

Homeric Sub-texts in Glaucos and Diomedes: Where is Pegasus?

The encounter of Glaucos and Diomedes on the battlefield in Homer's *Iliad* has attracted a great deal of scholarship both for the carefully crafted interaction between the two heroes and for the detailed account of the Bellerophon myth. The sub-texts have been carefully defined, so that the various details of the conversation all fit into a properly nuanced reading of the passage. However, the one major omission in the passage has been largely overlooked: Pegasus is entirely missing from the passage.

Later versions of the Bellerophon story have a fuller picture of the character, incorporating the various accounts of the myth into a larger whole. The earliest references to Bellerophon, though, are all very brief, short references to different stories that conflict with each other. Between Hesiod, Pseudo-Hesiod, and Pindar, in his *Olympian Odes* and *Isthmian Odes*, the only thing they agree on is that the main characters are Bellerophon and Pegasus. This relationship is corroborated by material evidence: the Pegasus-Bellerophon-Chimera type was popular not only in early Corinthian pottery, but also on Corinthian coinage, temple plates, and temple decoration (Schmitt 1970).

Angela Ziskowski has recently demonstrated that the Bellerophon myth was the core myth of early Corinthian culture and that its inclusion in the *Iliad* was a direct nod to Corinthian culture (Ziskowski 2014). However, it would be more proper to say that the Bellerophon-Pegasus myth was the core myth of the city, and that Pegasus was, in every other case, integral to Bellerophon. Therefore, his absence is not only intentional, but glaring.

It has been briefly proposed before that the omission simply puffs up Bellerophon's bravery in the genealogy (Alden 1994). It is clear that, at least on one level, Glaucos is grasping at whatever he can to save himself. By focusing entirely on Bellerophon's conquests and

attributing them all to him alone, he gives more glory to his ancestor. This is clearly confirmed with his boast πολλοὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἴσασιν (Il. 6.151). However, this does not account for the end of the story, where Bellerophon's fall is nonetheless alluded to, making his fall equally prominent. While the first subtext is present, the second subtext, that of Glaucón warning Diomedes of rebelling against the gods, has already been thoroughly highlighted before precisely because of the second half of the Bellerophon story.

The primary purpose of the omission is more properly understood as a wiser restatement of Diomedes' own warning: the Gods do cast down proud heroes. Bellerophon is cast by Glaucón not just as a hero proud of his family, but also as one aware of their faults. He not only clearly summarizes the murder of Bellerophon's fall, but also highlights the hero's impiety by changing the narrative that πολλοὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἴσασιν (Il. 6.151). The passage therefore also has Diomedes as the victim of the joke: he fails to even understand the warning, but instead takes the opportunity to swindle Glaucón, who leaves with his life and the wiser of the two.

Homer as the author foreshadows in Glaucón's words Diomedes' own fate in the Iliad. Having slaughtered and conquered even when gods were set against him, he is crippled by, of all the participants in the war, Paris. This small anecdote is set in purposeful contrast with the larger contest of Achilles and Agamemnon: Glaucón issues a warning to Diomedes, and Diomedes ignores it in favor of a more immediate prize. In this case, Glaucón is the clear inferior, and the contest is settled (Alden 1996; Kirk 1990). This larger context places the warning, centered around the missing Pegasos, in the middle of the work's main paradox, the endless cycle of wrath. Therefore, when properly understood, the story is not only a humorous interlude and interesting mythological account, but an important foil to the story as a whole.

Bibliography

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