience is supposed to know about. On the other hand, the comparison of the Laestrygones in Book 10, 'not to men, but to the Gigantes', should not be taken lightly. To use it in this context as a shorthand for their monstrous stature, the poet must have relied on powerful associations in the minds of his envisaged audience. All in all, taking into account the total absence of the Gigantes from the *Iliad*, I would think it most likely that a highly memorable poem featuring them, and perhaps the Gigantomachy as well, achieved wide circulation after the time of the *Iliad* and not too long before the creation of the *Odyssey*.³³

A significant passage of the *Iliad* seems to confirm this indirectly. When recounting previous divine misadventures with humans to Aphrodite freshly wounded by Diomedes (5.392–404),³⁴ Dione mentions two immortal victims of Heracles's bow – Hera and Hades. In conclusion, Dione characterises Heracles as σχέτλιος ὄβριμοεργὸς ὃς οὐκ ὄθεται αἴσυλα ῥέζων, | ὃς τόξοισιν ἐκιδε θεοὺς οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσι ('Brute, heavy-handed, who thought nothing of the bad he was doing, | who with his archery hurt the gods that dwell on Olympos!', 403–404; tr. Lattimore). Whereas it cannot be excluded that the poet of the *Odyssey* 21.25–29

³² Hainsworth in Heubeck, West, Hainsworth 1988: ad 7.59: 'He [*the poet of the Odyssey* – M.W.] betrays no acquaintance with the elaborate mythology of the Gigantomachia. The allusion to the Giants' defeat in 60, if not an *ad hoc* invention, is obscure'. On the contrary, Garvie 1994: 174, allows for the poet's familiarity with the motif of the war between the gods and the Giants in the light of the 'disapproving description of them' in the *Odyssey* (cf. also Garvie 1994: ad 7.60).

³³ This conclusion should make one ask oneself about the reasons of the absence of the Gigantomachy from Hesiod's *Theogony*. But instead of trying to speculate, from this particular point of view, about the relative chronology of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the poems of Hesiod (in general, cf., e.g., West 188–208 and 209–232), I would rather recall the artistic licence of Hesiod in presenting heroes ('divided' by him, so to say, into two groups, the heroic generation and the men of bronze) in the 'myth of the races of men' in his *Works and Days* (see, however, below). Since, in his *Theogony*, the Gigantomachy would idly and unnecessarily repeat the motifs of the Titanomachy, I posit that the poet consciously omitted this episode to move on to the story of Typhoeus, another monstrous child of Gaia. Cf. already Strauss Clay 2009: 113–115, for an ingenious explanation of the absence of the motif of the Gigantomachy from Hesiod's *Theogony*. Additionally, as Jenny Strauss Clay suggests me (a letter of June 28, 2021), the unusual mention of Zeus' respect for a mortal, in *Th.* 532, may perhaps be due to the former's gratitude for the role of Heracles in the Gigantomachy (cf. also an interesting commentary on this line in West 1966: ad loc.).

³⁴ I wish to thank Kacper Lepionka for reminding me of the importance of these lines in my current context. Note, however, that the lines 398–402 are athetized in West's Teubner edition following Koehly.

(... καρτερόθυμον | φῶθ', Ἡρακλῆα (...) σχέτλιος κτλ.) recalled these lines of the *Iliad*, Heracles the supreme archer looks rather like the (occasional) archenemy of the Olympians and not yet their emblematic ally of the Gigantomachy.

Furthermore, there is a cursory mention of the Gigantes in Hesiod's *Theogony* 50–52: '... sing of Zeus and then, singing of the race of human beings and of the mighty Giants, they give pleasure to Zeus' mind within Olympus, the Olympian Muses, the daughters of aegis-holding Zeus' (tr. G. W. Most). As Benedetto Bravo pointed out to me, Paul Friedländer was probably the first to systematically interpret this poem's famous 'prologue' as a coherent artistic whole. On this occasion, he observed that these lines do not so much present the contents of the poem to unfold, but they rather foreshadow the epic material that the Muses and so the poet have at their disposal. 'Theogonie, Hymnen, heroisches Epos', as Friedländer puts it,³⁵ or rather theogonies, the feats of the Olympian gods, and those of the heroes. So far, so good. But why would the Gigantes and only them be chosen here as a shortcut for one element of the traditional epic repertoire? I would argue that this very fact may confirm my previous hypothesis about the Gigantomachy as a memorable motif, or perhaps even a poem, of the time.

In the famous passage explicitly introducing a freshly circulating poem on the *nostoi*, or homecomings of the heroes of the Trojan War, in *Od.* 1.351–352 (tr. R. Lattimore), we hear from Telemachus that 'people, surely, always give more applause to that song | which is the latest to circulate among the listeners' (τὴν γὰρ αἰοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι, ἥ τις ἀκουόντεσσι νεωτάτῃ ἀμφιπέληται). Now, one cannot be sure whether the nature of the allusions mentioned above to pre-Homeric poems in the *Odyssey* – to an *Argonautica* and the motif of the Gigantomachy – point to their more recent dissemination and acclaim or rather to their more traditional and time-honoured status in the contemporary world of the poet. Still, 'Argo, who is in all men's minds' and the occurrences of the Gigantes in the *Odyssey*, and perhaps in the *Theogony* as well, as compared with the absolute absence of these motifs from the *Iliad*, strongly suggest the former. Whichever was the case, there can be no doubt about the vibrant intellectual atmosphere surrounding the poet of the *Odyssey*.³⁶ Incidentally, this lively artistic world is additionally testified to by the epic snippets inscribed on Greek late-geometric pottery, which I, for one, would interpret as literal citations from epic poems already accessible in their written, and not only oral form.³⁷ But this is another story.

³⁵ Friedländer 1913: 4.

³⁶ Cf. Węcowski 2019: esp. 31–32.

³⁷ Unlike several poetic vase-inscriptions of the eighth and early seventh century B.C. which ought to be associated functionally with the symposion (recently, see Węcowski 2017), including the renowned 'Cup of Nestor' from Pithekoussai, at least one early vase may be supposed to carry such a 'quotation' (see P. A. Hansen in *CEG* I, p. 252, on a fragmentary *oinochoē* from

Bibliography

- Ameis, K.F., Hentze, C. 1889: *Homers Odyssee. Für den Schulgebrauch erklärt von Karl Friedrich Ameis*, Bd. II, Hft. 2: *Gesang XIX–XXIV, siebente berichtigte Auflage besorgt von C. Hentze*, Leipzig.
- Boardman, J. 1990: 'Herakles', in *LIMC V.1: Herakles–Kenchrias*, Zürich, München, 1–192.
- de Jong, I.J.F. 2001: *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, Cambridge.
- Finkelberg, M. 2011: *The Homer Encyclopedia edited by...*, vols I–III, Chichester.
- Fowler, R.L. 2000: *Early Greek Mythography*, vol. I: *Text and Introduction*, Oxford.
- Fowler, R.L. 2013: *Early Greek Mythography*, vol. II: *Commentary*, Oxford.
- Friedländer, P. 1913: 'Das Proömium der Theogonie', *Hermes* 49, 1–16.
- Galinsky, G.K. 1972: *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*, Oxford.
- Gantz, T. 1993: *Early Greek Myth. A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, vol. I, Baltimore, London.
- Garvie, A.F. 1994: *Homer. Odyssey. Books VI–VIII* ed. by..., Cambridge.
- Heubeck, A., West, S., Hainsworth, J.B. 1988: *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. I: *Introduction and Books I–VIII*, Oxford.
- Heubeck, A., Hoekstra, A. 1989: *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. II: *Books IX–XVI*, Oxford.
- Hölscher, U. 2000: *Die Odyssee. Epos zwischen Märchen und Roman*, Nördlingen².
- Lehrs, K. 1865 [1833]: *De Aristarchi studiis Homericis scriptis...*, Lipsiae.
- Merkelbach, R. 1969: *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee*, Zetemata 2, München².
- Tzifopoulos, Y. (ed.) 2012: *Methone Pierias I / Μεθώνη Πιερίας I: Επιγραφές, χαράγματα και εμπορικά σύμβολα στη γεωμετρική και αρχαϊκή κεραμική από το 'Υπόγειο' της Μεθώνης Πιερίας στη Μακεδονία*, Thessaloniki.
- Meuli, K. 1921: *Odyssee und Argonautika. Untersuchungen zur griechischen Sagengeschichte und zum Epos*, Berlin.
- Montanari, F. 2015: *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, Leiden, Boston.

Ithaca: CEG I 453; ca 700 B.C.). I would argue that this may also be the case of the so-called 'Dipylon Jug' from Athens (another *oinochoē* of ca 740 B.C.). Its famous inscription might have been just a random citation copied as an exercise in the difficult art of writing around the body of three-dimensional objects (a good example of such difficulties may be now provided by the contemporary iambic [?] 'Hakesandros inscription' from Methone: Tzifopoulos (ed.) 2012: 341, no. 2 [M0 2248], inscribed by a very skilled specialist, but badly miscalculated as regards its total length). This interpretation would be one way to account for the strangely discontinuous syntactic structure of the hexameter inscribed on the 'Dipylon Jug', but also for the fact that this poetic line ultimately dissolves into a series of letters, by some scholars interpreted as a fragment of an abecedarium, most probably written by another hand. I hope to be able one day to substantiate this idea elsewhere.

- Pirenne Delforge, V., Pironti, G. 2016: *L'Héra de Zeus*, Paris.
- Russo, J., Fernández-Galiano, M., Heubeck, A. 1992: *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. III: *Books XVII–XXIV*, Oxford.
- Scarpi, P. 2000: *Apollodoro. I miti greci (Biblioteca)*, a cura di..., Milano⁵.
- Strauss Clay, J. 1983: *The Wrath of Athena. Gods and Men in the Odyssey*, Princeton, N.J.
- Strauss Clay, J. 2009: *Hesiod's Cosmos*, Cambridge – New York.
- Vian, F. 1988: 'Gigantes', in *LIMC* IV.1: *Eros–Herakles*, Zürich, München, 191–270.
- Węcowski, M. 2017: 'Wine and the early history of the Greek alphabet. Early Greek vase-inscriptions and the symposion', in J. Strauss Clay, I. Malkin, Y. Tzifopoulos, (eds), *Panhellenes at Methone. Graphê in Late Geometric and Protoarchaic Methone, Macedonia (ca 700 BCE)*, Trends in the Classics, Suppl. vol. 44, Berlin, Boston, 309–328.
- Węcowski, M. 2019: 'An *Intentionale Gegenwart*? Odysseus' "false tales" and the intellectual context of the *Odyssey*', in A. Möller (ed.), *Historiographie und Vergangenheitsvorstellungen in der Antike. Beiträge zur Tagung aus Anlass des 70. Geburtstages von Hans-Joachim Gehrke*, Stuttgart, 17–34.
- West, M.L. 1966: *Hesiod's Theogony. Edited with Prolegomena and Commentary by...*, Oxford.
- West, M.L. 2011: *Hellenica. Selected Papers on Greek Literature and Thought*, vol. I: *Epic*, Oxford.
- West, M.L. 2014: *The Making of the Odyssey*, Oxford.

Marek Węcowski

m.węcowski@uw.edu.pl

Faculty of History
University of Warsaw
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
00-927 Warsaw, Poland