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Abstract
Few will doubt that tracing Homer (and Homeric epos) on subsequent classical authors, in all its varied manifestations, has proved to be an enlightening critical enterprise. Indeed, it has become nearly impossible to consider the poetry of the so-called archaic lyric period without acknowledging at some level its relation to Homer and the epic tradition. It is a pity, therefore, that in this respect, as in so many others, Hipponax has been largely neglected except by those with specialized interests in the early Greek iambus, for Hipponax was clearly intrigued, as the fragments demonstrate, by the potential - particularly the comic potential - that Homeric style and narrative held for his own idiosyncratic poetry.

Comments
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HIPPONAX AND THE HOMERIC ODYSSEUS

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HIPPONAX AND THE HOMERIC ODYSSEUS

Few will doubt that tracing the influence of Homer (and Homeric epos) on subsequent classical authors, in all its varied manifestations, has proved to be an enlightening critical enterprise. Indeed, it has become nearly impossible to consider the poetry of the so-called archaic lyric period without acknowledging at some level its relation to Homer and the epic tradition. It is a pity, therefore, that in this respect, as in so many others, Hipponax has been largely neglected except by those with specialized interests in the early Greek iambus, for Hipponax was clearly intrigued, as the fragments demonstrate, by the potential – particularly the comic potential – that Homeric style and narrative held for his own idiosyncratic poetry. Below I wish to argue for one example of this interaction with Homer, which, if correct, sheds some much needed light on the nature of the iambographic psogos. In particular, I hope to show that in creating his abusive, iambographic persona, especially in the narratives which dealt with his quarrel with Bupalus, Hipponax looked to the Homeric Odysseus as a model for his own self-presentation ¹. The portrait of Odysseus as the eternal underdog whose relatively undistinguished physical appearance concealed enormous intellectual and athletic self-presentation provided an ideal persona for Hipponax to assume, since the contrast between the exalted heroic status of Odysseus and the comically low status of the iambographer engaged in perpetual psogoi would have added irony and bathos to his poems.

I. Hipponax, Odysseus and the Diskobolia

The testimonia about Hipponax’s life and character contain much that biographical conventions would lead us to expect for an iambographer: he was, we are told, vituperative, irascible and ugly, in keeping with the nature of his poetry ². But there

¹ For an illuminating discussion of Archilochus’ use of Odysseus in the creation of his own persona cf. B. Seidensticker, Archilochus and Odysseus, «GRBS» XIX (1978) 5-22. While both Archilochus and Hipponax found the epic Odysseus appropriate to their personae, it will become clear below that Hipponax seems to have incorporated different aspects of Odysseus’ character from those adopted by Archilochus. This observation not only testifies to the striking malleability of an epic figure in the hands of non-epic, but even suggests the possibility that Odysseus figured prominently in an early iambic tradition. Although, largely for the sake of convenience, I speak in this paper in terms of Hipponax’s allusion to a Homeric text more or less as we have it, I recognize that the present state of our knowledge does not allow us to locate with precision the ‘original’ epic material which informs Hipponax.

² The literary-critical principle that a poet’s work reflected his moral character and even his physical appearance had a long history in Classical culture: cf. E. Degani, Studi su Ipponatte,
always remain those frustrating details in the *testimonia* that cannot obviously be explained with reference to the poet's extant works or to the known processes of ancient biography. One anecdote about Hipponax full of such puzzling details describes the poet as small, ugly and thin, yet so muscular that he was able to hurl an empty *leykithos* at a great distance. Degani collects the three occurrences of the story in his edition as testim. 19, 19a and 19b:

**Testim. 19 Dg.**: Metrod. Sceps. 184 F 6 J. ap. Athen. XII 552ed: Μητρῶδωρος δ’ ὁ Σκήψιος ἐν δευτέρω Περὶ ἀλειτωπίς ἰππάνακτα τὸν ποιητήν οὐ μόνον μικρὸν γενέσθαι τὸ σώμα, ἀλλὰ καὶ λεπτὸν, ἀκρότονον δ’ οὖς τὸ πρῶτος ἀλλοίς καὶ κεννής ἕκτυσθαι βάλλειν μέγιστὸν τι διάστημα, τῶν ἐλαφρῶν σώματον διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι τὸν ἀέρα τέμενεν οὐκ ἐχόντων βιασάν τὴν φοράν.


**Testim. 19b**: Eust. ad Hom. Ψ 844 (1332, 54ff.): ἠστείον δὲ ὡς οἱ κατὰ τῶν Πολυαιοτῆς ἀφίνεντες ἐν τῇ διασκεδαίη ακρότονοι ἐλέγοντο, καθά, φασὶ, δηλοὶ τὸ Ἰππάνακτα δ’ ὁ ποιητής, καίτοι μικρὸς ὁ δν τὸ σώμα καὶ λεπτός, ὡς ἀκρότονος οὖς τὸ πρῶτος ἀλλοίς καὶ κενκήν λήκυθον βάλλειν μέγιστον τι διάστημα, καὶ ταύτῃ τῶν ἐλαφρῶν σώματον, ὑποίκη καὶ ἡ κεννή λήκυθος, οὐκ ἐχόντων βιασάν φοράν διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι, φασὶ, τὸν ἀέρα τέμενεν.

Of the physical attributes assigned to Hipponax, only his ‘ugliness’ (cf. αἰσχρόν, mentioned only by Aelian in 19a) fits the expected biographical stereotypes of an iambographer; we wonder in the end why the commentators pointedly contrast the poet’s unimpressive appearance with his surprising strength. It is easy enough to suggest, as others have done, that Hipponax drew this contrast himself somewhere in his poems. Indeed, these *testimonia* are so precise and so difficult to dismiss as obvious fabrication that I assume in this article that they do in fact derive from the actual *oeuvre* of Hipponax. Situating such a passage in the extant fragments, however, and assessing its potential function in Hipponax’s poetry, is another matter.

Ten Brink first suspected that the anecdote related above reflected a scene from Hipponax’s poetry, and Degani, in his edition of the *testimonia* and fragments, is likewise disposed. Ten Brink isolated as the model for Hipponax the Iliadic scene in which Polyphemus excels at discus-throwing at the funeral games for Patroclus (V 844ff.). This suggestion is at first sight plausible enough: Polyphemus competed in the discus-throw; the Homeric passage reminded Eustathius that the adjective ‘muscular’ (ἀχρότονος) had been used of Hipponax. Hipponax demonstrated his ‘muscularity’ by tossing an empty *leykithos*; therefore, the *leykithos* was an analogue of Polyphemus’ discus.

While it is tempting to see such a connection between Homer and Hipponax, there is no indication in Eustathius that he has anything more in mind than documenting two cases of the adjective ἀχρότονος. Still, it is a curious coincidence that the Polyphemus incident mentioned by Eustathius involves a discus competition and the Hipponax story functions analogously to the same athletic contest. We may at least feel certain, then, that in the *leykithos* scene Hipponax was engaged in an athletic contest of some sort. Several other issues also seem clear. First, the point of the anecdote is that although Hipponax was ugly and weak in appearance, his extraordinary strength served as a counterpoint to these liabilities. The poem in which the anecdote appeared, in other words, must have illustrated the unreliability of physical appearance as a judge of reality. Second, whether the poem actually depicted an athletic contest between Hipponax and his adversary, or simply referred to such a contest, perhaps as an *exempulum*, the setting must have been one in which the iambographer was pitted initially as an underdog against a self-assured ἐχθρός, yet proved victorious in the end, and thereby humiliated him. Hipponax’s athletic victory, after all, is presented as a παρὰ προσδόκησιν, the last thing one would expect from such a slight figure, and implies that he felt called upon to prove himself in answer to taunts and ridicule.

By focusing on the two basic elements of the story—the figure of the underdog, inferior in appearance yet superior in the end; an athletic *agon* involving a discus as the proving ground for his strength—a much clearer Homeric model than the Iliadic one inferred from Eustathius leaps immediately to mind, namely the alternation between Odysseus and the Phaeacian Euryalus in *Odyssey* VIII. This scene has a striking number of direct parallels to the Hipponax *testimonia*, and serves, as we

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2. Ten Brink (above, n. 5) 729: «ποιτειά σει ἀχρότονοι γλωρίας τικες ἐν δισαίμια τὸν Πολυφαοτο [...] se componere».
3. Meterodorus Scepsius (1st BC) included the example of Hipponax in his second book *On Training* (testim. 19 quoted above), implying that the story about the *leykithos* was embedded in an athletic context.
4. The expression πρὸς τοὺς ἀλλακτα in Eustathius, as explained by ten Brink (above, n. 5), 728ff.: «προτετελεία βραχομίαν ἑλυσιτον διάκων», implies that the hurling of the empty *leykithos* was the grand culmination of a series of athletic competitions (although they need not all have occurred in this particular scene).
shall see, to connect several other Homeric passages with Hipponax's self-presentation as a poet of abuse.

When Laodamas challenges Odysseus at 145ff. to compete in the Phaeacian games, Odysseus, perhaps disingenuously, takes mild offense (λαοδάμο, τί με ταύτα κελεύετε κερσομοῦντες;) claiming to have other things on his mind. But Euripides will not let the matter rest and proceeds to insult and taunt Odysseus (158ff.), likening him to a greedy sailing merchant rather than an athlete. Throughout the entire scene there is a distinct emphasis on physical appearance. Laodamas' first remarks at 133 focus on Odysseus' appearance: "she's not in bad shape" (φηνή γε μν οι κακός ἐστιν, 134). While it is true, he continues (137), that the sea has destroyed some of Odysseus' θρην, he still has impressive legs and hands (135) and a solid neck and large chest (136). Euripides begins and ends his speech with a similar emphasis on Odysseus' appearance: ὅ γαρ σ’... δακτύλους φώτι ἐί συκο / ἀθλων (159ff.), οὐδὲ ἀθλητὴρ ἐί ὁ ἔκτος (164). In his angered response, Odysseus contrasts those whom Zeus endows with good physique and those he endows with eloquence, and implies that it is dangerous to rely on mere appearances in evaluating the whole person (169-177):

... ἀλλάς μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἄκινδυνος πέλεις ἀνήρ, ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφήν ἐπεσί στέφει, οἱ δὲ τὸν τερπόμενον λεύσσουσιν: ὁ δὲ ἀρχαλέως ἀγορεύει αἰτῶν μελαζί, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἁγρομένου, ἐρχόμενον δὲ ἀνά ἄστο τοῦ ὁς εἰσορώσαν. ἀλλὰς δὲ αὐτὰ εἶδος μὲν ἄλογιος ἀθανάτοιον, ἀλλ’ οὐ δὲ χαρίς ἀμφιμετρεῖται ἐπέσσων: ὡς καὶ σοὶ εἰδος μὲν ἀφρέτηθε, οὔδε κεν ἀλλος οὐδὲ θεὸς τεύτει, νόσον δὲ ἀποφόλλος ἐσιν.

Superficially the speech delineates a contrast between intelligence and eloquence on the one hand, and mere physical strength on the other. Odysseus presents the dichotomy as if they are mutually exclusive, yet he characteristically breaks down the polarity as he excels in both realms. By accusing Euripides of being all brawn and no brain, Odysseus implies that he himself fits the first model, i.e., the man whose «form brims with words». But he then proceeds to demonstrate to the Phaeacians his great physical prowess as well, contrary to what they expect from his sea-worn appearance. At 186ff. Odysseus, enraged at the taunts of Euripides (cf. 178ff., 185, 205), grabs an enormous stone discus and hurls it farther than anyone (186-190):

... ὦ δ᾿ καὶ αὐτῶ φαρεὶ ἀναίδες λάβε δί σκον μείζονα καὶ πάχετον, στεφανάτερον οὐκ ἄλιγον περ ὦ οὐφαίνεσες δί σκον ἀλλήλοιμα.

By now it should be clear that the Hipponactean lekythos anecdote shares many essential elements with this Homeric episode. Like Odysseus, Hipponax's outward appearance must have been solid (ἀκρότονος) yet unassuming (μικρός, λεπτός), and, as I argued above, he too must have been taunted for apparent weakness and challenged to a competition. Both figures, finally, prove their strength by throwing an object (a discus, an empty lekythos) an extraordinary distance. Eustathius himself even makes it fairly clear that Hipponax's lekythos functioned analogously to the Homeric discus: «they are called 'muscular' who, in discus-throwing, hurl <the discus> like Polyphemus, just as (they say) the following <anecdote about Hipponax> makes clear, as follows». With this sentence, Eustathius implies that since people refer to Hipponax as ἀκρότονος, a word associated with discus-throwing, his lekythos must have been a conspicuous substitute for the discus in some sort of formal athletic agon.

As the anecdote is related in the Hipponax testimonia, we cannot reconstruct the details of abuse and confrontation that lie behind it. But it is striking that the Euripides passage follows a pattern of abuse ( JComboBox by Euripides), counter-abuse (Odysseus' response) and eventual victory by the downtrodden (Odysseus' hurling of the discus) that has a distinct generic provenance with Iambus. In fact, the principal Homeric passages in which Odysseus plays the iambographic role of abuser and abused, attacker and attacked, underdog and victor make it easy to see how Hipponax could have adopted him as an exemplary model in the fashioning of his own poetic persona.

II. Odysseus and Iris

Perhaps the most famous passage in the Odyssey in which Odysseus is both attacked and then himself attacks occurs in the quarrel between Odysseus and the beggar Iris in Book XVIII. This scene offers an abundance of provocative details of narrative and characterization which, I shall argue, significantly informed both Hipponax's lekythos scene as we have reconstructed it, and his abusive stance elsewhere in his poetry.

As in the Euripides episode and Hipponax's lekythos poem, one of the guiding themes of the Iris passage is the contrast (which ultimately assumes moral overtones) between physical appearance and reality. The opening lines of Book XVIII describe Iris as a beggar who, although lacking any real strength, looked enormous (οὐδὲ οἶ τὴν ς / οὐδὲ βῆ, εἶδος δὲ μέλα μεγάς ἦν δρόσατα, 3-4) 10. This description

9 Probably the adjective appeared in the poem(s) in which the lekythos story occurred.
10 On the likelihood that Iris' name comically and ironically means 'she who has force' cf. G. Nagy, The Best of the Achaeans, Baltimore 1979, 229-230 §§ n. 4.
stands in direct contrast to that of Odysseus, who appears in his rags as not much more than an old man (21, 31, 52). Eventually, however, he reveals a solid physique, made all the more imposing by Athena’s intervention (66-70):

ως ἄριστος, οἱ δ’ ἄρα πάντες ἐπήνευον, αὐτάρ Ὀδυσσέως ζύστατο μὲν ῥάκεστιν περὶ μῆδα, σώπε δὲ μπρος καλούς τε μεγάλους τε, ὀδενὲ δὲ οἱ εὐρέται ὁμοί στήθε τε στεμφοῦ τε βραχίονες· αὐτάρ Ἀθηνᾶν ἄχτι παρασταμένη μέλε’ ἔδανε ποιμένι λαὸν.

In the actual fight between the two in lines 89-104, Irus is clearly no match for Odysseus, whose most important strategic decision is whether or not to kill his opponent. Just as we suggested for the Hipponax of the lekythos poem, the taunted figure 11 who appears weak at first turns the tables on his abuser in an agon and emerges superior. Scholars have noted that Hipponax frs. 121, 122 and 132 seem suspiciously reminiscent of the Irus episode, in particular lines 25-31, although no one has ventured to articulate a sustained program of allusion on Hipponax’s part. 12

III. Odysseus the Poet of Abuse

Homer continually emphasizes in both epics Odysseus’ knack for appearing in one guise, only to reveal its opposite. Although this aspect of his personality is for obvious reasons more prominent in the Odyssey, Homer acknowledges it most explicitly in Iliad III, where Helen identifies for Priam the various Achaeans visible to them from the ramparts. This essentially

κόπταν, the apparent conflation of Homeric words in ἀμφιδέξιος, the parallel threats of Hipponax (ἀμφιδέξιος γὰρ εἷς κούκ ἀμαρτανός κόπταν) and Irus (κόπταν ἀμφοτέρητα, 28), the occurrence in both poets of πάντες ὄδωντες, all conspire to suggest that Hipponax drew on the Odysseus-Irus episode at some point in his attacks on Bupalus. The opening phrase of fr. 121, λάβετε με ταλάμετα, in particular, followed by the threat to strike Bupalus in the eye, clearly describes preparation for a formal boxing match. Likewise, Irus urges Odysseus in line 30 to «gird himself up» (ζοῦσαν νῦν). When Odysseus does tie up his rags around his loins in line 67 (ζοῦσαν μὲν ῥάκεστιν περὶ μῆδα), the result is the same as when Hipponax removes his himation, for in each case the body is uncovered. 13 The moment of uncovering for Odysseus is especially dramatic since, as we noted above, his impressive physique is thereby revealed to a stunned Irus. In similar fashion, it is likely that in Hipponax’s fr. 121 the removal of the himation served to transform the ‘downrodden’ poet into an unexpectedly threatening opponent. If, as I have argued, the three Hipponax fragments allude to the Irus episode, we have further testimony that Hipponax adopted as one of his roles the superficially unassuming, but physically powerful Odysseus 14.

11 Note that at the beginning of the book Irus begins the agon by addressing Odysseus with hostile intension δὲ ἔλθον Ὀδυσσεῖ διάδεκτο ὄν ὄντι, / καὶ μὲν νεικεῖον ἔκει πετρόνα προσήκεια, 8-9. On Irus’ veïkic cf. Nagy (above, p. 10) 228.

12 W. de S. Meleiros, however, comes close in his edition ad l. (his fr. 129; Hipponax de Esteio, I, Coimbra 1961: «estes versos, na realidade, deviam pertencer à máχη Bupalácos [...] inspirada, conforme dissemos, na luta entre Odiseu e Iró».

13 The obelisks reflect Degani’s judgment that the entire fragment is corrupt. Others are less extreme, such as O. Masson and M.L. West, who print it as lines 4-5 of their fr. 73 (Masson, Les fragments du poète Hipponax, Paris 1962; West, Iambi et Elegi Graeci, I, Oxonii 1989, 130). Whatever its precise configuration, it remains likely, nevertheless, that this fragment does refer to the result of a blow to the jaw.

14 Cf. Degani ad l. (p. 125) for discussions (ancient and modern) of this adjective.

15 M. Poliakeff in Combats in the Ancient World, New Haven 1987, 68-70 characterizes the Odysseus-Irus fight as a streetfight, since the contestants use no boxing gloves or padding. Hipponax (fr. 121 Dg.) certainly implies an impulsive fistfight as well: «take my cloak, I will strike Bupalus in the eye».

16 I should note here, of course, that the three Hipponax fragments need not come from the lekythos poem, nor need they necessarily come from the same poem. I wish to stress simply that Hipponax consciously drew on exemplary agonistic models in Homer.

There is, as it happens, a cluster of Hipponaxan fragments (42, 43, 44, 47, 48 Dg.) where the poet complains of poverty; one (fr. 44) even mentions the poet’s name:

ἐμοὶ δὲ Πλουτοῦς — ἔπει γὰρ λίπην τοφόλος —
ἐς τόποι’ ἔλθων συνάδμ’ εἶπεν: “Ἰππάνως,
δίδωμι τοῦ μένεις ἀργύρου τρικόντα
καὶ πάλα ἐς’ ἀλλα:’ δείλα αὐτὸ γάρ τὰς φρένας.
Possibly these fragments derive from a context in which Hipponax aligned himself with the beggar Odysseus. They portray, in any event, a poet who feels oppressed and unjustly put-upon (although the self-pity is surely ironic and humorous; cf. Degani ad fr. 42, pp. 59-60).
'metapoetic' passage focuses on the four principal players of the poem 17, but Homer lavishes a full 33 lines on Odysseus alone. At 203-224 Antenor embellishes Helen's brief identification of Odysseus with an anecdote about the time when he entertained Menelaus and Odysseus, who had come on an embassy to rescue Helen. Here Antenor stresses the startling discontinuity between the physical appearance of Odysseus and his intellectual-verbal faculties 18. Antenor's description of Odysseus at the Trojan assembly corroborates Priam's assessment of Odysseus as he spotted him on the battlefield; Odysseus was not an unusually impressive physical specimen, although, perhaps, he was distinct enough. In Antenor's account Odysseus pales beside Menelaus when they stand up, although sitting down his bearing is more stately: στάντον μὲν Μενελάους ὑπερεξαίρετα εὐθέα δέομεν, / ἀμφότεροι δ' ἐξωκάλλος γεγονότεροι ἐμένοις 'Oδυσσέας 20. Unlike the other passages we have examined which focus on Odysseus' superficially unheroic physique, we do not end up here with a demonstration of latent and unexpected physical force. Rather, in a subtle variation of the appearance-reality contrast, Antenor focuses on how on that occasion Odysseus' physical appearance belied his extraordinary rhetorical skills. In contrast to Menelaus' terse but clear and fluid style in speaking (213-215), Antenor describes how Odysseus fidgeted nervously, awkwardly wielded the speaker's scepter, and ultimately looked like an utter fool (217-224):

στάσακεν, ὡσπερ δὲ ἱδέασε κοτά ἱθόνος δύματα πήδας, σκήτηρον δ' οὔτ' ὁπλά οὔτε προπηρνίες ἐνώμα ἀλλ' οἷτης ἑξεκυν, ἀδίδερ φαίοντ' ἐν οἴποις φαίνετ' ξέκατον τε τ' ἑμναία άφρονα τ' αὐτός. ἀλλ' δὲ ὅπα τε μεγάλην έν στήθος ἐν' ἕ' καὶ ἔπα ψαθάδεσαν ἐνοκάτα χειμερίσθησαν, οὔτ' ἄν ἔκειτ' 'Οδυσσῆι γ' έρισθεν βρυτός ἄλλος· ὕστε γ' ἄκοτα 'Οδυσσῆος άγασασμέθ' εἴδος ἱδέαστε.

When Odysseus actually spoke, the beauty and power of his 'snow-like' words 21 mitigated his physical appearance. Line 224, although some have quibbled over it 22, clearly means that in the light of Odysseus' oratory, his performance demeanor in particular and overall appearance in general (ἐδοξε) seemed not to be so strange anymore (οὔ τότε γ' ἄκοτα... άγασασμέθ'). Antenor's point is consistent with the usual Homeric characterization of Odysseus: although certainly capable of holding his own on the battlefield with the best of the heroes, Odysseus' real distinction lay in his mental acuity and his ability to manipulate speech so as to prove superior even to those obviously stronger than himself.

We may readily understand, therefore, how such qualities could have been assimilated by Hipponax in creating his iambographic personae, since a poet's success, like that of Odysseus, relies on the power of ἔνεργη. Moreover, the fact that Odysseus' appearance initially makes him a potential object of scorn and abuse (219-220) ought to remind us that Hipponax's most famous quarrel began apparently with an abusive depiction of the poet by the sculptor Bupalus 23. Hipponax's allegedly deformed appearance occasioned ridicule from Bupalus and his brother Athenis, but Hipponax retaliated with poetry so violent that his targets supposedly committed suicide 24. The essential components of the ἐνεργή between Hipponax and Bupalus parallel neatly those of Antenor's description of Odysseus in public performance: both passages isolate an initial physical abnormality in their principal figures, but in turn each figure compensates for any physical deficiencies by means of verbal skill.

In the teichoscopy, of course, Odysseus is not behaving explicitly as a poet (or orator) of abuse as Hipponax does in his abuse of Bupalus. But only one book earlier in the Iliad Odysseus adopts precisely this stance in his attack on Thersites, a passage which adds an explicitly iambographic dimension to his character. Nagy has carefully analyzed the quarrel between Thersites and Odysseus and calls it «the one epic passage with by far the most overt representation of blame poetry» (p. 265). While this is largely true, Nagy's analysis of the actual mechanics of 'blame' 25 in this passage requires, I believe, some adjustment.

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19 Priam mentions that Odysseus was «shorter than Agamemnon by a head, though broader in the shoulders» (193).

20 Cf. Kirk (above, n. 18) 295: «Odysseus is not especially tall but is powerfully built. His broad shoulders make him look especially impressive when he is seated (and his lack of commanding height does not show)».


22 The problem lies with the meaning of δύνασθαι: 'admire' or 'be surprised at'; cf. Kirk (above, n. 18) 297.

23 Degani collects the relevant passages in his testim. 7 (Suda), 8 (Pliny; see next note), 9a-c (scholia to Horace, Epodes 6,14). The alleged incident may or may not have actually occurred, although there is little doubt that Hipponax's target Bupalus was the same person as the historical sculptor Bupalus; cf. R. Rosen, Hipponax, Bupalos and the Conventions of the Psogos, «TAPhA» CXVIII (1988) 31 n. 10.

24 The locus classicus is Pliny, Nat. Hist. XXXVI 12: Hipponactis notabilis foedias vulus erat; quamobrem imaginem eius lascivia locosam hi proposueris ridentium circulis, quod Hipponax indignatus destruxit amariitudinem carminum in tantum ut credatur aliquis ad laqueum eos compulsisse (= testim. 8 Dg.).

25 Nagy's important discussion of 'blame poetry' in the Best of the Acheaeans (above, n. 10) has made the term fashionable in Classical studies. Although I recognize its utility as a critical construct, I have never found it an adequately descriptive term (preferring myself 'poetry of abuse' or the like; if we require a technical term, perhaps we should consider
Nagy emphasizes, for example, Thersites' function as a blame poet, but never quite specifies Odysseus' role in the ἄρρητος. While Nagy does acknowledge that Odysseus responds to Thersites' 'blame poetry' with his own 'blame poetry', for him Thersites, whose <base appearance [...] serves to mirror in form the content of his blame poetry> (p. 263), embodies paradigmatically the poet of abuse. It is peculiar, however, that the representative par excellence of such poetry should end up utterly defeated, humiliated and physically injured by Odysseus – a laughing-stock (B 270) for the Achaeans, and a negative social force, rather than the positive one we would expect. Nagy himself senses the problem: «[h]ere again, we see a theme of reversal, since the function of Thersites himself was 'to make eris against kings' (ἐρείπωμενα βασιλεῖς: 2.214) – in accordance not with the established order of things but rather with whatever he thought would make the Achaeans laugh (2.214-15)» (Nagy's italics). Nagy infers from this situation that «Homeric Epos can indeed reflect the comic aspect of blame poetry, but that it does so at the expense of the blame poet. In the Thersites episode of the Ἰλιάς, it is Epos that gets the last laugh on the blame poet, rather than the other way around» (p. 262). This conclusion, while it explains ingeniously how a 'blame poet' can become the ultimate object of ridicule himself, seems to me to misidentify the roles played by Thersites and Odysseus in their quarrel. If we can judge from the quarrel between Hipponax and Bupalus, or that between Archilochus and Lycambes, the iambographer (qua 'blame poet') adopts a defensive stance which is by definition reactionary and self-righteous: he feels attacked himself, and so must attack in turn. Hipponax was driven to poetry, as the story goes, by the mocking sculptures of Bupalus; Archilochus by Lycambes' breach of trust. It is somewhat misleading, therefore, to speak of Thersites as a prime representative of 'blame poetry', since, although he does engage in blame, his blame is categorically judged in the poem to be unjust, unwarranted, and politically illegitimate. Rather, it is Odysseus who performs the true role of the 'blame poet'. As a representative of the Achaean leadership which has come under attack by Thersites, Odysseus – with 'right' on his side (cf. the army's response to Odysseus' harsh treatment of Thersites, 272-277) – quells with blame a potentially dangerous rabble-rouser. Viewed in this light, Thersites functions analogously to Bupalus, and Odysseus to Hipponax: both Thersites and Bupalus initiate the ἄρρητος, and both suffer the consequences with 'legitimate' blame from Odysseus and Hipponax respectively.

It would, of course, be tempting to speculate that somewhere in his poetry Hipponax cast Bupalus explicitly in the role of Thersites. Even though the evidence does not allow us to indulge such a temptation, it should be clear from the preceding discussion that Odysseus' role as a self-righteous 'blamer' in the Thersites episode was functionally that of the iambographic poet. This observation helps to affirm the other connections we have already noted between Hipponax and Odysseus; there can be little doubt, in any case, that Hipponax would have found the resonance of an Odysseus 'iambopoiois' appropriate to his own iamboi.

30 Or, on a less personal level, as we see for example in the ὑπονοία of Aristophanes, the poet may claim to feel compelled to retaliate for the public good against those whom he regards as acting unjustly. On the didactic pretense of Old Comedy cf. R.M. Rosen, Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition, Atlanta 1988, 18-19 and 27-28.
31 For the testimonia about the alleged betrothal of Lycambes' daughter Neobule to Archilochus, and the subsequent cancellation of the engagement, cf. West (above, n. 13) 63-64; cf. also Lefkowitz (above, n. 2) 26-27.
32 It is true of course, that neither Odysseus nor Thersites are strictly speaking 'poets', nor does Homer explicitly recognize them as such. However, as Nagy has well shown (above, n. 10), 253-264, the Thersites episode overtly employs the vocabulary of 'blame poetry' and the entire scene functions as an alternative analogue to the poetry of praise. Moreover, it is natural for the models of discourse available to a poet to derive from other poetic genres, even though epos does not allow for a seamless integration of 'blame poetry' into itself. One of Martin's central theses about the Ἰλιάς is that 'all speakers in the poem are 'performers' in traditional genres of discourse' (above, n. 17), 170; cf. esp. pp. 43-145.
IV. Odysseus and Hipponax among the Phaeacians

How explicit Hipponax would have been in adopting traits of the Homeric Odysseus in his poems is difficult to judge. His fondness for manipulating Homeric conventions, of course, is apparent at every turn in the fragments, and his allusive methods include overt parody, mixing of 'high' (i.e. Homeric) and 'low' diction to create bathos, and the use of Homeric diction as formal, ornamental devices. His interest in Homer, however, does not end with matters of style, but seems to take on genuine programmatic dimensions. In fact, the fragments suggest that Hipponax was particularly intrigued by the 'Phaeacian' books of the Odyssey — the very section in which Odysseus quarrels with Euryalus. Scholars fastened initially onto the name of Hipponax's lover (or would-be lover), 'Aphṛtē, who bears the same name as Alcinous' wife, Arete the queen of Phaeacia, and have argued convincingly that the similarity is more than coincidental. Hipponax's Arete, it seems, functioned as a cipher with specific Homeric associations through which the poet could shape his attacks on Bupalus. As such, the very name of Arete in Hipponax functioned as a hermeneutic device capable of expanding of its own accord the allusive possibilities of the poem. That is, if Arete is able to conjure up a Homeric context, it stands to reason that other characters who appear with her might easily be made to interact with her in a manner appropriate to such a context. Unfortunately, the sorry state of the fragments does not allow us to specify much further the details of such multi-dimensional interactions, although if scholars are correct to associate the hints of incest in Homer's genealogy of the Phaeacian royalty (τ 54-59) with the explicit charges of incest against Bupalus in Hipponax (fr. 20.2; 69.7 Dg.), we may form some idea of this allusive mechanism.

The most compelling evidence that Hipponax incorporated Homeric material from the Phaeacian books directly into his narratives, and that the Hipponaean Arete, therefore, bore some relation to the Homeric one, can be found in frs. 74-77. E. Lobel, who edited the papyrus from which these fragments derive (P. Oxy. 2174), noted that they include «the title and some details of a 'Return of Odysseus'»:

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remarkable fragments, however, was marginal ("it cannot be said that even these [frs.] greatly enrich our knowledge either of this writer's subjects or his treatment of them"); p. 67) and he did not attempt even to pose the most obvious questions about them. Even though the fragments do not allow us to restore a coherent narrative, the indisputable amalgamation of Odyssean elements that they reveal is itself reason for pause. Was this part of an attack on someone? Did Odysseus appear in the first or third person? 43 We cannot supply certain answers to these questions, but it seems highly probable that Hipponax's target Bupalus was interpolated into this Odyssean scene at 77.4: ἠκτός δέσπηρ σβο[ν. As I have noted elsewhere, Hipponax shows a predilection for placing Bupalus' name in the cretic that forms the last three syllables of the second metron in the trimeter line, precisely the position it would fall in here if we accept the supplement ἠκτός δέσπηρ Βο[ν ἀλος. 44 Line 4, therefore, seems to compare someone (or something) to Bupalus, perhaps the individual said to be 'crazed' (φρέναλης) in the next line. We can now begin to weave the strands together: the poem bears a title referring to the Odyssey; Phaeacia is named in fr. 77, and fr. 75 confirms that the actual setting is Phaeacia; in the Odyssean scene to which fr. 75 apparently alludes, Arete addresses Odysseus first after his meal (η 233-239); Arete is also the name of Hipponax's lover, over whom he competes with Bupalus; Bupalus is (probably) mentioned in 77.4. These factors point to a narrative involving a Homeric setting, but with transparent connections to contemporary characters. Insofar as Bupalus consistently played the role of Hipponax's target, we may feel confident that his appearance in this explicitly Odyssean context fulfilled a similar function. We have in frs. 74-77, therefore, a situation in which Odysseus, doubtless a loosely veiled stand-in for the figure of the poet, is presented at his most abject and vulnerable: nearly destroyed in his shipwreck, in a strange and quietly hostile land, at the mercy of its king and queen. Once again, the portrait of the poet that emerges from his identification with such an Odysseus is that of the oppressed underdog. We cannot say, of course, whether Hipponax actually included the lekythos story in the poem represented by frs. 74-77. As an analogue to the altercation between Odysseus and the Phaeacian Euryalus, it is certainly not difficult to imagine it in a Phaeacian setting. In any case, if we are right to assume, as many have done, that Hipponax attacked Bupalus in some fashion in frs. 74-77, we may comfortably speculate that the narrative followed the poet from apparent inferiority in the face of his enemy (i.e.) to eventual supremacy and glory. As we have seen, Hipponax consistently fashioned his poetic persona and the personae of his targets in accordance with just such a pattern.

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43 Hipponax may have used Odysseus as an exemplum here in a third person narrative, rather than adopting his role in the first person. In either case, however, the poet manages to identify himself with Odysseus. A. Bartalucci's suggestion in Hipponaceae interpolationiis, "Maia" n.s. XVI (1964) 253 n. 41, that Bupalus lies behind the Odysseus figure of these fragments, seems highly unlikely in view of our discussion above. While he is correct to point out that post-homeric portraits of Odysseus are not always positive (especially in didactic and philosophical writers), there is simply no real evidence in Hipponax that would lead us to suspect a connection with Bupalus. I hope to have shown at least that the case for a connection between Odysseus and Hipponax himself is considerably stronger.