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Galhegos: The *Theogony* vs. the
*Gigantomachy***

Manuel Ferro

Professor for Compared Literature

at Coimbra University

Fellow Reasearcher of the Interuniversity Research

Center for Camonian Studies

Portugal

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209
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**From Hesiod to Manuel de Galhegos:
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Abstract

If the Greek inheritance in the most important and well-known Portuguese epics, *The Lusíads*, by Luís de Camões, has been studied along the centuries and even today there is always something new to say, the same cannot be said about the *Gigantomachy*, by Manuel de Galhegos, the first great mythological epic poem in the Portuguese literature, as it has not caught the attention by literary criticism. Composed in the Portuguese Baroque and published in 1628, the *Gigantomachy* deals with the struggle of the ancient mythological giants and even though it was inspired in the *Gigantomachy* of Claudian, it goes back to the *Theogony* of Hesiod as an important source of inspiration. At the time, the subject got a new and deeper meaning because the Portuguese poem was written in a critical political context, when Portugal lost its independence and was ruled for 60 years by the Spanish kings. Therefore, in this paper, it is intended to analyze not only the way how Manuel de Galhegos takes advantage of the structures and suggestions available in Hesiod's *Theogony* and Claudian's *Gigantomachy*, as well of the codes of the epics both works imply, but also the way how he updates aspects and problems that affect, influence, condition and trouble men of his own time.

Keywords: Mythological epics; Hesiod; Claudian; Manuel de Galhegos; *Theogony*; *Gigantomachy*.

Contact Information of Corresponding author:

The Portuguese Baroque was rich in its epic production, being possible the identification of four great lines: epic poems inspired in patriotic subjects, mainly of national interest; heroic works of Hispanic importance; poems of religious character, of ecumenical significance, according to the dominant spirit of the Counter-Reformation; and last, but not least, epic poems of mythological matter. In this last category, the most well conceived and successful was the *Gigantomachia*, by Manuel de Galhegos, written and published in 1628 (FERRO, 1997, 309-310). Besides, it was the largest one, as in Portugal all the other poems were shorter than this, and apparently it followed in a stricter way well known literary models, mainly when dealing with the treatment of grotesque figures. At the time, the main purpose of epics was the exaltation of past national glories, constituting it the most important support of the autonomic spirit, as the country was crossing a period of crisis, because Portugal was being ruled by the Spanish kings and politically absorbed by the dual monarchy. The conscience of having developed a remarkable work of evangelization in other continents contributed too to this nationalist glorification. Together with the description of new realities, that human geography afforded, and the narrative of historical facts, even though still following in especial way the model of the Camonian poem, the epic identity of the Portuguese baroque got its shape and was thoroughly configured. However, that attitude of following *The Lusíads* was not uncritically accepted, as large theoretical debates dealing with the codes and characteristics of the epic poem took place simultaneously and two heroic patterns were being put in counterpoint, the Camonian and the Tassian one, this means, *The Lusíads* (1572) vs. the *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581), as the last one seemed then to be more adequate to the baroque worldview, for its religiosity and for a pretense creative capability of a noble tendency directed to ethical intuitions (FERRO, 1997, 309). Due to the popularity attained by this kind of poetry, the epic poem was considered the most sublime literary gender, in which the poetic vein of the writer was to be put on trial. The mythological poem, conceived as a category of the epic poetry, was then perfectly adapted to the artistic taste and aesthetical interests of the time. Mythology had been used since Renaissance as the most successful resource of embellishing the epic poetry. And now, after the composition of the *Fable of Polyphemus and Galatea* (1612), by Góngora, and the use of the love story of a grotesque Cyclop for a beautiful nymph, mythology became definitively the latest fashion.

As mentioned, in Portugal, at the time, there was a deep reflection and debate about the codes of the heroic poem and the two models, one from Camões and the other from Torquato Tasso, offered the opportunity for two main streams of criticism to fight and establish a larger and useful theory of the epics. In this context, Manuel de Galhegos composed too some theoretical texts, in general with an introductory character to his poems or to works of other poets (FERRO, 2004, 246). In the most important of them, “The Poetical Discourse”, used as a prologue to *Ulisseia* (1636), by Gabriel Pereira de Castro, he justifies not only the excellencies of that poem, but also the prerogatives of it, and takes the opportunity to clarify his theory of the heroic

poem. He explains then some general aspects which identify the gender, but, at the same time, he starts systematizing other ingredients, such as the sublimity of style. Therefore, he submits a definition of epics as the right poem to sing heroic actions accomplished by a valorous hero, worthy of future memory (GALHEGOS, 1636, [5]). Strictly connected with this subject, he advances with considerations regarding several rhetorical strategies – the aporia, periphrasis, hyperbole, asyndeton –, in order to get harmony and elegance in each verse (GALHEGOS, 1636, [5]). After that he deals with the appeal to the Muses and the dedicatory to a *mæcenas*, recalling classical examples and trying to show the superiority of Camões in these aspects (GALHEGOS, 1636, [5v]). When dealing with the narrative, Galhegos is divided between the beginning in *medias res* and the exposition *ab initio* (GALHEGOS, 1636, [5v]). In spite of accepting the first one as the most common, he prefers the second as a more rational way to display the subject. And when he approaches the other codes of the heroic poem, he does not keep away from the other contemporary literary theorists and poets. However, when dealing with the unity of action, Galhegos follows Torquato Tasso, as he chooses a unique action, embellished with a reasonable number of episodes, so that it may enable the poem to be enriched and, at the same time, extended to different plans (GALHEGOS, 1636, [6v-7v]). In this field, he prefers the use of the Christian marvelous dimension, notwithstanding the symbolic potentialities of the ancient mythology, at the time so admired. Besides in all other aspects of the heroic poem, only the inattentive reader does not identify the vocabulary of Torquato Tasso when he talks about variety, prudence, novelty, elegance, gentleness, courtesy, proportion, depth, in a word, the main features of what may be considered the poetical perfection (GALHEGOS, 1636, [8]). In some moments, Galhegos feels the attraction of introducing parts that up to the moment were not still well accepted as essential ingredients of an heroic poem, such as the peroration and the epilogue (GALHEGOS, 1636, [8]). When he discusses the characteristics of the style, he pleads for a grandiloquent, but at the same time a clear expression, everything assembled with the main purpose of introducing a moral and instructive purpose in poetry (GALHEGOS, 1636, [8]-[8v]). This last aspect ends by reflecting itself not only upon the way the hero is conceived, but also upon verisimilitude, which in its turn fits the circumstances and the chronotopical coordinates of the leading action (GALHEGOS, 1636, [8v]).

If all these considerations lead Manuel de Galhegos to the composition of the *Poetical Discourse*, so that he may exalt the intents and purposes of the work he is introducing – the *Ulissea* – regarding the *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, in another point of view, he also pleads for the development of expressive strategies in the Portuguese language, in order to attract the writers of the time, that went on writing simultaneously in Spanish. In another theoretical text, used as a prologue to his poem *Templo da Memória* (*The Temple of Memory*), from 1635, he stresses the importance of verisimilitude and truth as fundamental ingredients of the heroic poetry (GALHEGOS, 1635, [5]). In his point of view, the development of the Portuguese baroque epics had

to do with the importance given to these two aspects, complemented by the description of historical facts and the use of documentation, so that heroic poems may instruct the reader, reducing the epics æsthetic factor. In the remaining text of theory about the epics, the *Prelude to Gigantomachia*, he reevaluates everything he has written up to the moment regarding the two main streams of theorizers and poets of the contemporary Portugal: The Camonists and the Tassists (FERRO, 2004, 257-258).

In the end, the outreach of Manuel de Galhegos' theories is recognized by both tendencies, as he is an Aristotelian, and he dares to oppose himself to an overenhanced worship of Camões, admitting simultaneously that the national Poet did not follow rigidly all the theoretical rules of the epics. However, having in mind his fidelity to a literary critical honesty, Manuel de Galhegos was not a frontal anti-Camonist, but never became an unconditional Tassist (FERRO, 2004, 259).

Deeply attached to the mentality of his own time, Galhegos was born in Lisbon, in 1597, and he is a live example of the culture and taste of that epoch in Portugal. Being recognized as a praiseworthy poet, such as by Lope de Vega in his *Laurel de Apolo* (1630), he started, in 1628, his literary production with *Gigantomachia / Gigantomachy*, a mythological epic poem, followed by the *Fable of Anaxarete*, both of them written in Spanish; afterwards, he wrote *O Templo da Memória / The Temple of Memory* (1635), in which the characteristics of the heroic poem are adjusted to those of the epithalamium, as it was composed for the wedding of the Duke of Braganza, future king of Portugal, John 4.th. Besides, he is responsible for a volume of poems under the title of *Obras varias al real Palacio del Buen Retiro / Several Works to the Royal Palace of Buen Retiro* (Madrid, 1637), under the pseudonym of Maria de Quiñones; he is responsible too for a considerable number of comedies (*A Entrada de Filipe em Portugal / The Entrance of King Philip in Portugal*, *Afonso de Albuquerque*, *El honrado prudente / The honest wise man*, *Valor, verdad y aficion / Importance, Truth and affection*, *Casar a gusto per fuerza / A forced marriage at ease*, *La Oronte de Chypre / Oronte of Cyprus* e *La Reina Maria Estuarda / Queen Mary Stuart*); and composed *Relação do que aconteceu na feliz aclamação dedicada aos Nobres de Portugal... / A Relation of what happened in the happy acclamation dedicated to the Noblemen of Portugal* (1641); he directed the first gazette of the Portuguese restoration, *Gazeta em que se relatam as novas todas...*; he systematized his literary ideas in the theoretical texts above considered, and he left some more occasional poems, that remained scattered in different works of several contemporaneous authors (ANDRADE, 1629; GUZMÁN SUAREZ, 1630). He died when he was 68 years old, in 1665 (FRAGA, 1997, 745-747 and FERRO, 2004, 246).

In this atmosphere, when he was a young poet, mythology was still a vivid source of inspiration, mainly for poets who tried to make a fortune in academic circles. Renaissance in Portugal revealed the large and deep potentialities of symbolic and poetical resources that ancient mythology afforded. It was largely used as a technique of ornament of the poetical discourse in general in all literary genders, but especially in epic poetry, anyway as it happened at the

time in almost all European countries and cultures. Its charm seduced every poet and in Mannerism, and afterwards in Baroque, Rococo and Neoclassicism, its effect was felt very lively, as the artistic and literary production from the 16.th to the end of the 18.th gives clear evidence.

Galhegos' readings during his youth, for sure, offered him this large vein of poetical subjects, not only caught in works of modern poets, but also in the ancient, Greek and Latin authors, or in more recent ones, such as Giovanni Boccaccio' *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (*On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles*), an encyclopedic compilation of the tangled family relationships of the classical gods of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Thus, regarding Galhegos as a result of this artistic and cultural atmosphere, the *Gigantomachia* is an epic poem constituted by five cantos of different extension, with a variable number of stanzas, and it is seen as an answer to the classical challenge of imitation, as the very author declares that he wrote a second *Gigantomachy* following the example of Claudian. Besides, he adds the information he dares to do it because Claudian left his work unfinished. In the Prelude, already mentioned for reasons of theoretical nature, the poet summarizes the subject of the poem, centered in the war of the Titans against Jupiter and enounces the works that most inspired him and which he preferred when there were different versions (FRAGA, 1997, 746). But, of course, the starting point for those who wish to deal with the *Gigantomachy* is Hesiod's *Theogony*. Besides, there are some aspects which show an evident convergence of Hesiod's and Galhegos' points of view regarding poetry, as in both poems the didactic function of literature is deeply stressed (PEREIRA, 1993, 157) and, according to Lesky's opinion, the way how facts are presented shows not only a violent succession of several heavenly gods, but the ascendant direction towards a more civilized state, established by Jupiter, that implied, in the end, Justice's triumph and justifies the divine power exercised by the Olympian god (LESKY, 1963, 116-119; LESKY, 1966, 379-400; and PEREIRA, 1993, 160). Besides, the organic and systematized treatment and codification of divine legends ascribed to Hesiod and the application of the epic technique to the described events are well accepted to understand the way how truth is told making use of the myth (KIRK, 1962, 10, e PEREIRA, 1993, 164). The same will be made by Manuel de Galhegos. Among the most impressing myths included in *Theogony*, in which Hesiod's adjusts the myth of the different ages of the creation of the world, explaining the degeneration of Humanity, the Greek Poet introduced the age of heroes between the two last periods, so interrupting the line of unequivocal decadence (PEREIRA, 1997, 166), and this version of the myth shows how useful it is to Galhegos' purpose in his *Gigantomachy*.

In Hesiod's work, the structural principle followed for the construction of the poem is identified with the catalogue technique, not an innovation of his own, but allowing the understanding of the creation of the universe through the names of the first entities. The genealogies of the primordial gods are interrupted by episodes, most of them regarding the fights of Jupiter to survive (his birth and the trap to Chronos, vv. 468-490), then the conquest of power

(the fight against his father, vv. 490-506, and the Titanomachy, vv. 629-720), its consolidation (Prometheus' episode, vv. 521-564, Epimetheus' and Pandora's episodes, vv. 565-616), and finally, to keep it (fight against Typhon, vv. 821-869). In this way, we recognize that the subject used for the composition of the following poems about the gigantomachy is extracted in a considerable part from Hesiod's work, especially from the second half of *Theogony*.

When Claudian (Claudius Claudianus, ca. 370 - 404 AD) wrote his poem, his age was a disturbed period, with invasions of barbaric peoples, violent battles between the Roman Empire and the Ostrogoths, the division of the Empire in two, the eastern and the western, the decadence of Latin culture, counterpointed by the diffusion of Catholicism. After the clamorous defeat of Valens, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, in Adrianopolis, in 378, and the consequent ruinous and barbaric massacre of the imperial army, by the Goths, to the pacification of this people by Theodosius and afterwards to the plundering of Rome under Alaric in 410, Claudian was an attentive witness of all these historical events that express the course of the decadence of the world in which he lived.

Thus, Claudian is a poet that experiences directly the decline of civilization and recognizes the signs of the end of a well known world, but at the same time he becomes aware of them in an a-historical transfiguration of his own, in which his poems are seen as the reflex of the historical process he experienced. Historical and legendary heroes become actual, present, excellently effective, used to express the positive way of watching and representing a long lasting chain of events that finishes in his days. That's why Claudian's perspective of shaping his world includes the idea of a constant threat towards daily reality, but also towards history, figured not only by the vague demons of disorder, but also of hostile and mysterious forces. Contemporary threats are so transferred into a legendary distance, or rendered by cosmic successes often already concluded, making use of the recollection of a mythical spectrum of violent successes operated by monsters, giants and titans. And all this is evaluated instead of exalting the victory of order and light. In this way, he dissolves in the evidence of myth the already perceived menace of his own age. *Gigantomachy*, according to this point of view, becomes a proposal of exposing the initiating themes of the resplendent cosmic harmony and of the spiritual ascension after death experience through the reappropriation of neo-orphic and neo-platonic topics. However, the Egyptian-Roman poet did not finish the poem, maybe he did not succeed in deciphering thoroughly the changes occurring in his own days (SERPA, 1994, 10-11). Anyway, in this poem, myth fulfils Claudian demands, as gods are always characterized with human attributes, especially regarding the substance of feelings they display. Mythology is like a subtle veil covering ordinary successes. Olympus looks like Earth; nothing different happens from what we watch in everyday life, under our eyes, and the gods are not more than conspicuous men (BOISSIER, II, 1891, 240). Corresponding to these contents, Claudian exhibits a refined opulence of style, correlative either to the symbolic discourse of Mythology, or

to the daily rituals of the imperial court he attended. His language, far from being spontaneous, practical, and realistic, because he gives form to expressive secular traditions in an a-temporal contemporaneity, supported by a vigorous style and a fluent and harmonious verse, gives shape to a reality colored with radiant and elegant tonalities, revealing an educated intellect, endowed with an exuberant fancy (SERPA, 1994, 11, and GIBBON, II, 1788, 1106).

Besides, if after the Greco-Persian wars Gigantomachy started symbolizing too the hostility between those two peoples, the Greeks figuring the Olympians and the Persians as Giants, Claudian caught the suggestion for the struggle between the Roman Empire and the Goths. In such a context, thus can be read either the poem *Gigantomachy* or *De Bello Gothico*, even though there is always the possibility of disguising this historical and political interpretations with an allegorical meaning, in which the fight between the Giants and Jupiter can also be understood as a metaphor for mere catastrophic geomorphic changes, following the trend in Hellenistic Alexandria for rationalized glosses of archaic myths.

Anyway, in this sense, Gigantomachy got stressed the meaning of a symbolic struggle between cosmic order represented by the Olympians led by Jove and the nether forces of Chaos figured by the giants. Two ranks were then drawn, fighting each other, with several allies: Heracles for the Olympians defeated the giants, who could count with the support of Prometheus and Epithemeus, among others. The Titans' strategy of piling Mount Ossa upon Mount Pelion to storm Olympus inspired afterwards other autonomous poems. After the Titanomachy, mother Earth, goddess Gaia, seeking revenge, still exhorted the Giants, in whose ranks Enceladus and Porphyryon are to be especially mentioned, to fight and defeat definitely the Olympians.

This atmosphere of anger, dissatisfaction and uprising that exhales from the main plot of the narrative was taken by Manuel de Galhegos to express the dominant political feeling against the Spanish government in Portugal. Following the lesson of Claudian, he adapted the myth to the Portuguese historical circumstances of his time, with the country plunged into a sensitive political situation, even though he deals with the subject in a very cautious way.

Galhegos' *Gigantomachy* starts with the canonic parts of the epic poem, the proposition, the appeal to the Muses and the dedicatory to D. António de Meneses e D. Carlos de Noronha, his maecenas. Only then takes place the narration of the significant successes. Mother Earth populates its surface with monsters. The grotesque dominates the poetical discourse and, in the beginning, it is presented as the allegory of her triumph. A long discourse of her own encourages the giants to fight the Olympians and Typhon challenges Jupiter.

Canto II includes, in a first part, the introduction to the Olympian gods and, in the second, the preparation for the war from both sides. Canto III deals with the most barbaric scenes of war, mainly between Jupiter and Typhon, but there are to be found references to the participation of all the most important and well-known gods and Titans. It ends with the admission of defeat from the rank

of the giants, even though they do not take it as the definitive result of the conflict. Canto IV introduces two parallel episodes of love stories: while Typhon is deeply impressed with the view of Venus bathing, Damastor falls in love for the charms of the nymph Thetys, and everything happens while the war still goes on, mainly in the sea, as the back scene. The last Canto is the most tumultuous, as here are inserted the descriptions of the decisive fights, the development and conclusion of the love affairs of the previous episodes, the ultimate defeat of the giants, and the end of the poem, with the victory of the Olympians, the praise due to Heracles, and finally some personal considerations from the poet, a true moral of the story, warning the reader not to rebel against the sovereignty of his kingdom – what can only be taken as an ironical close of the poem.

If, as the author openly declares, Claudian was his main source of inspiration, he takes advantage of the suggestions offered by many other ancient and modern poets: Homer, Virgil, Plato, Eratosthenes, Ovid, Statius, Strabo, Martial, Horace, Seneca, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, Lucan, Hermann Torrentino, Bernardino Marmite, Lorenzo Majorano, Bishop of Siponto, Francisco Sancio, Giovanni Pontano, Angelo Poliziano, Camões and Luís de Góngora. However, of all them, the most remarkable influence is assigned to last two authors, Góngora and, of course, to Camões. These two poets are taken as models for the composition of the episodes, as the love stories of Thyphon and Venus and of Damastor and Thetys are inspired in Góngora's poem *Polyphemus and Galatea* (MARTINS, 1964, 49) and in the episode of Adamastor and Thetis in *The Lusiads*. In both cases, they are inconclusive love stories, but they fulfill in the poem high moments of lyrical density. They create the contrast, so typical during the baroque, with the verisimilitude of the descriptions of the violence in the battle field, such as with the way wounded and mutilated warriors are displayed, but also with the treatment of feelings, fear, panic and passions of the gods, here taken, as it was already stressed, in their human dimension. The highest point of horror and grandiosity is attained with the scenes of the monsters' rebellion. Besides, the dramatic touch is also reached with all the intense motion achieved with different strategies: gods transformed into fishes; pine trees used as weapons against Jupiter's thunders and beams; overlapped mountains to climb to the sky; everything contributing to assemble a marvelous baroque structure in which mythological figures move and interact, even though it may seem strange in it Mars' imprisonment by Etheus (MARTINS, 1964, 49).

In this way, if in this epic poem is missing not only a high gongoric tone, but also the capability of conferring to every character, to the natural scenery and even to the plot, the solemnity of the classical tradition, on the other hand we may point out several aspects that maybe are to be evaluated to extol it, such as: the vitality and the liberty perceptible in the composition of the plot; the sentimental episodes that ascribe to the poem a novelistic or even a dramatic tone; the high rhetoric level of the different speeches embedded in the epic narrative to persuade each part and their allies to fight to the end, and all of them following the codes of the classical eloquence; and, finally, the inter-

textual dialog with the national epics, *The Lusíads*, by Luís de Camões, easily identified not only in the episode of Damastor and Thetys, but also in the way the poet closes the poem, with personal considerations of moral contents, in order to bestow to the poem a strong pedagogic meaning.

Besides these literary, poetical and aesthetic aspects, collecting the lesson of Hesiod and Claudian, Manuel de Galhegos' *Gigantomachy* reveal at the same time a deep ideological and political message, sowing the seeds of nationalistic uprising against the foreign rule of the Spanish kings in Portugal, and so helping to the Restoration of the Portuguese independence on the 1.st December 1640.

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