

The Politics of Monstrosity: Giant Bodies and Behaviour in Classical and Renaissance Literature and Art

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Giants as a race are presented as Other to humans, their deviation from the typical human body being shown to relate to their behaviour. In antiquity, deformity was perceived in a socio-religious context as an expression of morality (Vlahogiannis 1998, pp.14-15). As an overly large humanoid, the giant shows human nature in excess, usually violent or hubristic excess linked to the fact that giants in antiquity are predominately male. In this paper, I will examine the relationship between body form and behaviour in two of the oldest races of giants: the humanoid Gigantes who fight the gods, and the many-limbed Hekatoncheires, or Hundred-handed, who fight on the side of the gods against the Titans. Over time the Greek Gigantes change from warriors to barbarians to hybrids, gaining increasingly monstrous bodies to reflect their monstrous behaviour. In contrast, the Hekatoncheires have monstrous bodies, but are only presented as monstrous in behaviour in Latin literature of the Augustan era. Is the connection between body and behaviour in these figures simply seen in moral terms, or does it relate to the politics of the time? To answer this question, I will consider the representations in chronological order across media and culture, examining the politics of monstrosity in the different social and cultural contexts of the classical and Renaissance periods. Renaissance examples will be used for the Gigantes (the Hekatoncheires did not really feature in Renaissance sources) to demonstrate all of the allegorical uses of the Gigantomachy.

Monsters like giants are physically monstrous for their deviation from the typical human body. In Greece, the ideal body was the young athletic or warrior male. While the nude in Greek art was ‘purified of the less palatable aspects’ of human nature (Stewart 1997, p.25), monsters express those very aspects in their bodies and behaviour. I have come to this way of thinking about the fictional bodies of monsters through reading contemporary theories regarding the body in today’s society, as well as from considering the social context of classical and Renaissance monsters. If the body can be socially constructed and actively partake in this construction (Shilling 2003, pp.11-12), and if, as Bryan Turner says of bodies in today’s society, value and meaning are ascribed to an individual by their body image (1996, p.23), then perhaps monstrous bodies in art reflect ideas about certain types of bodies. David McNally, thinking about categorization and the othering of the body when feminized, animalized or somehow constructed as different, argues that body and meaning make each other (2001, p.9). Is this true for the Gigantes and Hekatoncheires in literature and art – that their meaning can determine their body, or the monstrous body determine their meaning?

Gigantes and Gods

Hesiod (c.700 B.C.) is the first to write of the Gigantes’ origins. In his section on the castration of Ouranos in the *Theogony* Earth receives the drops of blood and bears the Gigantes, ‘shining in their armour, holding long spears in their hands’ (Hesiod 2006, p.19). This description immediately associates them with battle and a war-like nature, as it directly follows their birth. These associations are found in archaic art, in which they are presented as hoplites (the citizen-soldiers of Greek city-states), as for example on the North

frieze of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi [Fig. 1]. Early depictions of the battle between Gigantes and gods focused on the martial element (Woodford 2003, p.122), presenting the giants as warriors with conventional armour and weaponry. On the treasury frieze, Apollo and Artemis attack the Gigantes, who are formed into a phalanx, a battle-line of hoplites with overlapping shields. While the phalanx suggests united strength, this image is juxtaposed with a dead giant lying stripped on the ground. The lion drawing the chariot of Themis, the goddess of law and order, also shows the ultimate vulnerability of the Gigantes to the superior force of the gods by bringing down one of the giants.

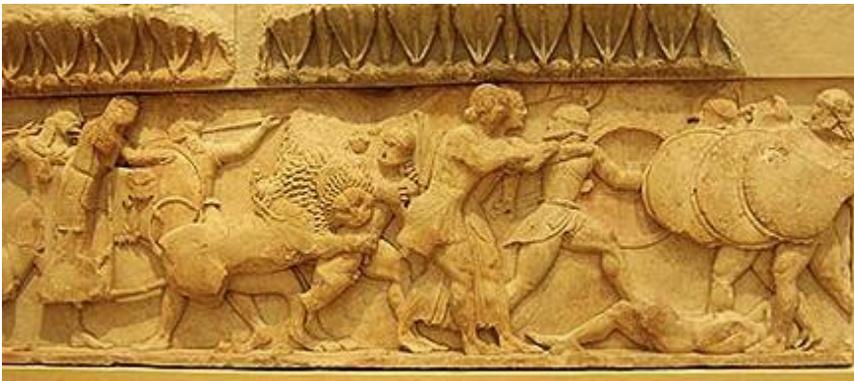


Fig. 1. Detail of North frieze of the Siphnian Treasury, c.530-525 B.C., Delphi, Delphi Museum <http://www.virtourist.com/europe/greece/delphi/imagenes/17.jpg>

A community's identity and wealth were displayed on temples and treasuries, and stories were taken from myth to illustrate their power. At this time the Siphnian economy was based upon their mines. Richard Neer suggests that they were more interested in commerce than military matters (2001, p.305), which is perhaps reflected in the negative hoplite Gigantes. This is one of the few depictions of a hoplite phalanx in Greek art (and the only one in archaic art), and since the phalanx was a characteristic aspect of Greek warfare, its presentation is significant. Here, its significance

is not what might be expected (e.g. civic virtue), but it is associated with the impious Gigantes. Since the hoplite was a fairly constant model of Greek manhood (Roisman 2005, p.109), and the giants represent excessive behaviour, the combination of hoplite armour and giant form emphasizes their impiety and excessive masculinity, and so the way in which the body is clothed and presented determines their function here. A negative presentation of the hoplite also seems to relate to the Siphnians: Siphnos did not prioritize its military, and so perhaps the hoplite is shown in a negative light as a way of distinguishing Siphnos from the other city-states represented at the inter-urban sanctuary of Delphi.

While the Gigantes' presentation as hoplite warriors in art brings out the theme of impiety against the civilized Olympian order, opposition to the civilized order has another effect on the presentation of the giants. Homer described giants as 'insolent', 'reckless', and 'wild' (Homer 2002, p.251; p.261). While these giants are not directly identified as the Gigantes who fight the gods, the theme of wild and insolent giants corresponds to those who challenge the gods and the civilized order. This theme is emphasised in art of the fifth century B.C. and becomes common by the fourth century B.C. [Fig. 3]. The Gigantes are now clad only in animal-skin cloaks and use rocks for weapons, their non-textile cloaks and nudity beneath the cloaks operating with their natural weapons to indicate their primitivism and wildness. One vase [Fig. 2] shows a soldier giant and a wild, or barbarian giant in the same battle scene, showing the contrast in their presentation.

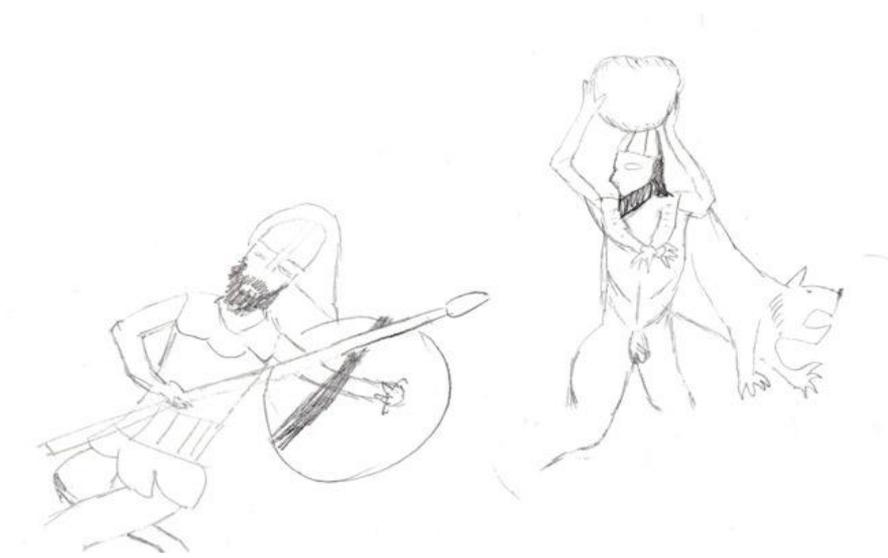


Fig. 2. Own drawing of the giants on Attic red-figure hydria, Tyszkiewicz Painter, c.480 B.C., London, British Museum E165

The wild giant wears a helmet like that of the warrior giant, but his animal skin cloak, nude body, and boulder for a weapon contrast greatly with the warrior's shield, spear, and battle-dress, and present the giant as a primitive and wild character. This barbaric aspect to the Gigantes became even more prominent in art after the mid-fifth century B.C. (Woodford 2003, p.123). Barbarians were seen as monstrous by Greeks, whose ethnographies of this time present other cultures as inferior in terms of morality and social norms, and even as marvellously other to the point of monstrosity. Making the Gigantes into barbarians increases the perceived monstrosity in their forms, demonstrating that they and their behaviour were seen as socially and morally unacceptable.

During the fifth century B.C. Athenian self-consciousness came to the fore in their art (Shapiro 1990, p.138). After the Persian Wars (499-449 B.C.), Athens became a major force in politics and culture. Greeks very rarely depicted actual historical battles, preferring to use myths to represent a victory, and so the Parthenon metopes (rectangular spaces with sculptural designs), including

those of the Gigantomachy, can be read as metaphors for the Persian Wars. The pride of the giants may reflect the Persians' pride for believing they could defeat Athens, who went on to have her own empire.

At this time the Athenians wanted to display their power, wealth and importance in their architecture and art. The Parthenon and other Acropolis buildings were a declaration of Athenian clout. Athena, the patron goddess of Athens, to whom the Parthenon was dedicated, was important in the Gigantomachy (Pausanias 2000, p.113), just as Athens was important in the Persian Wars and in Greek politics afterward. The schemes usually feature one god or goddess against one or two giants. The overall impression is of divine power and the continuing struggle of order (religious and social) over the uncivilized and impious sufferers of hubris.

The impious aspect of the barbaric Gigantes is also expressed in art after the mid-fifth century B.C. through the positioning of giants and gods. It is after this point that the gods are placed higher than the Gigantes on vases, rather than being level with them. Placing gods above and giants below visually reflects the place of each in the Greek view of morality.

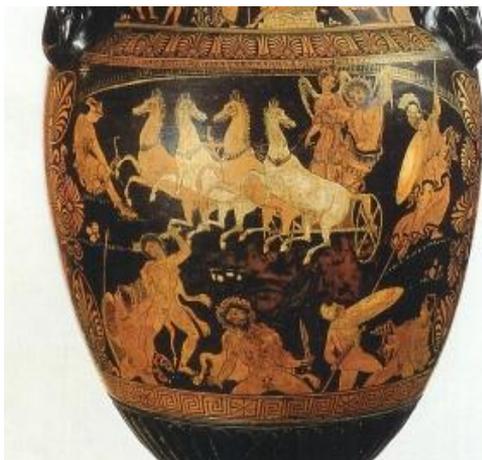


Fig. 3. Apulian red-figure krater, c.350 B.C., Lycurgus Painter. Saint Petersburg, Hermitage Museum B1714. Image provided by State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

The gods fight from their chariots and Herakles fights the giants on the ground. The main emphasis is on the frontal barbarian giant figure who turns to the viewer, clearly displaying his animal-skin cloak and his genitals. Such a display emphasizes masculinity – nude figures were usually viewed at a three-quarter angle – in addition to identifying him as a barbarian figure. The giants express masculinity in excess through their overly large and nude bodies, as well as in their violent and impious behaviour. Their ferocity and their use of primitive weapons, such as boulders and branches, present the giants as wild, excessive men, acting against the order of the universe. As Cohen argues for medieval giants (1999, pp.142-3), the Gigantes are a construction of masculinity, exploring what happens when men outgrow social constraints. The example of the Gigantes shows that impiety, pride, and violence are punished by the ruling order.

Having transformed from warriors to barbarians in Greek art, the next stage in the Gigantes' presentation was as hybrids, furthering their association with the wild and taking them away from gendered monstrosity. The Great Altar in the temple of Zeus at Pergamon (c.160 B.C.) shows frenzied, winged giants battling against the gods in a commemorative sculpture for victory. The Pergamene Altar uses the giants as a way to represent the current political situation, as did the Parthenon metopes. As on the Parthenon, there is a movement from divine chaos to local order: from the Gigantomachy on the exterior, the viewer passes to ordered images of the life of Telephos, a local hero, on the interior frieze (the Parthenon movement is from Gigantomachy to the Panathenaic religious procession). 'Quoting' the Parthenon sculptural themes proclaims Pergamon as a new Athens (Barringer 2008, p. 4), one political agenda to the use of the giants. In addition, the mythical

(local and Greek) operates alongside the historical for political symbolism and propaganda: the battle of Pergamenes and Galatians (229-228 B.C.) appears alongside the Gigantes fighting the gods. While Callimachus mentions ‘late-born Titans’ (1953, p.24) who will rise up against the Greeks, a reference to the Pergamenes (Hardie 1986, p.123), in their own art it is the enemies of the Pergamenes who are giants. The political move of casting one’s enemies as the impious Gigantes, rebels against the social order, implies a moral interpretation, which is reflected in their changing bodies.

This moral change in their bodies is epitomized in one particularly unusual image of a hybrid giant [Fig. 4], whose lion head and serpent tails for legs take the animalising and moralising themes found in Greek art even further.



Fig. 4. Hellenistic marble relief frieze detail from the Great Altar of Zeus at Pergamon, 2nd century B.C., Berlin, Pergamonmuseum (Woodford, Susan. 2003. *Images of Myths in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Figure 94. 125)

This hybrid giant wrestles with and bites a god. The animal aspect of the giant’s nature is emphasized, as it was in the trend of serpent-footed giants, which began in literature of the eighth century

B.C. with Typhoeus (Hesiod 2006, p.69). In addition to the animal act of biting, making the hybrid giant a ferocious creature, a moral application of the hybrid form is suggested by the comparison to Typhoeus, the snake-legged giant who dared to attack Zeus. Likewise, the Gigantes attack the gods, and their socially/morally monstrous behaviour leads to a monstrous form. The hybrid bodies of the giants display their wildness and immorality, beyond the giant form symbolising the excess they demonstrate. The socially/morally monstrous is also politically monstrous, and so the giants are used to represent political enemies.

While in art there is a clear progression in how the Gigantes' behaviour affects their form, this behaviour is seen to originate in their giant bodies in literature. In the first century B.C., Diodorus says the Gigantes are punished by Zeus because 'confident in their bodily superiority and strength, they had enslaved their neighbours' (Diodorus 1939, p.291). This is the key to the idea that the body can inform behaviour. Their great size and strength lead them to enslave humans, linking the giant body and monstrous behaviour, as previously seen in the battle-ready giants of Hesiod. The giant bodies of the Gigantes then first determine their socially and morally unacceptable behaviour. Then, owing to the moral interpretation of that behaviour, their bodies become increasingly monstrous in art. The monstrous hybrid giants are then attributed further monstrous behaviour. This is a continual process, and so body and meaning make each other, as McNally argues (2001, p.9).

In the Roman period, Ovid turns the Gigantomachy into a double battle with two sets of giants. First of all, the Gigantes pile up mountains to assail the heavens (an action traditionally associated with the Aloadae, giant brothers, but not the Gigantes who usually fight the gods) and Zeus destroys them, drenching

Earth in their blood. Earth gives this blood new life in a human form (Ovid 2004, p.13), a form that shapes its behaviour and character. Again, the body and behaviour are connected here: ‘this new stock, too, proved contemptuous of the gods, very greedy for slaughter, and passionate: you might know they were the sons of blood’ (Ovid 2004, p.13). These Gigantes share the characteristics of those they came from, characteristics that are directly linked to their origins from blood.

In addition, the giants are ‘serpent-footed’ and ‘hundred-handed’ (Ovid 2004, p.15). These attributes may have come from artistic representations of giants with serpents for legs, as mentioned earlier. The hundred hands come from the Hekatoncheires who fought with Zeus against the Titans, thus conflating the myths to create many-limbed hybrid Gigantes, who feature significantly later in the tradition, particularly in art. The combined attributes of different giants shows that the monstrous body is associated with monstrous behaviour and creates a great sense of the threatening Other. This threat can be specific to the religious context: Lowe identifies the combination of hoplite armour, snake-feet and multiple limbs as the attributes of ‘anti-Olympian beings’ (2007, p.181). While Gigantomachy in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* can be read as an allegory of chaos versus cosmos (Lowe 2007, pp.180-181), it is also an allegory of Augustan order coming out of civil war and the monstrous giants represent enemies of the empire. Although the Gigantomachy eventually becomes a cliché used to highlight an enemy’s impiety or the large scale of the battle (Hardie 1986, p.89), in literature of the Augustan era the political connotations of the myth are explicit. The best example of the Gigantes as expressions of impiety or *hubris* in a political allegory is Horace’s *Odes* 3.4, published in 23 B.C, the year in which Augustus gave up the

consulship and assumed the title *princeps*, 'first among equals'. Ancient writers and artists did not often distinguish the three stories of Gigantes, Titans, or Typhoeus and gods, as all are 'closely related to the original ordering of the Olympian universe out of chaos' (Hardie 1986, p.85). The forces of chaos can be transferred out of myth to historical subjects through allegory, usually of a political or moral nature. *Odes* 3.4 embraces the moral, the religious, and the political - an assault on the ruler of the world is a concept that relates to the Roman Empire and the *princeps* Augustus.

The poem is essentially about Augustus, and the defeat of the 'impious/ Titans' (Horace 2004, p.154) is used to align Augustus with the divine forces and his enemies with the impious giants, here conflated with the Titans, showing how the myths operated in a similar fashion. As in Ovid, the Hundred-handed are placed on the side of monstrosity in behaviour: 'great terror had been brought on Jove by that insolent crew, bristling with arms' (Horace 2004, p.154). The Aloadae and their deeds are also included (Horace 2004, p.154), bringing together all the main races of giants who war with the gods, albeit with the inversion of the role of the Hundred-handed to make those with a monstrous form monstrous in behaviour. This role inversion again implies that a monstrous body is perceived as resulting in monstrous behaviour, giving the monstrous a moral and political dimension.

The political and moral meanings of the poem become explicit: 'brute force without wisdom falls to ruin by its own weight' (Horace 2004, p.156). Brute force is attributed to the giants, and so to political enemies of the empire. This is given a religious meaning as well, since Augustus presented himself as the son of a god, in addition to the political element (Augustus as the power tempered by counsel in line 66), and his enemies are accused of impiety:

‘power tempered with counsel the gods too make greater, but might that in its soul is bent on impiety, they hate’ (Horace *Odes*, 2004, p.156). After this programmatic statement, the punishments of various Giants by the gods are described, a warning to all political enemies.

For the most part giants – and the Gigantes in particular – are symbols of rebelliousness, pride and brute force, interpretations prominent in the later tradition of the Renaissance and the years preceding it. In Christian exegesis the nephilim, offspring of angels and women, were giants (Bible 2005, p.1) and Ham, Noah’s son and the descendant of Cain, is cursed for revealing his father’s nakedness, and is the ancestor of giants (Bible 2005, p.1). So, to Christian interpreters as well, giants signified pride. The Gigantomachy could be considered as an allegory of the rebel angels, for example in the commentary accompanying the 1484 Bruges edition of the *Ovide Moralisé*. The interpretation of pride is also found there (Boer 1966, p.86-7) and in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (1961, p.386; 1971, p.154-6). Following Christian and Latin traditions, Dante’s giants are appropriately found in the ninth circle of hell, where pride and violence are punished. Boccaccio highlights the latter characteristic of violence, emphasizing the Gigantes’ origins from the Titans’ blood in Ovid, showing how their origins were seen as emblematic of their bloodthirsty nature. Boccaccio, in keeping with his euhemeristic agenda, says that the pagan giants are the impious who defy the gods. He also says that they represent human nature because poets would not have thought of giants if men were humane (Boccaccio 1965, p.222-3). This is relevant to the idea that monsters are used to explore human behaviour; in the case of the giants, to show the consequences of excessive conduct.

Allegorized versions of the Gigantes' attack on the gods also occur in post-classical art. Renaissance artists did not tend to portray the hundred hands, or the serpent feet of the giants from classical art, focusing instead on their gigantism. Paulo Veronese's version of the battle between Gigantes and gods in the Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci at Salotto Dorato is an allegorized version of Jupiter expelling the crimes and vices. His battle is strongly reminiscent of the iconography of the fall of the rebel angels, in which the Archangel Michael is represented above in heaven and below him the rebel angels fall to earth (Polzer 1981, p.566). Here, Jupiter takes the place of the Archangel and the Gigantes signify the crimes and vices.

The moral, religious and political use of the myth was particularly significant for the emperor Charles V. In 1533 and 1536 his business in Genoa was conducted in the Sala di Giove of the Palazzo Andrea Doria underneath Perino's Gigantomachy fresco. Perino's gods are calm, in contrast to the defeated and contorted giants, some of whom wear turbans. Thus, identifying Jupiter with Charles V and the giants with his Turkish enemies, the myth takes on political and religious meanings in imperial propaganda, just as it did for Augustus.

The Imperial conquest of Italy was also displayed as a Gigantomachy and became the theme for several of Charles V's entries into cities (Bull 2006, p.152). The revolt of the giants is seen as a refusal to follow the social and religious order, and so the important battles of Charles' reign during the 1530s and the battle of Mühlberg in 1547 came to be presented in similar terms. The use of such imagery aligns Charles V with the gods and his enemies, both Protestant and Catholic, with the giants, again demonstrating the political and religious uses of myth in imperial propaganda. As

Philip Hardie says, Gigantomachy ‘stresses national identity through [...] defining the enemy outside’ (1986, p.130).

In addition to the broad context of rebellion against the social order, the Gigantomachy is treated in moral terms because of the body forms and behaviour of the giants. In Aneau’s 1552 *Picta Poesis*, an emblem with the motto ‘Great Ignorance’ was accompanied by a depiction of snake-legged Gigantes [Fig. 5].



Fig. 5. Aneau, *Picta Poesis* (1552, p.57)
www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FAAna048

The race is ‘of the kind that [...] despises God or denies him’ (Aneau 1552, p.57). The giants have snake feet ‘invented by poets’ because their ‘senses crawl on the earth, for they are lazy for higher things’ (Aneau 1552, p.57). This applies an explicit interpretation to the snake-legged classical form, showing that a monstrous form is attached to those who behave monstrously. The giant is thus a monster through moral as well as physical deformation, indicating how the body and meaning make each other.

The hybrid giant shows that the hybrid form is used to express certain things about character and behaviour, so that the giant is not only an excessive and proud human, but also a primitive, wild and monstrous being. That the hybrid form is associated with the

Gigantes who take on heaven shows that the Gigantomachy has a particular function in defining the Gigantes by their behaviour. This is particularly important in moral and political allegories, an interpretation that applies equally to classical and Renaissance presentations of the myth.

The Hekatoncheires

The Hekatoncheires are giants with a multi-limbed form (one hundred arms and fifty heads), and they reverse the basic body-behaviour relationship found in the Gigantes, whose monstrous behaviour leads to a hybrid body in both literature and art. The monstrous bodies of the Hekatoncheires, on the other hand, come to be associated with monstrous behaviour in Latin literature, showing how value and meaning are ascribed to body images, as Turner argues (1996, p.23).

In their first appearance in Greek literature the Hekatoncheires are ‘great [...], strong [...], presumptuous children’ (Hesiod 2006, p.15). The vocabulary used to describe Briareus, Gyges, and Kottos suggests that they are monsters, although there is nothing in their behaviour to confirm monstrosity. Like the Gigantes, they are characterized by their size, strength, and an arrogance that is perceived as threatening to the gods (suggested by calling them ‘presumptuous’). Ouranos imprisons them because ‘he was indignant at their defiant manliness and their form and size’ (Hesiod 2006, p.53). The vocabulary here again implies that these giants are a threat to the ruling gods because of excessive masculine traits and bodies, and Ouranos’ fear of them indicates how a monstrous form leads to assumptions about behaviour. He has them confined at the limits of the earth (Hesiod 2006, p.53), the distance of their geographical location serving to illustrate the perceived threat that

they will behave as monsters, usually found on the boundaries of the physical and moral worlds where ‘physical attributes are in themselves evidence of one’s evil nature’ (White 1972, p.16). However, Hesiod suggests that the Hundred-handed are not monstrous, or at least gives them a say: they are imprisoned ‘with much grief in their hearts’ (Hesiod 2006, p.53).

Hesiod also shows the Hekatoncheires to be rational and politically savvy in direct speech. When the war between the Titans and the gods is evenly matched, Zeus frees the giants on the condition that they fight on the side of the gods (Hesiod 2006, p.55). He calls them the ‘splendid’ children of Gaia and Ouranos (Hesiod 2006, p.55), creating a different perspective to Ouranos’ earlier assessment. This corresponds to their now acceptable place among the Olympian order, provided that they fight for them (Hesiod 2006, p.55). Kottos’ reply shows that the giants are intelligent, and aware of Zeus’ need for them, as well as what he can do for them: ‘we know that your thoughts are supreme and your mind is supreme and you have revealed yourself as the protector of the gods’ (Hesiod 2006, p.55). He firmly aligns himself and his brothers with the Olympians and flatters Zeus to assure him of their help. Some scholars perceive the alliance as evidence of Zeus’ wisdom (e.g. Blickmann 1987, p.346). While the speech praises Zeus, earlier the idea of releasing the Hekatoncheires was attributed to Gaia’s advice (Hesiod 2006, p.53). Therefore, Kottos’ attribution of the idea to flatter Zeus displays a skill in diplomacy: it was not Zeus’ idea, and he cannot protect the gods after all. While Mondi argues that the praise of Zeus distracts from reality (1986, p.38), I would suggest that it actually draws attention to Zeus’ inability to win against the Titans without the help of the Hekatoncheires.

In battle the Hundred-handed are ‘terrible and mighty, having defiant strength’ (Hesiod 2006, p.57). In fact, they even sprout fifty heads from their shoulders as they go into battle, increasing the monstrosity of their bodies and their ability to fight. They are armed with boulders and are later described as ‘insatiable in war’ (Hesiod 2006, p.57, p.61). Their bodies and characters are designed for an overpowering victory, yet their success is bound to Zeus, who ‘no longer holds back’ because of their involvement, just as his success is bound to theirs as they are the ones who ultimately defeat the Titans (Hesiod 2006, p.59, p.61). They become the ‘trusted guards’ (Hesiod 2006, p.63) of Zeus, guarding the imprisoned Titans in Tartarus, and so these giants maintain the existing social and religious order.

However, in Latin literature of the Augustan era, the Hekatoncheires take on an explicit political and moral function as monsters behaving monstrously, as discussed in the case of Horace above. Horace’s contemporary Virgil also uses mythical events to represent human ones, giving contemporary political, moral, and historical slants to the myth. Hardie (1986) sees Gigantomachia throughout the *Aeneid* in thematic patterns rather than explicit references, although these occur as well (Virgil 1999, p.553; p.573; 2000, p.213). It is in these explicit references that the Hundred-handed are significant. In the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, the Gigantomachy is referred to through the implied inversion of the role of the Hundred-handed: ‘hundred-formed’ Briareus is listed as one of the monsters at the entrance to Hades (Virgil 1999, p.552). This associates him with monstrous behaviour, implying that he fought against the gods, and not with them. This is stated later in the text when Aegaeon (another name for Briareus) is said to fight Jove with fifty swords and fifty shields (Virgil 2000, p.213). He has one

hundred arms and one hundred hands, ‘and he flashed fire from fifty mouths and chests’ (Virgil 2000, p.213). This description amplifies the giant’s monstrosity through his form, showing how even the bodies of the Hundred-handed are made more monstrous to reflect their now monstrous behaviour.

It is only in Augustan literature that the Hundred-handed fight against the gods. The Augustan Hundred-handed are examples of excessive behaviour, of impiety, of immorality – their behaviour is made monstrous to reflect their bodies, showing the moral dimension to monstrosity. Yet with Virgil’s addition of the ability to breathe fire, the Hundred-handed who fight the gods also show that monstrous behaviour affects the body, just as it did for the Gigantes. The Augustan context sheds light on the moral and political use of a monstrous body as an example of monstrous behaviour and vice versa, for this was a time when morality was of great concern for the city had just come out of civil war (Gibson 2007, p.3).

In contrast, the Greek sources interpreted the myth in religious terms in relation to the power of Zeus, whether taken as an affirmation of his power, or the basis of it. The contradictory roles of the Hekatoncheires in Greek and Latin sources demonstrate how monsters are used to enforce norms: the Greek Hekatoncheires uphold the social and moral order, while the Latin ones enforce norms by acting against the ruling order and by being defeated, thus validating that order and providing a warning against such behaviour. While the Gigantes gain a monstrous body over time to reflect their behaviour, the Hekatoncheires’ monstrous bodies mean that they can be transplanted from the Titanomachy, where they fight for the gods, into a Gigantomachy in which they fight against the gods and the social, moral, and political order. This use of the Hundred-handed occurs only in Latin literature of the Augustan era,

pointing to a political and moral application of these giants, making the Latin Hundred-handed a prime example of how a monstrous body can be used to represent monstrous behaviour.

Conclusions

According to Chris Shilling and Bryan Turner, the body is a site of political and cultural activity (Shilling 2001, p.1; Turner 1992, p.12). This seems to apply very well to fictional monstrous bodies and to monsters who represent the extremes of human behaviour and can act as warnings or threats concerning social activity. Monsters thus enforce norms while exploring excessive behaviour. Male monsters in particular express an excess in traditionally masculine qualities and a lack of control over these qualities. In examining the Gigantes and Hekatoncheires and their roles in Gigantomachia, battles in which the giants represent excess in bodies and behaviour, it can be seen that the body-behaviour relationship is a continual and two-way process. The bodies and behaviours of the Gigantes and Hekatoncheires affect each other: if the body determines behaviour, then that behaviour alters the body and so on. The Gigantes behave as monsters in excessive ways that reflect their gigantism, and this excessive behaviour further shapes their bodies into hybrid monsters in moral and political allegories. In contrast, the Hekatoncheires are made monstrous in behaviour in Augustan literature by fighting against the gods, a reversal of their role in Greek mythology, pointing to a specific political use of the monstrous body. The relationship between body and behaviour in these giants is affected not only by moral interpretation, but also by the political context. Therefore, through the changing presentation of the Gigantes' bodies, and the inversion of the Hekatoncheires'

behaviour, it can be seen that there is a complex relationship between body, behaviour, and meaning in the politics of monstrosity.

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