

CENTRE FOR ODYSSEAN STUDIES

# CONTESTS AND REWARDS IN THE HOMERIC EPICS

Proceedings  
of the 10th International Symposium on the Odyssey  
(15-19 September 2004)

*Editors*

Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou  
Antonios Rengakos  
Christos Tsagalis

ITHACA 2007

ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙΑΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ

# ΑΘΛΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΑΘΛΑ ΣΤΑ ΟΜΗΡΙΚΑ ΕΠΗ

Από τα Πρακτικά  
του Ι' Συνεδρίου για την Οδύσσεια  
(15-19 Σεπτεμβρίου 2004)

*Εκδότες*

Μάχη Παϊζη-Αποστολοπούλου  
Αντώνιος Ρεγκάκος  
Χρήστος Τσαγγάλης



ΙΘΑΚΗ 2007

NANCY FELSON

Epinician Ideology at the Phaeacian Games:  
θ 97-265

THE COMPLEMENTARY NOTIONS that fine deeds demand fitting words of praise, and misdeeds, appropriate words of blame, inform the section of Book θ of the *Odyssey* that we call the Phaeacian Games. Here the *Odyssey* poet represents his characters exploring what constitutes excellence (*aretê*) and who deserves praise and blame. Almost two centuries later, the supreme value of calibrating word to deed becomes the centerpiece of another genre, epinician poetry, which celebrates the male world of sports, where triumphant athletes dominate their opponents in contests that took place in the recent past. Within that genre, *kairos*, defined by H. Fränkel as «the rules of accurate choice and prudent restraint, the sense of what suits, tact, discretion,» finds expression in athletics, heroics, and poetics.<sup>1</sup> For the athlete and hero, *kairos* involves excelling at a specific task and thereby outstripping all rivals; for the poet, *kairos* means fitting words to deeds appropriately (*kata kairon*, *kata moiran*, or *kata kosmon*).

\* I would like to thank the Organizing Committee of the Centre for Odyssean Studies, especially D.M. Maronitis and Machi Apostolopoulou, for hosting the conference on Ithaki and for their editorial labors. I am grateful to my friend and colleague Seth Schein for his patient reading of my paper. All errors that remain are my very own.

1. H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, transl. M. Hadas and J. Willis. London. Blackwell, 1973, p. 447, identifies *kairos*, «selectivity», as a key Pindaric practice and, p. 128, cites Hesiod as Pindar's forerunner. In the section on sailing (*Op.* 641-94) Hesiod interweaves time, measure, and the notion of order and caps his advice to his brother Perses on proper timing with the command at 694: «Observe due measure (*metra*); in all things proper choice (*kairos*) is best.» E. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica*. Berkeley and Los Angeles. University of California Press, 1986 (orig. 1962), enlarges this principle of selectivity, or *kairos*, to include all the rhetorical conventions of the epinician genre. He builds on Fränkel and also on W. Schadewaldt, *Der Aufbau des Pindarischen Epinikion*. Halle. Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1928, especially on his work on the *Programm* of the epinikion.

*Kairos* is integrally related to notions of *dikē* (justice) and *kosmos* (order): the poet who completes a judicious poem and satisfies his poetic *chreos*—his debt to the victor—is a restorer of order. He implements, via poetry, equilibrium, balance, justice. The rhetorical and dictional conventions that come to characterize epinician poetry include, along with victor praise and mythic exempla, *gnōmai* that self-reflexively affirm the proper way to praise and blame and that express the ideology of male *aretē* at its peak.<sup>2</sup>

Epinician praise has a linear structure, constituting a “story” about the victor that moves from deprivation, through extraordinary toil to ultimate attainment. The deprivation may parallel a low point in a myth, as when the royal Theban family appears to have suffered extirpation in β 35-45 but an offspring arises and brings hope; or it may simply describe the imagined state of an athlete, vis-à-vis his victory, before the contest begins. The contest itself is the athlete’s means for turning the situation around, for attaining what originally was missing yet appeared most desirable. He moves from *aporia* to victory, a progression that occurs before the commissioning of a celebratory ode. His victory becomes the basis for hiring a poet, whose consequent need to praise is comparable to the athlete’s initial state of deprivation. The poet, too, moves from *aporia* to attainment, as he completes a victory ode that will immortalize the athlete’s victory and elevate him and his city.<sup>3</sup>

The Phaeacian Games anticipate the epinician *mentalité* in several important albeit informal ways. On the one hand, the Phaeacian youths and Odysseus perform *erga* that cover a wide range of activities, and the term *aretē* is often used to designate their accomplishments. On the other, two sets of exchanges having opposite functions take place, one combative, the other collaborative. In the first, Euryalus and Odysseus vie in a verbal *agôn* that defers and then virtually supplants any athletic *agôn* between them, while in the second, Alcinous and Odysseus negotiate mutually beneficial exchanges of praise. Through figures that praise, blame and mediate the *Odyssey* poet explores poetic *kairos* and the parameters of *arête* in ways that anticipate the Pindaric epinikion.

2. *P.* 9, 76-79 and *Isthm.* 1.41-46 are two examples of gnomic statements that articulate, respectively, notions of poetic *kairos* and of the correspondence between expenditures and their rewards in poetry. See Bundy, p. 18, n. 44.

3. In Bundy’s technical language (Bundy, p. 7), the poet is the *laudator*, the victor the *laudandus*.

King Alcinous initiates the Phaeacian Games in the first place as a distraction from the minstrel’s song—the *Neikos* of Odysseus and Peleus’ son Achilles (90-95). He intervenes out of tact, one component of *xenia* when he alone of the Phaeacians detects his guest’s misery. Though he does not ask the reason, he seems to intuit what the poet’s audiences know for sure: that the song stirs painful, all too recent memories—ir Odysseus but not the Phaeacians. By redirecting the entertainment from song to sports, Alcinous averts the consequences of the minstrel’s selection of a song that distresses his guest on this occasion.<sup>4</sup>

A yearning for Phaeacian glory also moves Alcinous to propose the «we go out and make trial of all contests» (*aethlôn peirêthômen/pantôn*). In his first of three requests he asks the stranger to tell his *philoî*, once he arrives home, «how far we excel over others in boxing and wrestling and jumping and with our feet» (100-103). The Phaeacian king desires immortality through memory for his extraordinarily isolated and thus untested people—that they not remain nameless in the world. In effect he wants to enlist his guest as their *laudator*.<sup>5</sup> This desire and its various forms of fulfillment are at the core of the humor in the portrayal of the Phaeacian society as would-be «heroes».

Of course, the *Odyssey* will ultimately satisfy the Phaeacian longing for renown. Their epithet, *nausiklutoi*, already affirms their fame in seafaring. Odysseus’ *muthos* to Penelope at Ψ 338-41 formally bestows *kleos* upon them as the ones who escort the hero safely home with his many gifts. Only a portion of the Phaeacians perish—the sailors who are «petrified» with their ship before they complete their *nostos* and who receive, as consolation, a stone monument that will last through time.

After Alcinous’ first request comes a swift catalogue of contestants and of winners in each event (120-30). This list seems to be a forerunner, in some respects, of the epinician victory list, though that list recounts the triumphs only of the victor and his relatives and then turns to the speci-

4. On the way that the Phaeacian Games combine contest and hospitality, see W. G. Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the Odyssey* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 141-153.

5. Compare Alcinous’ explicit requests for praise to Odysseus’ request of Demodocus to change his topic and sing the *hippou kosmon* ... *dourateou*, the order account of the wooden horse (492-98), a part of the Trojan saga that highlights heroism. The *aretē* of Odysseus is well attested and already the subject of song while the Phaeacians are obscure and unsung before Odysseus’ visit.

victory being celebrated. The narrator in this catalogue (110 and 111-20) first names the sixteen contenders (110-19) and then reports five events and singles out the winner in each: the foot-race (120-25) (blameless Clytneus), the trial of wrestling (Euryalus), jumping (Amphialus), the discus (Elatreus), and boxing (Laodamas). The five sports—running, wrestling, jumping, discus throwing, and boxing—include the four marked by Alcinous as ones in which his people stand out plus the sport in which Odysseus will soon exhibit his athletic prowess. This catalogue precedes an exchange, supposedly private, between Prince Laodamas and Euryalus over how to get the stranger to engage with them in a contest.<sup>6</sup>

Laodamas is well-intentioned when he exhorts the stranger to make trial of contests and scatter his cares from his *thumos* (145, 149). But Euryalus is a bad influence. He stirs Laodamas to lecture the much-enduring Trojan hero on how to be heroic and athletic and how to deal with troubles. This, I surmise, is what initially offends Odysseus, as his use of the participle *kertomeontes* (153), indicates. When Odysseus proceeds to his past sufferings and toils (155), he evokes and thereby reclaims part of his identity at the same time that he educates the youths on epic heroism<sup>7</sup>: 153-57

Λαοδάμα, τί με ταῦτα κελεύετε κερτομέοντες;  
κῆδεά μοι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἢ περ ἄεθλοι,  
ὅς πρὶν μὲν μάλα πολλὰ πάθον καὶ πολλὰ μόγησα,  
νῦν δὲ μεθ' ὑμετέρῃ ἀγορῇ νόστοιο χατίζων  
ῆμαι, λισσόμενος βασιλῆά τε πάντα τε δῆμον.

«Laodamas, why do you all urge me on provocatively  
to do these things? Cares are more on my mind than games are,

6. See A. F. Garvie, *Odyssey. Books 6-8*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 264 (ad 133-67).

7. Odysseus depicts himself as blocked in his heroism, as earlier on Ogygia when Hermes finds him sitting on the beach, weeping and yearning for Ithaca (ε 82-84 = ε 157-58; cf. ε 13). Achilles, once he has withdrawn from battle, is often depicted sitting idly, as at A 329-30 and Σ 104 (where he rues his inactivity in the face of Patroclus' death); cf. *LSJ* s.v. ῆμαι: «freq. with collat. sense, sit still, sit idle». For other images of the inactive male sitting on the sidelines, cf. Hes. *Op.* 130-37, where the 100-year old child of the Silver Age sits at his mother's side, and *O.* 1.81-84, where Pelops, as enters the contest for the hand of Hippodameia, asks disparagingly: «Why should someone sit in darkness and cherish to no end/ A nameless old age, letting go all lovely things?»

I who before this have suffered much and had many hardships,  
and sit here now in the middle of your assembly, longing  
to go home, entreating your king for this, and all of his people.»  
(Lattimore, adapted)<sup>8</sup>

Right away, Euryalus provokes Odysseus to action by picking a quarrel face-to-face (*neikese t'antên*).<sup>9</sup> Here begins the negative exchange that comprises the *neikos* proper between them, a contest of boasts and insults that R. P. Martin calls «flyting,» appropriating the term from traditional Germanic poetry.<sup>10</sup> Euryalus' brief infelicitous speech (158-64) begins and ends with an assertion that strips Odysseus of his identity as an athlete and makes him instead a captain of merchant ships, a master over mariners. The *neos* would rob the hero not only of his masculinity but of his Achaean, heroic past, especially if his two categories—athlete and merchant—might be thought to stand for the masculine Western Greek and the effeminate, levantine Phoenician.<sup>11</sup>

8. I am using the Greek text of W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer*. London. Macmillan & Co., 1965 and the English translation by R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York 1967), occasionally adapted.

9. On the implications of the comparison to Ares at θ 115 for an elaborate structural parallel between the contest at the Phaeacian Games and the competition between Ares and Hephaestus over Aphrodite, see B. K. Braswell, «The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to *Odyssey* 8», *Hermes* 110 (1982) 129-37.

10. R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 47. Flyting is one of three kinds of authoritative speech-acts that Martin identifies as *muthoi*, each with its own rhetorical and dictional conventions.

11. The Phoenicians are paradigmatic in the *Odyssey* for their mercantile life-style: see espec. V. Bérard, *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee*, Vol. 1. Paris, 1903 and I. Winter, «Homer's Phoenicians», in J. B. Carter and S. P. Morris (edd.), *The Ages of Homer*. Austin. University of Texas Press, 1995, pp. 247-271. Winter discusses Eumaeus' story of his abduction as a child by the Phoenicians (ο 403-84) and the characterization of the Phoenicians in Odysseus' lies. When Euryalus imputes the motive of profit-seeking to the stranger, it is the same as calling him cowardly and unheroic (in effect, unmanly) as well as unaristocratic; cf. Achilles' insult to Agamemnon by calling him *kerdaleophrôn* at A 149 (which refers to his «[cowardly] greediness» rather than his «cunning») and Agamemnon's insult of Odysseus at Δ 339, where the same adjective is linked with *kakoisi doloisi kekasmenos*. Cf. *LSJ* on the various ancient and medieval glosses on *trôktai*, which is used in later Greek of greed for money. We can distinguish pirates from merchants in that pirates take by force and merchants profit by sharp trading.

159-64

οὐ γάρ σ' οὐδέ, ξεῖνε, δαήμονι φωτὶ εἴσκω  
 ἄθλων, οἷά τε πολλὰ μετ' ἀνθρώποισι πέλονται,  
 ἀλλὰ τῷ, ὅς θ' ἅμα νηῖ πολυκλήιδι θαμίζων,  
 ἀρχὸς ναυτῶν, οἷ τε πρηκτῆρες ἔασι,  
 φόρτου τε μνήμων καὶ ἐπίσκοπος ἦσιν ὁδαίων  
 κερδέων θ' ἀρπαλέων· οὐδ' ἀθλητῆρι ἔοικας.

«No, stranger, for I do not see that you are like one versed  
 in contests, such as now are practiced much among people,  
 but rather to one who plies his ways in his many-locked vessel,  
 master over mariners who also are men of business,  
 a man who, careful of his cargo and grasping of profits,  
 goes carefully on his way. You do not resemble an athlete.»

Odysseus responds in kind, and fittingly, in word and deed neutralizing this rude and baseless challenge to his identity. His speech (166-85) highlights Euryalus' verbal deficiencies while displaying his own virtuosity; i.e., he enacts what he charges Euryalus with lacking, grace and beauty. He rebukes the youth for using words inappropriately and unjustly, a point he makes eight times within his 14 lines of reprimand: 166-77

ξεῖν', οὐ καλὸν ξειπες· ἀτασθάλῳ ἀνδρὶ ἔοικας.  
 οὕτως οὐ πάντεσσι θεοὶ χαρίεντα διδοῦσιν  
 ἀνδράσιν, οὔτε φυῆν οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτ' ἀγορητύν.  
 ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος πέλει ἀνὴρ,  
 ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφὴν ἔπεσι στέφει· οἱ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν  
 τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν, ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύει,  
 αἰδοῖ μειλίχην, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,  
 ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνὰ ἄστρ' ἐπὶ θεὸν ὥς εἰσορόωσιν.

On the contrast between plying a trade and being an aristocrat knowledgeable about athletic games (*daemoni.../athlon*), see esp. M. Dickie, «Phaeacian Athletes», *Papers in the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983) 247-251; also Stanford, p. 336 (*ad* θ 161-4). This insult is tricky, however, in that Odysseus is an aristocratic hero and he is concerned with *kerdos*; cf. ν 255 (*polukerdea*) and 297 (*kerde'*) in Athena's characterization first of Odysseus and then of the two of them; elsewhere, e.g. in Sophocles' depiction of the merchant in the *Philoktetes*, this anti-heroic sense of *kerdos* intersects with the sophistic associations of the word.

ἄλλος δ' αὖ εἶδος μὲν ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν,  
 ἀλλ' οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφὶ περιστέφεται ἐπέεσσιν,  
 ὥς καὶ σοὶ εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπές, οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως  
 οὐδὲ θεὸς τεύξειε, νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐσσι.

«Friend, that was not well spoken; you seem like one who is reckless. So it is that the gods do not bestow graces in all ways on men, neither in stature nor yet in brains or eloquence; for there is a certain kind of man, less noted for beauty, but the god puts comeliness on his words, and they who look toward him are filled with joy at the sight, and he speaks to them without faltering in winning modesty, and shines among those who are gathered, And people look on him as on a god when he walks in the city. Another again in his appearance is like the immortals, but upon his words there is no grace distilled, as in your case the appearance is conspicuous, and not a god even would make it otherwise, and yet the mind there is worthless.»

Odysseus' second person address in the opening part of his speech (166 and 176-79) frames an extended generalization (167-75) that applies, point by point, to Euryalus. Odysseus tells the youth directly: «you spoke not well» and «you seem like one who is reckless.» The gods, he tells Euryalus, do not bestow gracious gifts evenly. One person gets comeliness on his words and people admire him (cf. Hes. *Th.* 84-87), another looks handsome but has no grace on his words.<sup>12</sup> Odysseus returns to the case at hand and the second person with *hos kai soi* and *essi* (76-77) to round off the attack.

In the rest of the speech, Odysseus refutes Euryalus' charges and finally agrees to enter the athletic contest: 179-85

... ἐγὼ δ' οὐ νῆϊς ἀέθλων  
 ὥς σύ γε μυθεῖαι, ἀλλ' ἐν πρῶτοισιν ὄτω  
 ἔμμεναι, ὄφρ' ἦβη τε πεποίθεα χερσὶ τ' ἐμῇσι.  
 νῦν δ' ἔχομαι κακότητι καὶ ἄλγεσι· πολλὰ γὰρ ἔτλην,  
 ἀνδρῶν τε πτολέμους ἀλεγεινά τε κύματα πείρων.

12. Alcinous compliments Odysseus in similar terms at λ 367: σοὶ δ' ἐπὶ μορφῇ ἐπέων...

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς, κακὰ πολλὰ παθὼν, πειρήσομ' ἀέθλων·  
θυμοδακῆς γὰρ μῦθος· ἐπώτρυνας δέ με εἰπὼν.

«...I am not such a new hand  
at games as you say, but always, as I think, I have been  
among the best when I still had trust in youth (*hēbē*) and hands' strength.  
Now I am held in evil condition and pain; for I had much  
to suffer: the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters.  
But even so for all my troubles I will try your contests,  
for your word bit in the heart, and you have stirred me by speaking.»

At this point Odysseus throws the discus and proves with this single act that he is still excellent at athletics and deserves praise, not blame. His success exposes Euryalus' injustice in uttering an unfounded *thumodakēs muthos* (185). The mighty throw intimidates all the ship-famed Phaeacians, who cower down to the ground (190-92), as the suitors will at χ 362. This response marks them as unheroic: they are unused to competing with a hero of Odysseus' stature. The speech of the disguised Athena endorsing the stranger's victory helps restore the balance upset by Euryalus' insults, even as it exemplifies appropriate praise.

His confidence restored, Odysseus makes a second speech to the *neoi*. He begins with an Iliadic vaunt, boldly challenging all except Laodamas to make trial of various sports: boxing, wrestling, and running.<sup>13</sup> Now that he invites them to compete with a real hero and athlete, no one takes him up on his offer, and no further contest takes place.

In the second section of his speech, from 214 to 228, Odysseus builds his case for his own high status as an athlete. Here he is like an epinician poet but he is praising not the achievements of another, but his own past athletic triumphs and talents and, by implication, his recent victory. The diction and *topoi* he uses anticipate those of the epinician genre. Situating of himself amidst the heroes of the Trojan War and of the previous generation, he employs what amount to mythic exempla to specify his own level of excellence:

13. Cf. *peirêthêto* (205) and *peirêthēmenai antên* (213) in Odysseus' second speech with Laodamas' *peirêsai* (145 and 149). On the uses of *peirao* + gen. *aethlôn* or *aethlou* in this prolonged exchange, see espec. V. Visa, «Les compétitions athlétiques dans l'Odyssée: divertissement, mise à l'épreuve et jeux funèbres», *BAGB* (1994) 32-36. There are countless parallels in the context of war and athletics in both Homeric epics and in Pindar.

219-25

οἶος δὴ με Φιλοκτήτης ἀπεκαίνυτο τόξῳ  
δῆμῳ ἐνὶ Τρώων, ὅτε τοξαζοίμεθ' Ἀχαιοί.  
τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἐμέ φημι πολὺν προφερέστερον εἶναι,  
ὅσσοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσὶν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῆτον ἔδοντες.  
ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροις ἐριζέμεν οὐκ ἐθελήσω,  
οὔθ' Ἡρακλῆϊ οὔτ' Εὐρύτῳ Οἰχαλιῇ,  
οἳ ῥα καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἐρίζεσκον περὶ τόξων.

«There was Philoktetes alone who surpassed me (*apekainuto*) in archery when we Achaians shot with bows in the Trojan country. But I will say that I stand far out ahead of all others such as are living mortals now and feed on the earth. Only I will not set myself against men of the generations before, not with Herakles nor Eurytos of Oichalia, who set themselves against the immortals with the bow...»

At 235 a new set of exchanges begins, this time not combative but reciprocal. The king strives to restore *xenia* with his guest by reinstituting the proper correspondence between word and deed. He adopts poetic diction that reflects Odysseus' own and implicitly acknowledges the *kairos* principle when he evaluates anyone who would «find fault with your excellence» as not speaking fittingly (*artia*):

236-240

ξεῖν', ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀχάριστα μεθ' ἡμῖν ταῦτ' ἀγορεύεις,  
ἀλλ' ἐθέλεις ἀρετὴν σὴν φαινέμεν, ἣ τοι ὀπηδεῖ,  
χωόμενος, ὅτι σ' οὔτος ἀνὴρ ἐν ἀγῶνι παραστάς  
νεῖκεσεν, ὥς ἂν σὴν ἀρετὴν βροτὸς οὐ τις ὄνοιτο,  
ὅς τις ἐπίσταιτο ἧσι φρεσὶν ἄρτια βάζειν·

«My friend, since it is not graceless for you to speak thus among us, but you wish to show that excellence you are endowed with (*sên aretên*)—angered because this man came up to you in the competition and picked a quarrel with you (*neikesen*), in a way no man would properly find fault with your excellence (*sên aretên*), if he knew in his heart how to speak fittingly.»

(Lattimore, adapted)

This regal intervention neutralizes the negativity of the earlier exchange of abuses and leads Euryalus to amend his behavior in time to avoid disaster: the youth retracts his remarks and presents his sword to Odysseus as a gesture of peace, conciliation, and friendship. Odysseus generously pardons him and accepts his gift (413-15). With equilibrium now restored, Alcinous makes a second appeal to the stranger for *kleos*, redefining the domains of *aretê* for which he seeks remembrance:

241-55

ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐμέθεν ξυνίει ἔπος, ὄφρα καὶ ἄλλω  
εἵπης ἡρώων, ὅτε κεν σοῖσ' ἐν μεγάροισι  
δαινύη παρὰ σῇ τ' ἀλόχῳ καὶ σοῖσι τέκεσσιν,  
ἡμετέρης ἀρετῆς μεμνημένος, οἷα καὶ ἡμῖν  
Ζεὺς ἐπὶ ἔργα τίθησι διαμπερὲς ἐξ ἔτι πατρῶν.  
οὐ γὰρ πυγμάχοι εἰμὲν ἀμύμονες οὐδὲ παλαισταί,  
ἀλλὰ ποσὶ κραιπνῶς θέομεν καὶ νηυσὶν ἄριστοι,  
αἰεὶ δ' ἡμῖν δαῖς τε φίλῃ κίθαρίς τε χοροὶ τε  
εἵματά τ' ἐξημοιβὰ λοετρά τε θερμὰ καὶ εὐναί.  
ἀλλ' ἄγε, Φαιήκων βητάρμονες ὅσσοι ἄριστοι,  
παίσατε, ὥς χ' ὁ ξείνος ἐνίσπη οἷσι φίλοισιν,  
οἴκαδε νοστήσας, ὅσσον περιγινόμεθ' ἄλλων  
ναυτιλίῃ καὶ ποσσὶ καὶ ὀρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ.  
Δημοδόκῳ δέ τις αἴψα κιῶν φόρμιγγα λίγειαν  
οἰσέτω, ἣ που κεῖται ἐν ἡμετέροισι δόμοισιν.

«Come then, attend to what I say, so that you can tell it even to some other hero after this, when in your palace you sit at the feasting with your own wife and children beside you, remembering our excellence and what Zeus has established as our activities, through time, from the days of our fathers. For we are not perfect in our boxing, nor yet as wrestlers, but we do run lightly on our feet, and are excellent seaman, and always the feast is dear to us, and the lyre and dances and changes of clothing and our hot baths and beds. Come then, you who among all the Phaiakians are the best dancers, go dance, so that our guest, after he comes home to his own people, can tell them how far we surpass all others in our seamanship and the speed of our feet and dancing and singing. Let someone go quickly and bring Demodokos his clear-voiced lyre, which must have been set down somewhere in our palace.»

Whereas initially, before the contests began, Alcinous had named four sports—boxing, wrestling, jumping, speed of foot—as spheres in which the Phaeacian surpass others (102-103), now, after Odysseus' success at the discus throw and inclusion of himself among the heroes who fought at Troy (219-20), the king explicitly concedes: «we are not perfect in our boxing, nor yet as wrestlers» (246). This disavowal directly undermines the status of two *aristoi* from the earlier catalogue: the boxer Laodamas and the wrestler Euryalus (126-27).<sup>14</sup>

The new spheres of Phaeacian excellence begin with «running swiftly with our feet» (247) and navigation; then Alcinous proceeds to six distinctly non-heroic activities «dear to us»: the feast, the lyre, dances, changes of clothes, hot baths, and beds—admissions of a love of comfort and ease. The length of this new list reflects Alcinous' desire to find some activities that would merit praise. The six he highlights hearken back to the planning and execution of Nausicaa's journey, for the outward purpose of providing her five brothers with clean clothes when they go to the dance (cf. ε 31-40 and 57-65).

At 250-53, right after the list of comforts, Alcinous begins his final request, as he calls out the best tumblers and urges them to dance: 250-53

ἀλλ' ἄγε, Φαιήκων βητάρμονες ὅσσοι ἄριστοι,  
παίσατε, ὥς χ' ὁ ξείνος ἐνίσπη οἷσι φίλοισιν,  
οἴκαδε νοστήσας, ὅσσον περιγινόμεθ' ἄλλων  
ναυτιλίῃ καὶ ποσσὶ καὶ ὀρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ.

«Come then,  
you who among all the Phaiakians are the best dancers,  
do your dance, so that the guest, after he comes home

14. On Alcinous' retractions as a response to Odysseus' proof of his epic heroism, see espec. Dickie, 252-57. He discusses the softness of the Phaeacians and the negative valences of the king's second list of arenas in which his people excel (θ 241-45) but grants no legitimacy to any of them in the world of the Odyssey. And yet the whole poem defines the *oikos* as the locus of heroism, and these non-Iliadic values get reinforced by the hero's sojourn at Scheria, a half-way place between Troy and Ithaca (see Segal, espec. pp. 25-30).

The problem confronting the Phaeacian youths is their insularity: the «others» whom their king initially claims that they surpass are all locals, and they have no adversaries who would truly test their mettle until Odysseus arrives.

to his own people, can tell them how far we surpass all others  
in our seamanship (*nautilîi*) and the speed of our feet (*possi*) and  
dancing (*orchestui*) and singing (*aidêi*).»

He also summons someone to fetch the lyre of Demodocus, making it clear that the Song of Ares and Aphrodite, which begins at 268, will demonstrate Phaeacian excellence in song. The two displays of dances, the first to the minstrel's lyre (260-64) and the second by Halios and Laodamas (370-80), corroborate the Phaeacian skill at dance and with their feet and perhaps at leaping as well.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, a series of performances before the stranger may be said to illustrate, from Alcinous' third and final list at 253, «speed of our feet and dancing and singing.» Moreover, Odysseus responds to each of them—the dancers/tumblers at 264-65, Demodocus at 367, and to the pair of dancers at 382-84—with wonder and joy, and this suggests that they will receive *kleos* for their *arête* and in fact are receiving it from the *Odyssey* poet.

The king reiterates his wish that his guest, when he returns home, tell his *philoî* about the excellence of the Phaeacians. One can assume that Odysseus will recount their virtues *kata moiran* and *kata kosmon*, or *atrekeôs*, since he has eye-witnessed the events he is to praise. As a teller of tales, he will outstrip Demodocus, the professional minstrel, whom he shortly rewards with meat and extravagant praise for singing of the events of the Trojan War «as if he were there himself» (487-91). Of course, his own first person narration of the Adventures is the most impressive (if not always believable) display of bardic skill.

Odysseus will repay the Phaeacians for their hospitality and their excellence at seamanship by including them in the Return he sings to Penelope in their marriage bed at ψ 338-341, when he assigns them the last and culminating *ergon* as the ones who escorted him home and gave him many gifts. He will thereby satisfy his *chreos* to them, something the *Odyssey* poet already in θ has incorporated into his narration of the glorious visit of Odysseus in the remote and strange land of the ship-famed Phaeacians.

15. Feet function four times as a synecdoche for running and on the fifth their reference shifts to tumbling and dancing. At 263-64, e.g., the dancers «strike the dance floor swiftly with their feet» (*posin*).

## Conclusion

The Phaeacian Games commemorate the *aretê* of the Phaeacian *neoi* and of an Odysseus who uses this occasion to reestablish himself as a hero whose *erga* are the matter for poetic song. His *neikos* with Euryalus is a contest with words over athletic prowess, which Odysseus wins handily and for which he receives a «prize»—Euryalus' sword. In his speech Odysseus affirms his own *arête* and, so to speak, his manliness in contrast to the «soft» Phaeacians.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, he restores *dikê* and *kosmos*, both by reproving the *neoi*, particularly Euryalus, and by himself enacting the proper fit of words to deeds. He wins the athletic competition by default when no one dares to enter another contest against him after the discus throw that justifies his self-appraisal at 214-28 of his own athletic worth. The later apology to Odysseus that Alcinous exacts from Euryalus is a part of this restoration. Moreover, Odysseus' enthusiastic responses to Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite and to the performance of the tumblers and dancers assure the Phaeacian king that his people will indeed earn the praise they deserve, once the hero returns to Ithaca.

Odysseus' self-praise as an archer prepares us for his extraordinary defeat of 108 suitors at the Contest of the Bow, where he exhibits *aretê* in the face of another, more sinister set of *neoi*, the suitors of his wife.<sup>17</sup> That final triumph is an assertion of his manhood, his heroism, and his right to reclaim Penelope, his *oikos*, and his kingdom from the suitors who have temporarily usurped his position in these several domains. In a way, Odysseus of the Phaeacian Games helps the *Odyssey* poet immortalize in song his own triumphs at the Phaeacian Games.

16. N. Felson, «Paradigms of Paternity: Fathers, Sons, and Athletic/Sexual Prowess in Homer's *Odyssey*» in J. N. Kazazis and A. Rengakos (edd), *Euphrosyne: Studies in Ancient Epic and its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis*. Stuttgart. F. Steiner Verlag, 1999, pp. 89-98.

17. The scholia ad θ 215 was first to observe that Odysseus' highlighting of his skills at archery at the Phaeacian Games points ahead to the slaughter of the suitors, where he will use the very bow of Eurytus as his implement for reclaiming his wife. In his angry response to Penelope at the hearth when he thinks someone may have moved the steadfast bed and thus supplanted him, Odysseus emphasizes the age-grade of his hypothetical competitors by saying, «No man could move the bed, not even if he were at the peak of youth» (ψ 187: *hebôn*).



## NANCY FELSON

The ideology Odysseus practices in his speeches, when he is addressing the two Phaeacian youths who are agemates of Telemachus and (roughly) of the suitors, and when he is negotiating with Alcinous over *kleos*, resonates with the male ideology underlying the Panhellenic Games commemorated by epinician poets. At the Phaeacian Games Odysseus affirms the aristocratic and aesthetic values that will permeate and in fact define the epinician genre.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

- V. Bérard, *Les Phéniciens et l'Odysée*. Vol. 1. Paris 1903.  
 B. K. Braswell, «The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to Odyssey 8», *Hermes* 110 (1982) 129-137.  
 E. L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica*, Berkeley. University of California Press, 1962.  
 J. S. Clay, «Iliad 24.269 and the Semantics of κερτομέω», *CQ* 49.2 (1999): 618-21.  
 N. B. Crowther, «Athlete as Warrior in the Ancient Greek Games. Some Reflections», *Nikephoros* 12 (1999): 121-130.  
 M. Dickie, «Phaeacian Athletes», *Papers in the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983) 237-276.  
 G. Dindorf, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam*. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1954.  
 N. Felson, «Paradigms of Paternity: Fathers, Sons, and Athletic/Sexual Prowess in Homer's *Odyssey*» in J. N. Kazazis and A. Rengakos (edd.), *Euphrosyne: Studies in Ancient Epic and its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis*. Stuttgart. F. Steiner Press, 1999, pp. 89-98.  
 H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, transl. M. Hadas and J. Willis. Blackwell, 1973 (orig. 1962).  
 A.F. Garvie, *Odyssey. Books 6-8*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1994.  
 E. Kaiser, «Odyssee-Szenen als Topoi», *Mus. Helv.* 21 (1964) 217-224.  
 R. Lattimore, transl. *The Odyssey of Homer*. New York, 1967.  
 B. Louden, «An Extended Narrative Pattern in the *Odyssey*», *GRBS* 34.1 (1993) 7-33.  
 G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer*. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.  
 R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad*. Ithaca, NY. Cornell University Press, 1989.  
 H. Pelliccia, *Mind, Body and Spirit in Homer. Hypomnemata* 107. Göttingen, 1995.  
 K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen. Untersuchungen zum ersten Buch und zur Phaiakis. Hypomnemata* 19. Göttingen, 1969.  
 W. Schadewaldt, *Der Aufbau des pindarischen Epinikion*. Halle, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1928.

## EPINICIAN IDEOLOGY AT THE PHAEACIAN GAMES: θ 97-265

- S. L. Schein, «Herakles and Odysseus' Bow: Mythological Allusion in the *Odyssey*», *Eranos*. Ithaki (2001) 395-406.  
 C. P. Segal, *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey*. Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press, 1994.  
 W. B. Stanford, ed. *The Odyssey of Homer: Books I-XII*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, 1959.  
 A. F. Stewart, «Pindaric Dike and the Temple of Zeus at Olympia», *Classical Antiquity* 3.1 (April 1983) 133-144.  
 W. G. Thallmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the «Odyssey»*. Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press, 1998.  
 V. Visa, «Les compétitions athlétiques dans l'Odysée: divertissement, mise l'épreuve et jeux funébres», *BAGB* (1994) 31-40.  
 I. Winter, «Homer's Phoenicians», in J. B. Carter and S. P. Morris (edd.), *The Age of Homer*. Austin. University of Texas Press, 1995, pp. 247-271.

## ΕΝΑ ΠΡΩΤΟ-ΕΠΙΝΙΚΙΟ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΑΓΩΝΕΣ ΤΩΝ ΦΑΙΑΚΩΝ: ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙΑ, θ 202-233

(Περίληψη)

ΕΞΕΤΑΖΕΤΑΙ ΤΟ ΕΠΕΙΣΟΔΙΟ ΣΤΗΝ όγδοη ραψωδία της Οδύσσειας (στ 179-233), όπου ο Οδυσσεύς, υπερασπιζόμενος και επαινώντας τις ικανότητές του στο τόξο και το ακόντιο, εμφανίζεται ως πρόδρομος ενός έπινικίου. Εγκωμιάζοντας την προσωπική του υπεροχή, Οδυσσεύς παίζει τον διπλό ρόλο εκείνου που επαινεί και εκείνο που επαινείται. Όπως άλλοι ερμηνευτές έχουν υποδείξει, η σκηνή των αγώνων στους Φαίακες εξαίρει τις ικανότητες του Οδυσσέα στην τοξοβολία και προεξαγγέλλει τον αγώνα του τόξου στ ραψωδία χ. Εκεί επίσης ο θρίαμβος του Οδυσσέα εναντίον των μνηστήρων αποτελεί εκδήλωση της αξιοπρέπειάς του και του δικαίωμάς του να ξανακατακτήσει την Πηνελόπη, τον οίκο και το βασίλειό του.