Phoenix's Antecedents: A Note on *Iliad* 9[1]

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One of the strangest problems in Homeric textual criticism is raised by the passage which Plutarch believed was deleted from Phoenix's speech by Aristarchus (*de aud. poet.* 8 [*Mor.* 26F]):[2]

> καὶ μὴν ὁ Φοίνιξ διὰ τὴν παλλακίδα κατάρατος ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς γενόμενος
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> 'τὸν μὲν ἐγώ' φησί 'βούλευσα κατακτάμεν ὀξέι χαλκῶι·
> ἀλλά τις ἀθανάτων παῦσεν χόλον, ὅς ῥ' ἐνὶ θυμῶι
> δήμου θῆκε φάτιν καὶ ὀνείδεα πόλλ' ἀνθρώπων,
> ὡς μὴ πατροφόνος μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν καλεοίμην'.
>
> ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἀρίσταρχος ἐξεῖλε ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη φοβηθείς·[3] ἔχει δὲ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν ὀρθῶς, τοῦ Φοίνικος τὸν Ἀχιλλέα διδάσκοντος οἷόν ἐστιν ὀργὴ καὶ ὅσα διὰ θυμὸν ἄνθρωποι τολμῶσι, μὴ χρώμενοι λογισμῶι μηδὲ πειθόμενοι τοῖς παρηγοροῦσι.

> Then again, Phoenix, being cursed by his father because of the concubine, says 'I purposed to slay him with sharp bronze; but one of the immortals checked my wrath, bringing to mind the people's talk and men's many

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1 The following works are cited by author's name alone: J. Griffin, *Homer,* Iliad *Book ix*, edited with introduction and commentary (Oxford, 1995); J.B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: a Commentary* iii: books 9-12 (Cambridge, 1993); W. Leaf, *The Iliad,* edited with apparatus criticus and appendices, i-ii (London, 1900-02); P. Von der Mühll, *Kritisches Hypomnema zur Ilias* (Basel, 1952); H. van Thiel, *Homeri Ilias* (Hildesheim, 1996).

2 For a survey of the discussion surrounding this passage see M.J. Apthorp, *The Manuscript Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Heidelberg, 1980), 91-9. On Plutarch's quotations from Homer see H. Amoneit, *De Plutarchi studiis Homericis* (Königsberg, 1887), esp. 45-9 ('De textus Homerici a Plutarcho adhibiti forma ac pretio'); his conclusion (49) should be noted: 'In philologica Homeri pertractione necesse est missum faciamus Chaeronensem illum ob animi castitatem admirandum, sed ob criticae artis ignorationem reiciendum'.

3 Susp. Naber, *Quaestiones Homericae* (Amsterdam, 1877, 118); but he does not suggest any emendation.

> reproaches, lest among the Achaeans I be called my father's slayer'. Now Aristarchus removed these lines out of fear; but they are appropriate to the occasion as Phoenix teaches Achilles what anger is and what men venture to do because of temper if they do not use reason or yield to those who try to soothe them.

The lines evidently made a deep impression on him. He refers to this passage again (*Mor.* 72 B):

> οὐχ ἁπλῶς ὁ Φοίνιξ ἐνέβαλε τὰ περὶ αὑτὸν ἀτυχήματα, δι' ὀργὴν ἐπιχειρήσαντος ἀνελεῖν τὸν πατέρα καὶ ταχὺ μεταγνόντος, 'ὡς μὴ πατροφόνος μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν καλεοίμην', ἵνα μὴ δοκῇ νουθετεῖν ἐκεῖνον ὡς αὐτὸς ἀπαθὴς ὢν ὑπ' ὀργῆς καὶ ἀναμάρτητος.
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> Not naively did Phoenix refer to his own misfortunes, his attempt to kill his father in anger and his rapid change of mind, 'lest among the Achaeans I be called my father's slayer', so that he might not seem to admonish Achilles as if he himself were unaffected by anger and faultless.

He quotes the second and third lines once more (*Coriol.* 32.5)[4] without any indication of context, along with *Od.* 18.158 (=21.1) and 9.339.

Wolf's line-numbering has lent this passage authority. We need to remember that without Plutarch's testimony we should know nothing of these lines. The earliest papyri covering what he believed to be their context come from the Roman period; as we would have expected, they agree with the later tradition.[5] Such drastic excision is difficult to reconcile with Aristarchus' reputation for caution;[6] more serious, if Aristarchus had omitted lines well attested, and included by Aristophanes and Zenodotus, the lack of any reference in the scholia would raise serious doubts about the reliability of our best evidence for the methods of ancient Homeric scholarship.

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4 With τρέψεν φρένας (diverted my thoughts) instead of παῦσεν χόλον (checked my wrath) (for which cf. 1.192, 15.72. 19.67).

5 See further M.J. Apthorp, 'Double news from Antinoopolis on Phoenix's parricidal thoughts (*Iliad* 9.458-61)', *ZPE* 122 (1998), 182-8.

6 Plutarch's view of Aristarchus' methodology provoked an indignant protest from Ludwich (*Aristarchs Homerische Textkritik* i [Leipzig, 1884], 73f. What Athenaeus alleges about Aristarchus' treatment of *Il.* 18. 604f. and *Od.* 4. 17f. is even more peculiar, but does not inspire confidence. Aristarchus' editorial work had evidently assumed a legendary quality; see further G.M. Bolling, *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Oxford, 1925), 47f.; H. van Thiel, *Homeri Odyssea* (Hildesheim, 1991), xiif.; M. Revermann, 'The text of *Iliad* 18.603-6 and the presence of an ἀοιδός on the shield of Achilles', *CQ* 48 (1998), 29-38.

These lines, unlike the great majority of plus-verses attested by the pre-Aristarchean papyri, are not just a cento of phrases occurring elsewhere in Homer. They are distinctive in both content and wording; in particular, πατροφόνος (parricide, his own father's slayer) (not equivalent to the *Odyssey*'s πατροφονεύς (1.299, 3.197)[7]) is not otherwise attested before Aeschylus (*Th.* 783). If ancient scholars had known of any manuscript which gave the lines here, we should have expected some discussion to survive. It is not surprising that Plutarch's explanation of the absence of this passage from the paradosis has not commended itself.

Where did Plutarch find these lines? Ancient scholars had no conception of palaeographical criteria, and his confident ascription of responsibility suggests that he had more to go on than a manuscript which looked as if it might antedate Aristarchus' activity. It seems much more likely that he found the lines quoted by an earlier author.[8] This puts a stage further back the questions raised by the passage.

These are normally discussed in isolation, without regard to other problems relating to Phoenix's part in Book 9. His role epitomises the general difficulties raised by this book in the plot of the *Iliad*; as Hainsworth well puts it, 'The problem is that Book 9 is integrated into the idea of the *Iliad* but not so well integrated into its text'.[9] Scholarly concentration has focussed on the implications for Phoenix of the notoriously intractable cluster of duals used of an embassy consisting of three principals and five persons in total (182, 183, 192, 196, 197, 198).[10] But some strange features of his

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7 Carefully glossed ὅ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα (who slew his noble father) to avoid any misunderstanding.

8 Cf. Amoneit, op.cit. (n. 2) 48f.: 'De hac re ita statuendum puto: Plutarchus, cum hos versus ex abstruso exemplari ob moralem sensum arreptos non inveniret in editionibus sub Aristarchi nomine propagatis..., opinionem sibi finxit, Aristarchum eos eiecisse. Quare cum e textu nullius pretii hi versus fluxisse videantur, nimia eos ab editoribus reverentia conservatos esse puto, et quod codicum fide careant, spurios reiciendos'. See also R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary* iv: Books 13-16 (Cambridge, 1992), 27f.; he suspects that Plutarch's sources 'were perhaps Peripatetics like Aristoxenus or Stoics like Crates'. Of course, the inference about Aristarchus' activity need not be Plutarch's own; M.L. West suggests that he was indebted here to Seleucus (*Homeri Ilias* [Munich/Leipzig, 2000], II vii [addenda to app. crit., cf. app. crit. ad 18.604/5]).

9 55 (introduction to Book 9).

10 'The problematic aspect of the duals is not an isolated and contained philological difficulty but a determining feature of the narrative and dramatic structure

autobiographical opening deserve more attention than they commonly receive; I shall argue that their relevance extends beyond the debate over the authenticity of 458-61.

Phoenix's unheralded introduction at 168 (Φοίνιξ μὲν πρώτιστα Διὶ φίλος ἡγησάσθω, Let Phoenix dear to Zeus first lead) suggests a character whom the poet expected to be familiar to his audience. The old man's rehearsal of the circumstances in which he came to Peleus' court[11] serves primarily to remind Achilles of their close relationship, the basis for his appeal. Various features suggest that the poet was not inventing a biography for a figure of his own creation, but adapting a pre-existing narrative

As Phoenix relates the circumstances of his flight,[12] his situation appears rather ignominious. Griffin (on 447ff.) well says, 'Some of Phoenix' narrative reads almost like a burlesque of Achilles' story: the quarrel over a concubine, the sulking, the attempt to prevent him from going away, his undignified departure'. We may not approve of Amyntor's dalliance, but Phoenix was unwise to cooperate with his mother's curious counter-strategy, apparently intended to alienate the concubine's affections. The scholia (bT) explain: ῥᾶιστα γὰρ ἀφίσταται γυνὴ γέροντος νέα πειραθεῖσα ἀνδρὸς νέου (For a young woman very easily turns away from an old man when she has experienced a young one). Still, the concubine's inclinations are of secondary importance; whatever her preferences, she would not have had much room for manoeuvre. The difficulty was clearly appreciated in antiquity; the T scholia record a variant γέροντι (to the old man), an obvious conjecture; thus Phoenix's mother's plan is to make the girl hateful to Amyntor (and thus recover her former pre-eminence).[13] This is what we should expect, and it may be thought surprising that Phoenix does not put this more plainly. The constraints created by the conventions of supplication may have put him in

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of Book 9', well says M. Lynn-George (*Epos: Word, Narrative and the Iliad* [Basingstoke, 1988], 54).

11 Perhaps the model for Patroclus' similar narrative (23.83-90).

12 447 raises an awkward problem of political geography, since Phoenix identifies Amyntor's kingdom as Hellas, which elsewhere in the *Iliad* belongs to Peleus (as we were reminded at 9.395) while Amyntor is located in Eleon (10.266), which according to the *Catalogue* (2.500) was in Boeotia. This strange inconsistency (memorably highlighted by D.L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* [Berkeley, 1959], 304) could be avoided with van Thiel's conjecture ἴδον (I saw) for λίπον (I left).

13 For the meaning thus given to ἐχθαίρω cf. *Od.*4.105, where ἀπεχθαίρει means 'make hateful to'. Ludwich records Axt's ingenious suggestion, ἐχθήραιμι (-ραιμ' ἑ) γέροντι (so that I might make her hateful to the old man).

an impossible position; but clearly fulfilment of his mother's plea was bound to provoke his father's justified wrath, and the adverse consequences were not likely to be trivial.[14] Phoenix was no doubt more to be pitied than blamed, but if this was the tale that he told to Peleus on his arrival in Phthia, it was hardly a recommendation.

We might consider the possibility that this unedifying *novella* is a trivialization of an enterprise more worthy of a hero, an attempt to enforce the replacement of a ruler no longer equal to his office. In the *Odyssey* Odysseus has not had to wait for his father's death to become king in Ithaca; Laertes retired already before the Trojan War.[15] Recollection of the advice given by Ahitophel to Absalom (ii Sam. 16.20-23)[16] in his attempt to usurp his father's throne alerts us to the political potential of Phoenix's act; in the history of the house of David possession of the king's harem is tantamount to a claim to rule.[17] Of course, Hellas is not Israel. But it seems worth considering the possibility that Phoenix's story is based on the banalization to a tale of domestic intrigue of a motif at home in a grander context.

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14 Thus Reuben lost his right of primogeniture as a result of sleeping with his father's concubine Bilhah (Gen. 35.22; 49.4).

15 We find parallels in Euripides for the situation implied here. In *Alcestis* Admetus rules in Pherae though his father Pheres is still alive; in *Hippolytos* Theseus rules in Troezen in the lifetime of his grandfather Pittheus, the former king; similarly in *Bacchae* Pentheus has taken over from his grandfather Cadmus at Thebes; at *Andromache* 22f. it is implied that Neoptolemus might have driven his grandfather Peleus to abdicate at Pharsalus. But we do not know whether Euripides had any grounds, apart from the evidence of the *Odyssey,* for regarding this as common practice in the heroic age.

16 (David had been driven out of Jerusalem, leaving ten concubines to keep the house) 'Then said Absalom to Ahitophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. And Ahitophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house, and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. *And the counsel of Ahitophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God*: so was all the counsel of Ahitophel both with David and with Absalom' (my italics).

17 See also ii Sam. 12.8 (David has taken over his predecessor's harem); the stories of Abner and Rizpah (ii Sam. 3.7) and of Adonijah and Abishag (i Kings 2.13-25) show that possession of the king's wife could be seen as a claim to the throne. See further J.P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas* (Berlin, 1995), 65-70.

The curse with which Amyntor retaliates (453-7) is not free from difficulty.[18] It is clear from the scholia that already in antiquity it was disputed whether οἷσιν meant 'my' or 'his'. Aristarchus evidently opted for 'his': λέγει δὲ οὐ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ὁ Φοίνιξ ἀλλὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἀμύντορος (Phoenix does not mean 'his own' but those of Amyntor). But this interpretation (though it seems to be the majority view) produces a rather inadequate curse, if the wording is taken literally (as curses and oaths should be).[19] Phoenix clearly believes that he has been sentenced to lifelong childlessness and that Achilles has taken the place of the son he would never have (492-5); the force of Amyntor's curse should not be supposed to be cancelled by his death. 488 rather favours 'my'; but it ought not to be left to us to infer from subsequent developments what is meant.

The lines quoted by Plutarch, if they belong here, should follow, though I doubt if any reader feels that something is missing at this point. However, the sequel (462-77) seems defective. The problem was well stated by Rhys Carpenter:[20] 'Obviously the youthful Phoinix interfered in affairs that were not his own, and well merited his father's angry outburst; yet he takes a contrary view of the matter and persists in most violent resentment against his father, whose house he determines to leave. Why then is he held prisoner there? And what is all the feasting and revelry about? Can we credit (or sensibly interpret) the ensuing situation, where his clansmen and kinsmen hold him behind locked doors while they waste the king's wine cellar and herds, keeping watch through the night with fires blazing before the house, until Phoenix at last breaks out by force and by stealth and so escapes unharmed from this curious captivity? The emotional cause-and-effect runs crooked, and there seems no rational sequence in the events'. L. Friedländer[21] and

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18 Well discussed by Martin Steinrück, 'Meine Knie/seine Knie. Zu Ilias 9,455', *RhM* 141 (1998), 209-14.

19 I find quite unpersuasive the widely held view that Amyntor formally declares that he will not accept into the family any son to be born to Phoenix (and that this, somehow, is equivalent to a curse of childlessness).

20 *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1946 [1958]), 171. He compares Herodotus' story (7.197) from Alos in Thessaly, where the eldest son of the family descended from Athamas was liable to be sacrificed if caught in the public banqueting hall, a hazard which had led many of those potentially affected to flee the country. This does not seem to me illuminating.

21 *Philologus* 4 (1849), 582: 'Nicht minder klar ist es, dass in der erzählung des Phönix von seiner flucht aus dem vaterhause zwei stücke von entgegengesetztem inhalt an einander gefügt sind; nur lassen sie sich nicht mehr vollständig ausscheiden'. Emphasising the vast difference between the method by which

Von der Mühll[22] are likewise alert to a problem, though they offer slightly different diagnoses. Willcock and Hainsworth more or less agree: 'It is a strange and disturbing story, and perhaps as told here an abbreviation of some other version; for example, it is not made clear why large numbers of relations should have come along to try to prevent Phoinix leaving home, as is told at some length in 464-73';[23] 'the narrative of Phoinix' story is rather inconsequential, but that may be the result of omission of explanatory details and general compression ... The intentions and motivation of Amuntor's relatives ... are unclear, especially if 458-61 are retained, but evidently coercive.'[24] This incoherence is the more striking because we should not be perplexed if Phoenix passed straight from 463 to 478.

The role assigned to him by Peleus is not as clearly defined as we might wish. Lohmann[25] has questioned the generally accepted view of Phoenix as *paedagogus,*[26] tutor, *Erzieher.* He distinguishes between the duties which Peleus has assigned to Phoenix as an adviser at Troy to the inexperienced Achilles (438-44) and his role in Achilles' childhood: 'Er fütterte das Kind, nicht weil er dazu angestellt war (das wäre wohl Aufgabe einer Amme gewesen), sondern weil es der kleine Trotzkopf nicht anders wollte'. Yet it is not surprising that it is Phoenix's relationship to the child, so vividly depicted, which leaves the stronger impression; this surely is the basic conception, and this was how Quintus of Smyrna clearly understood it (3.463ff., esp. 470-8, where Peleus hands over Achilles to him at the Amphidromia).

If Phoenix's role seems hard to grasp, that no doubt was the poet's intention. Phoenix's influence with Achilles rests on the relationship established in the hero's childhood; at Troy he is a marginal figure. If Achilles as an adult needs further guidance beyond what Patroclus can offer (11.788f.), he would (we might think) be better advised by Nestor and other more seasoned warriors than by an elderly dependant who left home under a cloud and

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Phoenix's kin try to induce him to stay in the first part of the passage (464-9) and the virtual imprisonment of the latter part (470-77), he diagnoses the former as a narrative which has lost its end and the latter as lacking its beginning.

22 175: 'In Phoinix' Rede liegen einige unleugbare Ungeschicklichkeiten vor ... Wir erfahren nicht, warum die ἔται und ἀνεψιοί den Phoinix, der aus dem Haus des von ihm beleidigten und ihn verfluchenden Vaters fliehen will, in diesem Haus festhielten; die Ursache ist nur zu vermuten'.

23 M.M. Willcock, *The Iliad of Homer, Books i-xii* (London, 1978), n. on 445-77.

24 Hainsworth on 447-77 and 464.

25 D. Lohmann, *Die Komposition der Reden in der Ilias* (Berlin, 1970), 247-52.

26 So Plato, *Rep.* 390E τὸν τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως παιδαγωγὸν Φοίνικα (Phoenix the *paedagogus* of Achilles).

seems short of relevant experience. We should note that Phoenix distances himself from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt (527f.), as if to discourage the inference that he himself had taken part in that venture (contrast Ovid, *Met.* 8.307). When he wishes that heaven could restore to him his lost youth, he does not, like Nestor, recall some exploit of his prime, but simply the time when he left home.

At least from the time of Euripides' *Phoenix* Amyntor's wrath found physical expression: Phoenix was blinded.[27] This came to be regarded as a fixed element in the story: cf. Menander, *Sam.* 498-500 Ἀμύντορος / νῦν ἐχρῆν ὀργὴν λαβεῖν σε, Δημέα, καὶ τουτονὶ / ἐκτυφλῶσαι (Now Demeas you ought to have adopted Amyntor's anger and blinded him).[28] Greek legend offers many tales of blinding for sexual misconduct. The weird logic of Sophocles' Oedipus (*OT* 1371ff.) so impresses us that we tend to forget that the punishment hardly fits the crime. Folktale collectors have seen reason to believe that this and other forms of mutilation have often replaced an original reference to castration.[29] Could this be veiled in the *Iliad* by Amyntor's curse, while bowdlerization of the immediate aftermath has garbled the following narrative (462-77)?[30]

Devereux seems to move towards such an interpretation:[31] 'In Homer *Iliad* ix 453ff. Phoinix is unmanned, in an unspecified way, by the Erinyes, whom his father's curse invoked. Now, A. *Eum.* 186f. tells us that the Erinyes preside (*inter alia*) over blindings, castrations and impalements ... There is ... little doubt that they feminised him. It suffices to compare Hom. *Il.* ix 485ff. (and the derivative passage: Q.S. iii 470ff.) with the speech of

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27 F 816 offers reflections on the hero's loss of vision; Aristophanes (*Ach.* 421) has Euripides suggest that the rags of τοῦ τυφλοῦ Φοίνικος (the blind Phoenix) would be a suitable costume for his project.

28 Cf. Lyc. 421-3, Apollod. 3.13.8 (with subsequent cure by Chiron).

29 See further *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 7.4/5 (Berlin, 1993), 1019-25 s.v. Kastration (Klaus Roth), esp. 1020f.

30 The obscurantist effects of euphemism are nicely expressed by Catherine Storr (in D.J. Enright (ed.), *Fair of Speech: The Uses of Euphemism* [Oxford, 1985], 83f.): 'Victorian writers ... were not always able to avoid the advent of babies, but these are heralded, when they do not arrive with extraordinary suddenness, by phrases which can be interpreted correctly only when the event explains all'. Similarly Patricia Beer (ibid. 117): 'The nineteenth century novelists seem to have felt less need to be euphemistic about a child's being born out of wedlock than about its being born at all'.

31 G. Devereux, 'Self-blinding of Oidipous in Sophokles' Oidipous Tyrannos', *JHS* 93 (1973), 36-49; see also P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, 'Pain, mutilation, and death in Herodotus vii', *PP* 31 (1976), 356-62, esp. 358f.

Orestes' nurse (A. *Choe.* 479ff. ...), to realise that, at the start, Phoinix was more a nurse than a paidagogos or mentor'.

It would not be inappropriate that Achilles should have been entrusted to a male attendant at an age when ordinary small boys would have been left with their mothers and nurses. Plato (*Alc.* 121D) affects to praise the role of selected eunuchs in the early upbringing of the Persian crown prince.[32] Castration for vocational purposes was unhellenic, but might be thought a natural enough measure of self-help where a sexual offence was concerned. 'Quin etiam illud / accidit, ut cuidam testis caudamque salacem / demeterent ferro'; Horace's observation (*Sat.* 1.2.44-6) may be illustrated from the list in Valerius Maximus (6.1.13) of Romans who suffered condign punishment when caught *in adulterio:* 'Carbo Attienus a Vibieno, item Pontius a P. Cerennio deprehensi castrati sunt' without adverse consequences for Vibienus and Cerennius ('irae suae indulsisse fraudi non fuit'). The most recent commentator on Terence's *Eunuchus* (set in Athens) interprets *id quod moechis solet* (sc. *fieri*) (957) as probably a reference to castration.[33] This may surprise us; if it is indeed the most natural interpretation, Aristophanes has overlooked a rich source of innocent merriment. But the law which allowed an aggrieved husband (or other appropriate male relative) to put to death on the spot an adulterer caught in the act or ὅ τι ἂν βούληται χρῆσθαι (to treat him in whatever way he wishes) (Lys. 1.49) would seem, at least in theory, to have permitted castration.[34] What is interesting, for the purposes of my argument, is that, notwithstanding a shortage of actual Greek examples, to a modern scholar castration seems an obvious measure of self-help in such a situation.

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32 τρέφεται ὁ παῖς, οὐχ ὑπὸ γυναικὸς τροφοῦ ὀλίγου ἀξίας, ἀλλ' ὑπ' εὐνούχων οἳ ἂν δοκῶσιν τῶν περὶ βασιλέα ἄριστοι εἶναι· οἷς τά τε ἄλλα προστέτακται ἐπιμέλεσθαι τοῦ γενομένου, καὶ ὅπως ὅτι κάλλιστος ἔσται μηχανᾶσθαι, ἀναπλάττοντας τὰ μέλη τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ κατορθοῦντας· καὶ ταῦτα δρῶντες ἐν μεγάλῃ τιμῇ εἰσιν. (The boy is reared not by a woman-nurse of little worth, but by whoever are most highly regarded of the eunuchs in the king's service. They are instructed to care for the child generally and in particular to contrive for him to be as fine-looking as possible, moulding his limbs and keeping them straight; and while performing this office they are held in great honour.) Sophocles (F 620) gave Troilus a eunuch *paedagogus.*

33 John Barsby, *Terence, Eunuchus* (Cambridge, 1999). I have profited from discussion of this passage with Peter Brown.

34 As J.C.B. Lowe (*BICS* 32 [1985], 83) well notes. Understandably, this possibility is not considered by A.R.W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens: The Family and Property* i (Oxford, 1968), 32f. or by S.C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford, 1993), 276-9.

Should we suppose that Peleus devised a distinctive and rewarding role for an unfortunate refugee who could hope for no son of his own? Phoenix is thus given charge of Achilles in the nursery;[35] the infant hero was, it seems, ready for an adult diet of roast meat and wine long before he was mature enough for the rigours of Chiron's peculiar training (cf. 11.832).[36] The old man's single-minded devotion to Achilles well illustrates the theory which Xenophon advances to account for the extensive employment of eunuchs in high positions in the Persian court and administration, a feature which he attributes to Cyrus the Great (*Cyr.*7.5.59-60):

> ἐνόμισε δὲ μὴ ἂν γενέσθαι ποτὲ πιστὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅστις ἄλλον μᾶλλον φιλήσοι τοῦ τῆς φυλακῆς δεομένου. τοὺς μὲν οὖν ἔχοντας παῖδας ἢ γυναῖκας συναρμοττούσας ἢ παιδικὰ ἔγνω φύσει ἠναγκάσθαι ταῦτα μάλιστα φιλεῖν· τοὺς δ' εὐνούχους ὁρῶν πάντων τούτων στερομένους ἡγήσατο τούτους ἂν περὶ πλείστου ποιεῖσθαι οἵτινες δύναιντο πλουτίζειν μάλιστα αὐτοὺς καὶ βοηθεῖν, εἴ τι ἀδικοῖντο.
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> He held that a man would never be loyal who loved anyone else better than the one who needed his protection. Now he realised that those who have children or congenial wives or favourites are naturally constrained to love them best; but seeing that eunuchs are deprived of all this he thought that they would value most highly those who could most effectively make them wealthy and help them if they should suffer any wrong.[37]

Phoenix is unlikely to have been invented by the poet of the *Iliad.* Pausanias (10.26.4) tells us that he appeared in the *Cypria* (F16 Davies, 21 Bernabé):

> τοῦ δὲ Ἀχιλλέως τῶι παιδὶ Ὅμηρος μὲν Νεοπτόλεμον ὄνομα ἐν ἁπάσηι οἱ τίθεται τῆι ποιήσει· τὰ δὲ Κύπρια ἔπη φησὶν ὑπὸ Λυκομήδους μὲν

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35 It is not clear how Phoenix combined frequentation of Peleus' palace with residence among the Dolopes (484). We had better not ask how Thetis fits into these arrangements; but Achilles' allusion to her reminiscing πατρὸς ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν (in my father's halls) (1.396) would be consistent with occasional visits and need not imply ordinary residence there.

36 C.J. Mackie ('Achilles' Teachers: Chiron and Phoenix in the *Iliad*', *G&R* 44 [1997], 1-10) well draws attention to the *partial* nature of the *Iliad*'s suppression of the supernatural and fantastic; it would have been easy enough to exclude Chiron altogether.

37 Cf. Hdt. 8.105.2: παρὰ γὰρ τοῖσι βαρβάροισι τιμιώτεροί εἰσι οἱ εὐνοῦχοι πίστιος εἵνεκα τῆς πάσης τῶν ἐνορχέων (For among non-Greeks eunuchs are more highly valued than normal men because of their complete loyalty). On the paradigm of the eunuch as faithful minister see P. Briant, *Histoire de l'Empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris, 1996), 282-4.

> Πύρρον, Νεοπτόλεμον δὲ ὄνομα ὑπὸ Φοίνικος αὐτῶι τεθῆναι, ὅτι Ἀχιλλεὺς ἡλικίαι ἔτι νέος πολεμεῖν ἤρξατο.
>
> Throughout his work Homer gives Achilles' son the name Neoptolemus; but the *Cypria* says that he was given the name Pyrrhus (red-haired) by Lycomedes but Neoptolemus (young warrior) by Phoenix because Achilles began to make war when young.

From Proclus we learn that the *Nostoi* related how he was buried in Thrace on the way home from Troy by Neoptolemus. Of course the poems known under these titles to Pausanias and Proclus are likely to have been composed later than our *Iliad.* But that he was supposed to be already in some degree familiar to the poet's audience is, as we have seen, strongly suggested by the manner of his introduction at 168. The lines quoted by Plutarch come, I suggest, from one of the Cyclic epics, in which Phoenix's departure from his home was related more fully. Perhaps this was the *Cypria,* but Achilles' death in the *Aethiopis* would also provide a suitable context for the autobiographical part of Phoenix's speech (as it does in Quintus of Smyrna [3.460ff.]),[38] and is perhaps the more likely in view of the *Iliad*'s extensive and conspicuous use either of Arctinus' poem or of a predecessor with very similar contents.[39] The Cyclic epics were more hospitable than the *Iliad* to sensationalism.[40] In the extremity of his grief for his heroic charge Phoenix might reveal details of his past which he had hitherto kept to himself. Certainly Achilles' funeral would have offered a more appropriate context for such a confession than a request for asylum would have done.

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38 Cf. Von der Mühll, 175 n. 42: 'Eine Vermutung: War Phoinix zuerst in die Troïka eingeführt bei der Klage an Achills Leiche? Quintus 3, 460ff. benützt für seine Klage des Phoinix das *I.* War das ursprüngliche Verhältnis umgekehrt?'

39 See further Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Die Achilleis als Quelle der Ilias* (Zürich-Erlenbach, 1945); G. Schoeck, *Ilias u. Aithiopis: kyklische Motive in homerischer Brechung* (Zürich, 1961); H. Mühlestein, 'Ein Halbvers u. einige Epitheta aus vorhomerischer Dichtung', *MH* 43 (1986), 209-20; K. Dowden, 'Homer's sense of text', *JHS* 116 (1996), 47-61 (esp. 61). The composition of the *Iliad* is almost invariably discussed as if it was self-evident that its poet pioneered the creation of an epic too lengthy to be performed in a single evening; but we are not obliged to accept the longstanding prejudice about relative dating created by Aristarchus' use of the term νεώτεροι (younger, i.e. later) for the Cyclic poets collectively.

40 See further D.B. Monro, *Homer's Odyssey, Books xiii-xxiv* (Oxford, 1901), Appendix iii, 340-83; J. Griffin, 'The epic cycle and the uniqueness of Homer', *JHS* 97 (1977), 39-53.

Plutarch's defence misses the point. Deliberate parricide is a crime so horrific that a man who admits to entertaining such an intention as a response to his father's curse might well be thought unfit to play any part in a hero's training.[41] Yet as a reaction to a humiliating and serious mutilation it would not be a sign of turpitude to contemplate a deed normally regarded as unspeakably dreadful;[42] we might see Phoenix's response as a measure of the appalling injury done to him. That no thought of retaliation should cross the victim's mind in such circumstances might be thought rather spineless.

The situation which I have postulated is undoubtedly an unusual one. If the purposes of Amyntor's friends and relations (464-77) seem unclear, that might correspond to some uncertainty as to whether Phoenix should be regarded as an accident victim or as a continuing threat to his father's welfare. In the immediate aftermath of his injury sympathy might be divided, but while he recovers[43] a decision about his future can be postponed, and (as Penelope's suitors knew) feasting is a good way to pass the time (and wine, for the injured man, the best available painkiller). The elliptical and inconsequential manner of Phoenix's narrative results, I suggest, from the poet's wish to remind us of a feature of the story too important to be passed over but (in his view) too unseemly for explicit mention.[44] We see similar

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41 The Persians, according to Herodotus (1.137.2), simply did not believe that it ever occurred; alleged cases must involve some mistake about the killer's paternity.

42 See further Diskin Clay, 'Unspeakable words in Greek tragedy', *AJP* 103 (1982), 277-98.

43 The poet and his audience probably had no clearer idea than I have of a reasonable recovery period. Catullus' Attis appears to need hardly any time. J.L. Burckhardt (*Travels in Nubia*^{2}, ed. W.M. Leake, [London, 1822], 294f.) describes (partly in Latin) the work of two Coptic monks in a village near Assiut in Upper Egypt; they operated on boys between 8 and 12 and were said to allow forty days for the wound to heal; similarly with the cases described by Zia Jaffrey, *The Invisibles: A Tale of the Eunuchs of India* (London, 1996), 139f., 247 (though 10 days was enough in one case of self-castration [263], and we might wonder whether 40 is simply a conventional figure). Peter Abelard, more articulate than most victims of this form of punishment, tells us that the next morning he suffered more from his students' sympathy than from the pain of the wound (*Historia Calamitatum* 597-600, cf. 1385-90).

44 I have wondered whether Phoenix was allowed to give a hint of his unmanning in the striking phrase which he uses as he speaks of miraculous rejuvenation (445f.): εἴ κέν μοι ὑποσταίη θεὸς αὐτὸς *γῆρας ἀποξύσας* θήσειν νέον ἡβώοντα (If a god himself were to undertake to *strip off my old age* and make me young and vigorous) — γῆρας (literally 'old age') is the standard term for

principles of self-censorship at work in lines where those familar with the story will see references to the sacrifice of Iphigenia (*Il.* 1.106f.) and the acts of sacrilege committed by Ajax and Neoptolemus at the sack of Troy (*Od.* 3.132-5).

This may be thought a rather sensational scenario.[45] But the inconcinnities inherent in Phoenix's role cannot be ignored, and may better be treated together than separately. In practical matters it is familiar experience that alterations call for more skill than working with new material; making down a garment is normally worth the effort only if the material is of high quality or sentimental value. When the oral tradition truly flourished such adaptation must have been commonplace, but the process of adjustment and abbreviation to fit narrative to a new context might be expected to produce some inconcinnities and ellipses, effects which might well not have been readily observable when poet and audience were thoroughly familiar with the story as a whole. The poet of the *Iliad* decided to exploit a pre-existing familiarity with the relationship between Achilles and Phoenix; the details did not need to be spelt out. A similar process of adaptation was at work to produce the maverick (and somewhat inconsequential) version of the tale of Meleager which Phoenix relates, where, we should note, a parent's curse (566ff.) likewise plays a crucial role in the narrative.[46] As Schoeck well puts it, 'Ein Großepos im homerischen Sinn ist ja nur auf der Basis ständiger *Kompromißlösungen* denkbar'.[47]

We should have expected to find Phoenix with Achilles and Patroclus, an ally from among Achilles' own dependants ready to lend support to the embassy's plea. Already in antiquity (as we see from the bT scholia) his inclusion in the delegation raised the question why he was not quartered with

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the old skin which snakes slough off annually (see further E.K. Borthwick, *CQ* 26 [1976], 200-5); the image evidently appealed to Lycophron, inspiring his choice of the crab (which enjoys a similar annual renewal) to represent Phoenix (*Alex.* 419 κουροτρόφον πάγουρον [child-rearing crab]). One consequence of castration which can be mentioned without any breach of decorum is its effect on skin and complexion: cf. Ter. *Eun.* 688, Claud. *In Eutrop.* 1.110-2. Phoenix's specification of this most superficial of the effects of aging may be significant.

45 It might support the hypothesis (generally regarded as far-fetched) that the bard left by Agamemnon to protect Clytaemnestra (*Od.* 3.267-71) was a castrato.

46 See further M.M. Willcock, 'Mythological Paradeigma in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 14 (1964), 141-54 (= *Homer: Critical Assessments* 3 [ed. I.J.F. de Jong, London, 1998], 385-402). The obscurities of the story of Bellerophon (6.150ff.: see Kirk on 168-70, 170-1, 183, 200-02) should no doubt be similarly explained.

47 Op.cit. (n. 39), 114.

his chief. The reiterated duals of 182ff. suggest that he was added to the embassy's original pair as an afterthought,[48] as does the awkward way in which he is mentioned at 223;[49] in that case the lines describing the sleeping arrangements made for him (427-9, 617-22, 658-62, 690-2) presumably belong to the same stage in the evolution of this episode. What could be the point of this change?

The opening lines of Phoenix's speech envisage Achilles leaving him behind at Troy if he returns to Phthia. We might think this an unreal anxiety; Achilles can be trusted to take his dependants with him if he goes home. But the inclusion of Phoenix in the embassy and the emphasis on the need to provide overnight accommodation for him imply a degree of independence; we might be persuaded that if Achilles decides to leave, Phoenix will face the dilemma of divided loyalties. This expedient allows him to overlook Achilles' belief that if he stays and fights at Troy his life, though glorious, will be short (9.412ff.).

If this argument is accepted, then the ultimate source of Plutarch's quotation is most likely to be the *Aethiopis* of Arctinus, and the case will be similar to that of 8.548, 550-52, quoted in the ps.-Platonic *Alcibiades* 2.149D, and accepted into the text by Barnes, followed by Wolf, though nowadays generally thought to come from one of the Cyclic poems.[50] On the assumption that Plutarch found the lines quoted by a writer whom he believed to be earlier than Aristarchus, I do not see any means of deciding whether his source believed the passage came from the *Aethiopis* or had been misled by a copy of *Iliad* 9 in which 458-61 had been interpolated. In view of ancient habits of quotation from memory, the question is perhaps slightly unreal.

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48 Flaubert's second thoughts produced a comparable, but greater, numerical oddity in *Madame Bovary;* at the beginning of ch. 3 Charles is paid a fee of 75 francs in two-franc pieces ('soixante et quinze francs en pièces de quarante sous'); originally it was 100 francs, and Flaubert forget to change the rest of the sentence when he reduced it.

49 'Why Odysseus should unceremoniously begin when Aias has signed to Phoinix it would be hard to say, were it not evident that the name of Phoinix has been awkwardly dragged in to remind us of his existence' (Leaf ad loc.). Theiler well suggests that the original form of the line was Αἴας ὀφρύσι νεῦσε· νόησε δὲ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς (Ajax made a sign with his eyebrows, and noble Odysseus observed it) (*Festschrift f. Edouard Tièche* [Bern, 1947] 127).

50 See further Kirk on 8.548-52, emphasising the discrepancy with the usual Homeric conception of sacrifice (though cf. 9.535). It is slightly surprising that neither Bernabé nor Davies includes the lines.

In Book 9 we have, as Hainsworth has happily put it, 'a glimpse into the workshop of Homer' (p. 57). The difficulties which once fuelled the arguments of analytical critics are now seen rather to provide us with clues as to the poet's materials and methods.[51] In what may be regarded as signs of incomplete revision we have the best evidence we are ever likely to get that a definitive version was not Homer's priority.[52]

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51 A very similar point is made in connection with the *Nekuia* by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *"Reading" Greek Death* (Oxford, 1995), 73: 'Textual elements perceived by the analysts as inconsistencies that proved their thesis can help us see the epic in a wider perspective, if we consider them as possible products of the interactions between Homer's choices and the choices of his predecessors which he abandoned'.

52 This article has benefited substantially from the comments of Margalit Finkelberg and Martin West.