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DOUBLE NEWS FROM ANTINOOPOLIS ON PHOENIX'S PARRICIDAL THOUGHTS
(*ILIAD* 9. 458-61)

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1. Introduction

Of all the passages which are absent from a significant proportion of our Homeric MSS. and papyri and whose authenticity has on that account been denied or doubted, none has aroused more interest and controversy than *Il.* 9. 458-61, where Phoenix briefly toys with the idea of killing his own father:

τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βούλευσα κατακτάμεν ὄξει χαλκῷ·
ἀλλά τις ἀθανάτων παῦσεν χόλον, ὅς ῥ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ
δήμου θῆκε φάτιν καὶ ὀνειδέα πόλλ' ἀνθρώπων,
ὣς μὴ πατροφόνος μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν καλεοίμην.

This passage is known only from Plutarch, who alleges that Aristarchus excised it (ἐξείλε) out of shock or fear (φοβηθείς).¹ It is absent from all our minuscule MSS. But what of the papyri? It has become customary, even in very recent years, to cite only one papyrus in this connection, Pap. Pack² 1189 (saec. i-ii p.C.), published in 1937, a glossary fragment in Leiden covering *Il.* 9. 454-68, which ignores 458-61.² So R. Janko (1992) and J.B. Hainsworth (1993) in the new Cambridge commentary on the *Iliad*;³ and Stephanie West goes a little further in roundly declaring this glossary to be “the only papyrological evidence for this part of the *Iliad*”.⁴ It is not - nor was it in 1982, when West wrote. As I shall show, two other papyri testify, directly or indirectly, on this part of the *Iliad*, and both (reassuringly) testify against the Plutarch passage. By a strange coincidence both come from Antinoopolis and both were published in 1967. They are P. Ant. III. 158 (saec. iii p.C.) and 160 (saec. iii-iv p.C.). But for the deficiencies in the reports of the three scholars cited above I must myself take the lion's share of the blame, since the Leiden glossary was the only papyrus evidence I cited in my own 1980 treatment of the passage,⁵ to which all three scholars refer. Their faith in the exhaustiveness of my earlier investigations is touching, even if (as it turns out) misplaced. Here, however, I hope to make amends by providing a fuller, more up-to-date and more accurate account of the external evidence on the passage than has ever been given before.

2. The Leiden glossary

Let us begin by reviewing the evidence of the Leiden glossary against the passage. Unusually, this evidence has two completely separate strands.

First, although the surrounding lines are amply glossed, there are no notes at all on 458-61 themselves. We find one gloss on 454, one on 455, one on 456, one on 457, one on 463, two on 464, one on 467 and three on 468. Within 458-61, if the glossator had read the lines, we should have expected notes on κατακτάμεν in 458 (cf. e.g. Schol. D on *Il.* 3. 379: κατακτάμεναι· ἀποκτεῖναι), φάτιν in 460 (a poetic and Herodotean word, found nowhere else in the *Iliad*), and perhaps πατροφόνος in 461.

Secondly, below the gloss on line 454 we find the entry σν, = 250, and below the three glosses on line 468 the entry σξ, = 260. Since there are eleven glosses, not ten, between the two numerals, it is

¹ *Moralia* 26 F; Plutarch also cites 459 and the first half of 460 (as far as φάτιν), with the variant τρέψεν φρένας for παῦσεν χόλον, at *Vita Coriolani* 32 (= 229 B), and 461 alone at *Moralia* 72 B.

² B.A. van Groningen, “Un fragment de glossaire homérique”, *Mnemosyne* 5 (1937) pp. 62-8.

³ Janko: Vol. IV p. 28 n. 36; Hainsworth: Vol. III p. 123 ad loc.

⁴ *LCM* 7 (1982) p. 84.

⁵ *The Manuscript Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Heidelberg 1980) pp. 91-101.

highly unlikely that these numerals count the glosses themselves: while stichometry marking off lines by hundreds is sometimes inexact, scribes could presumably be relied on to count accurately enough from one to ten. In all probability, then, the numerals count the lines of the Homeric text being glossed; and we find that the text from line 455 to line 468 does indeed comprise exactly ten lines *if, and only if, lines 458-61 were absent!*⁶

Thus both the contents of the glossary and the line-numbering strongly support the hypothesis that the passage cited by Plutarch was absent from the text being glossed.

We can now move on to the two papyri published in 1967. Both were published merely by description and collation rather than by full transcription.

3. P. Ant. III. 158

First, P. Ant. III. 158. Scholarship has unfortunately conspired to conceal the relevance of this papyrus to the authenticity of *Il.* 9. 458-61. First, the papyrus was published just too late to gain entry into Pack². Secondly, when the papyrus entered H.J. Mette's lists of newly-published Homeric papyri as *Il.* Pap. 486a⁷ his catalogue of its contents was full of errors, and he wrongly claimed that the only part of Book 9 it contained was the first three lines.⁸ Thirdly, the brief and austere collation of the papyrus's editor, J.W.B. Barns, did not exactly shout its omission of 458-61 from the rooftops: since the collation was with the text of T.W. Allen's *editio maior* (Oxford 1931) and since Allen had here relegated the lines to his apparatus, the only indication that the lines were absent from the papyrus was the absence of any comment at all at this point of the collation - a perfectly legitimate procedure, though positive confirmation of the omission would have been welcome. I am now in a position to confirm the omission myself after inspecting photographs of the papyrus; the relevant fragment is Fr. (e) recto (ii), covering *Il.* 9. 455-77, of which I here transcribe lines 455-65:⁹

455 μη ποτε γουνασιν οισιν εφεσσεσθαι φιλο]ν υιοϛ
 456 εξ εμεθεν γεγαωτα θεοι δ ετελειον ε]παρας
 457 ζευς τε καταχθονιος και επαινη] φερσεφον[εια (sic)
 462 ενθ εμοι ουκετι παμπαν ερητυε]τ εν φρεσι θυ]μ]ος
 463 [πατρος χωομενοιο κατα μεγαρα στρωφασθαι] (a few exiguous traces)
 464 [η μεν πολλοι εται και ανεψιοι αμφι]ς εοντες
 465 αυτου λισσομ]ενοι κατερητυον ε]ν με]γαροισι

Below these lines the fragmentary remains of 466-77 are also clearly visible, but the above transcription will more than suffice to prove that the Plutarch passage never formed part of the text of this papyrus, whether after 457 or after 463, where some have thought it belongs.¹⁰

⁶ Cf. van Groningen (above, n. 2), esp. pp. 66-7. Of course it still remains something of a mystery why line 454 is labelled 250 rather than 454. Perhaps the glossary was prepared at the instigation of a schoolmaster who chose a "set text" for his class starting at *Il.* 9. 205. This would make the numbering exactly right. Line 205 at least starts a new paragraph in modern editions, and the schoolmaster's purpose may have been to cover all the speeches of the embassy and Achilles's replies while omitting most of the lengthy preliminaries. This is (roughly) the hypothesis put forward by P. Collart, "A propos d'un papyrus E. von Scherling de Leyde", *Mélanges Boisacq* (Brussels 1937) pp. 191-3. Alternatively, one may accept van Groningen's tentative suggestion (ignored by Collart) that the line-numbering may have been based on a text in papyrus rolls whose endings and beginnings did not correspond to the standard Iliadic Book-divisions (p. 67).

⁷ *Lustrum* 11 (1966) p. 35.

⁸ I corrected Mette's errors op. cit. (above, n. 5) p. xi n.; so did F. Uebel, *APF* 24-25 (1976) p. 196 No. 1291.

⁹ I should like to thank Dr. R.A. Coles of the Ashmolean Museum for kindly supplying me with photographs of both Antinoopolis papyri and my colleague Dr. J.E.G. Whitehorne for expertly and patiently helping me to improve my transcription of this part of P. Ant. 158.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Samuel Clarke (ed.), *Homeri Ilias* (11th edn. London 1790) ad loc.; *MS. Evidence* (above, n. 5) p. 124 n. 207. After I had completed my first draft of this article a copy reached me of I. Morris and B.B. Powell (edd.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden 1997), in which M. Haslam, to his credit, writes (p. 78), "The verses in question, 458-61, are

4. P. Ant. III. 160

With P. Ant. III. 160 the argument will, unfortunately, need to be more complicated, since the evidence for the absence of 458-61 from the original text of the papyrus, though strong, is indirect. The papyrus covers *Il.* 9. 222-699, but with many lacunae, and the area surrounding 458-61 falls within the largest of these lacunae. We have here the remains of a papyrus codex, and the argument will be based on the usual number of lines per page. I have supplemented the editor's description and collation with an inspection of photographs of the whole papyrus. In the interests of clarity I shall use both the fragment-numbers assigned by the editor and page-numbers which I have added myself: this will be necessary because the lacunae include the loss of a whole leaf, which of course carries no editorial fragment-number but whose contents we shall nevertheless need to consider. In fact the surroundings of 458-61 fall within this missing leaf.

Page 1: Fr. (a) recto (<). Top margin well preserved. Page contains 222-59, = 38 lines, each of which is still at least partly legible. The little that remains of the bottom margin is very poorly preserved, but that 259 (legible in part) was the last line on its page is proved by the fact that the next page clearly starts with 260.

Page 2: Fr. (a) verso (>). Top margin well preserved; part of bottom margin adequately preserved. Contains 260-98, but omits line 263, i.e. contains 38 lines altogether.

Page 3: Fr. (b) recto (>). Parts of top and bottom margins well preserved. Contains 299-338 (mostly middles), = 40 lines.

Page 4: Fr. (b) verso (<). Fibres mostly stripped, but contains lines in three separate horizontal segments: (i) at top of page (where part of top margin is adequately preserved), ends of 339-44; (ii) middle of page, 354-9; (iii) lower middle, 367-9. No part of the bottom margin is preserved, so we cannot be sure how many more lines there were on this page, but considerations of space would suggest that there were probably another nine (I base my calculations mainly on a comparison with the foot of p. 3 and the fact that elsewhere in this papyrus, wherever the evidence allows the relevant comparison, the two sides of the same leaf always end their text at the same point on the page). If so, then the last line on this page would be 378, and the total number of lines on this page (339-78) would be 40; and I shall adopt this total as a working hypothesis in what follows.

Page 5: Lost *in toto*. Probably started with line 379.

Page 6: Lost *in toto*, but must have ended with line 463, since the next page starts with 464.

Page 7: Fr. (c) recto (>). Part of top margin very well preserved; most of left margin well preserved; small part of bottom margin preserved. First come lines 464-95, all of which are at least partly legible; but an oblique stroke and a caret sign in the left margin call attention to the accidental omission of 478 (slight homoiarchon 478 φε, 479 φθ) and to its addition in the bottom margin (φευγον[]). Next comes a short lacuna covering the five lines 496-500. Finally, we can just make out the beginnings of 501-3; then comes the bottom margin. Thus the text on this page (excluding the insertion in the bottom margin) will have contained 31 + 5 + 3 = 39 lines.

Page 8: Fr. (c) verso (<). Part of top margin preserved. First come lines 504-33, but with 532 omitted (= 29 lines). There is then a short lacuna covering the seven lines 534-40. Finally, the end of line 541, μκκ]ρα, is clearly visible: this is definitely not 538 ιοχραι]ρα, as Barns alleges, because 538 is a very short line (30 letters) and 541 a very long one (40 letters), and in the papyrus]ρα clearly ends one of the longest lines on its page, projecting far into the right margin. The bottom margin is too fragmentary here to show explicitly where the page ended, but since the next page starts with 543 there must have been one more line at the foot of this page, 542, which will then have been written (as the

not in any of our Homeric codices (including one of the 3rd century)": this must be an allusion to P. Ant. 158. However, Haslam does not mention either the Leiden glossary or P. Ant. 160.

photograph shows) at the same level on this page as the last line of the text of p. 7 on the other side of this leaf. This gives a total for this page of $29 + 7 + 1 + 1 = 38$ lines.

Page 9: Fr. (d) recto (<). Parts of the top and bottom margins preserved. Contains 543-79, = 37 lines.

Page 10: Fr. (d) verso (>). Parts of top and bottom margins preserved. Contains 580-620, = 41 lines, nearly all of which are clearly legible in their preserved parts.

Page 11: Fr. (e) recto (>). Left corner of top margin preserved. Text starts with line 621. Barns's collation contains a significant error: he writes "622 om. by original hand, added above by corrector", but for "622" read "622-6";¹¹ the scribe's accidental omission of these lines was caused by the homoioteleuton *τάχιστα* in 621 and 626. The text of p. 11, then, contains line 621, then lines 627-50, fairly fragmentary but all more or less clearly legible from the left margin. After this the text becomes much more fragmentary and much less easy to decipher. We do not have the bottom margin, or any part of what must have been the last three lines of this page, 661-3, since the next page clearly starts with line 664. The text of this page, then, will have contained line 621 and lines 627-63, = $1 + 37 = 38$ lines.

Page 12: Fr. (e) verso (<). Starts with line 664, but where does it end? 699 is the last line of which traces are clearly visible - the photograph shows its beginning, *μύρ[ι]τα* (accented thus) - but below this the surface is abraded for a few vertical mm. and then the papyrus breaks off; we cannot tell how many more lines followed before the bottom margin, which is not preserved. All we can say is that p. 12 must have contained at least 36 lines; but it will have to be ignored in the following calculations.

Our main results so far, then, are as follows:-

- p. 1 = 38 lines
- p. 2 = 38 lines
- p. 3 = 40 lines
- p. 4 = 40 lines (?)
- p. 5 = ?
- p. 6 = ?
- p. 7 = 39 lines
- p. 8 = 38 lines
- p. 9 = 37 lines
- p. 10 = 41 lines
- p. 11 = 38 lines

The average number of lines per page (i.e. pp. 1-4, 7-11) is 38.78. If the missing leaf containing pp. 5-6 bore lines 379-463, this would be 85 lines of the printed vulgate (i.e. if 458-61 were present), with an average of 42.5 lines for each of these two pages. Not only is this 9.59% above the average for the remaining pages, but it is also well above the highest number of lines contained on any extant page, viz. the 41 lines of p. 10. On the other hand, if 458-61 were absent from the missing leaf, it would have contained only 81 lines at an average of 40.5 per page - still above the average for the remaining pages, but far more plausible, since we do actually have two other pages with 40 lines and one with 41. Alternatively, if my "working hypothesis" on the papyrus's p. 4 (see above) is rejected and we suppose instead that p. 4 actually contained 41 lines rather than the 40 I have posited thus far, then the missing leaf (pp. 5-6) would carry one less line, but the situation would not be significantly altered: pp. 5-6 would still carry 84 lines of the printed vulgate between them, i.e. 42 each either actually or on average, still a total higher than that of any extant page. One could juggle further with possibilities and statistics, but to do so would be to labour the point: it should by now be abundantly clear that considerations of space strongly favour the absence of 458-61 from the text of this papyrus.

¹¹ I corrected Barns's error at *ZPE* 57 (1984) p. 52.

As far as I am aware, this exhausts the present papyrus testimony on the lines. But no assessment of the external evidence would be complete without a consideration of the allegation that Porphyry knew the passage.

5. Porphyry

In 1963-4 M. van der Valk tentatively expressed the view that “Porphyry seems to have been acquainted with [the lines]”, “Porphyry seems to have retained them”,¹² and in 1980 I followed this view, albeit equally tentatively;¹³ but in 1992 Janko stated baldly, without any argument, “Porphyry I. 139. 9 does not allude to them”,¹⁴ and this has prompted me to re-examine the evidence.

The phrase on which van der Valk relies¹⁵ occurs (underlined in my citation below) at the beginning of Porphyry’s discussion of the question of why Peleus appointed Phoenix as his son’s tutor when Phoenix had disgraced himself in his quarrel with his father: διὰ τί ὁ Πηλεὺς τὸν Φοῖνικα τοιαῦτα ἡμαρτηκότα, ὥστε τῇ παλλακίδι τοῦ πατρὸς συγγενέσθαι καὶ τῷ πατρὶ ἐπιβουλεύσαι, ὅμως διδάσκαλον τῷ υἱῷ συνέπεμψεν;¹⁶

Two factors would seem at first glance to support van der Valk’s interpretation: first, the verbal parallel between *Il.* 9. 458 τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βούλευσα κατακτάμεν and Porphyry’s τῷ πατρὶ ἐπιβουλεύσαι; and secondly, the fact that the phrase τῷ πατρὶ ἐπιβουλεύσαι follows the phrase τῇ παλλακίδι ... συγγενέσθαι, which might seem to suggest that ἐπιβουλεύσαι was less likely to denote the sexual plotting which precedes Phoenix’s intercourse with the concubine (*Il.* 9. 451-3) than the parricidal plotting which follows it in Plutarch’s version (458). However, when one takes account of the long Porphyry fragment as a whole,¹⁷ these two arguments lose most of their force, since the only specific “sin” (ἁμαρτία, ἁμάρτημα, etc., *passim* - cf. 139. 8 ἡμαρτηκότα in the above quotation) which Porphyry discusses in the “fine print” of his answer to the problem (139. 18-25¹⁸) is Phoenix’s sin of sleeping with his father’s concubine (139. 18 τῆς περὶ τὴν παλλακὴν ἁμαρτίας). If Porphyry had specifically raised the problem of Phoenix’s plans to commit the heinous sin of parricide this would surely have required some sort of specific reply, corresponding to the detailed discussion of Phoenix’s sexual sin. One might suppose that Porphyry did originally discuss the problem of the parricidal thoughts in detail but that our Homeric scholiasts – on whom we mainly depend for our text of Porphyry – failed to excerpt this part of his discussion because it had no bearing on the Aristarchean text they knew; but this hypothesis is certainly not necessary to explain the evidence. It is probably simpler to interpret Porphyry’s τῷ πατρὶ ἐπιβουλεύσαι as referring only to the sexual plotting of 451-3 and to regard the slight verbal parallel as no more than a meaningless coincidence. What, then, of the argument based on the order of Porphyry’s phrases: 1. τῇ παλλακίδι ... συγγενέσθαι, 2. τῷ πατρὶ ἐπιβουλεύσαι? Well, we are not obliged to regard this order as reflecting chronology. Rather, in a prothysterion of a common enough kind, the two phrases could simply be referring to the same incident from different angles, the more dramatic and more specific sleeping with the father’s concubine being mentioned before the more amorphous “plotting”. Indeed, the same type of prothysterion may be seen a

¹² *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad* Part One (Leiden 1963) p. 462, Part Two (Leiden 1964) p. 484 n. 28; so also (but much more confidently) A. Roemer, *Aristarchs Athetesen in der Homerkritik* (Leipzig 1912) pp. 448-9.

¹³ Op. cit. (above, n. 5) p. 92.

¹⁴ Loc. cit. (above, n. 3).

¹⁵ Op. cit. (above, n. 12) Part One p. 462 n. 258.

¹⁶ H. Schrader (ed.), *Porphyrii quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem pertinentium reliquiae* Vol. I (Leipzig 1880) p. 139 lines 8-10.

¹⁷ Ibid. (above, n. 16) p. 139 lines 8-25; but the following argument is not adversely affected (it is in fact strengthened) if one adds *ibid.* 139. 26 - 140. 13, whose provenance may well be only partly Porphyrian, as Schrader himself acknowledges *ad loc.*

¹⁸ Also 139. 26 - 140. 13 - but see above, n. 17.

little later within this very passage, where Porphyry comments that Peleus did not refuse to welcome Phoenix the suppliant fugitive, ἰκετεύσαντα καὶ διὰ φυγῆς ἐξιλασκόμενον τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς μῆνιν (139. 22-3): chronologically Phoenix's flight from Amyntor (φυγῆς) comes *before* he supplicates Peleus (ἰκετεύσαντα), but Porphyry puts the supplication first because it is the more important point for his argument: just as Peleus welcomed the suppliant Phoenix, so should Achilles welcome the suppliant Agamemnon (τὸν ἰκετεύσαντα Ἀγαμέμνονα, 139. 23). Thus it is certainly not necessary, nor (I now believe) is it particularly plausible, to see Porphyry's τῷ πατρὶ ἐπιβουλεῦσαι as referring to *Il.* 9. 458-61.

However, even if we are still inclined to believe that van der Valk's interpretation has at least an outside chance of being right, it does not necessarily follow that the testimony in favour of the lines is thereby significantly increased: since Porphyry uses Plutarch as a source elsewhere,¹⁹ it would be most natural to suppose that he became acquainted with the lines through reading them in Plutarch.

6. Conclusion

In 1925 G.M. Bolling commented, "From Plutarch's statement we must infer that ... he had observed that the lines were not in the vulgate MSS. of his day; ... we have every reason to believe this observation accurate, and may confidently expect papyri when discovered to confirm it ..."²⁰ This prophecy has been most pleasingly fulfilled by the three papyri discussed above. They are more significant than our mediaeval MSS. to the extent that they are earlier than the earliest of these MSS. by over 600 years and closer in time by this margin to the edition of Aristarchus (c. 150 B.C.), on which the whole of the subsequent tradition ultimately depends for its *numerus versuum*, as Bolling had himself demonstrated,²¹ and as Plutarch himself was evidently aware, as Bolling goes on to point out.²² Of course, given the unanimous testimony of the mediaeval MSS. against the lines, the confirmation provided by the papyri was only to be expected; but it is nevertheless welcome.

However, as has long been recognized, Plutarch's conclusion that Aristarchus *excised* the lines, with its implication that Aristarchus ignored the testimony of all or most of his MSS. in favour of the lines, cannot be taken at face value: there is plenty of evidence to show that Aristarchus was far too conservative a critic to proceed in this way:²³ he would not have omitted the lines unless they were absent from the vast majority of his MSS. (they may even have been absent from all of them). But the state of our MSS. and papyri shows that Plutarch's ἐξεῖλε does in fact refer to the total *omission* of these lines from the edition of Aristarchus, not their mere *athetesis* (i.e. the marking with marginal obeli of lines *left in* the text). This fact has been missed by the most recent editor of *Iliad* 9, C.H. Wilson, who wrongly states that "Plutarch ... says that Aristarkhos athetised them".²⁴ The wording of Jasper Griffin in his recent edition also confuses the issue: "Plutarch ... says that Aristarchus *deleted* them Normally Aristarchus' *deletions* did not mean the disappearance of lines from the standard text, and it is tempting to disbelieve the story" (my italics).²⁵ But there is an equivocation here: if, as we have just

¹⁹ See e.g. J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon (edd.), *Porphyre, De l'abstinence* Tome II (Paris 1979) pp. 138, 144-8; M. Patillon and A.P. Segonds (edd.), *ibid.* Tome III (Paris 1995) pp. LVI-LVII.

²⁰ *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Oxford 1925) p. 121.

²¹ *Ibid.* (above, n. 20) pp. 3-30, with the articles listed there on p. 7; cf. *The Athetized Lines of the Iliad* (Baltimore 1944) pp. 5-30. See further my *MS. Evidence* (above, n. 5) Ch. I.

²² *Loc. cit.* (above, n. 20). A similar awareness is shown by Athenaeus (181 C-D) in his discussion of *Il.* 18. 604/5, another line absent from all our MSS. and papyri and allegedly "excised" (ἐξεῖλεν again!) by Aristarchus: cf. Bolling (above, n. 20) pp. 47-8; *MS. Evidence* (above, n. 5) pp. 160-65; Janko (above, n. 3) p. 28; *ZPE* 110 (1996) pp. 110-11 (for the latest papyrus evidence).

²³ Cf. e.g. Hainsworth, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 3); Haslam (above, n. 10) pp. 78-9; and my *MS. Evidence* (above, n. 5) Chs. IV and V, esp. pp. 49-56, 91-101.

²⁴ *Homer: Iliad Books VIII and IX* (Warminster 1996) p. 239. Cf. Bolling (above, n. 20) p. 48 n. 1.

²⁵ *Homer: Iliad Book Nine* (Oxford 1995) p. 130.

shown, by “deleted” (ἐξέειλε) Plutarch must have meant “totally removed from the text”, such “deletions” by Aristarchus (in reality, merely omissions of lines which were very weakly attested) most certainly *did* lead to the disappearance of such lines from the text. The kind of “deletion” (as Griffin calls it) that did *not* lead to the disappearance of lines from the standard text was *athetesis* - a fact which Griffin’s terminology obscures, since a “deletion” in modern critical parlance implies the actual removal of lines from the *textus receptus* and their relegation to the apparatus criticus, whereas the Alexandrians’ athetized lines remained in their texts, merely branded with marginal obeli - a procedure equivalent to placing lines in square brackets within the text of a modern edition (= *damnat*, not *delet* or *omittit*).²⁶ The distinction between Aristarchus’s omissions and his atheteses is a vital one for our understanding of the transmission of the Homeric text, and it is incumbent on modern editors to clarify this distinction rather than obscure it, and to show how our MSS. and papyri help to clarify it.

Thus the external evidence against the passage is overwhelmingly strong: omission by all our MSS. and all three papyri proves absence from the edition of Aristarchus, which in turn implies that the passage would have been absent from the vast majority of Aristarchus’s MSS., if not all of them. Stephanie West has argued that “faith, not reason, is the only basis for the assumption that the MSS. on which Aristarchus based his text adequately represented the tradition as a whole”,²⁷ that “we know very little about the MSS on which Aristarchus based his text”,²⁸ and that “even in relatively recent times it has not been unknown for editors to select and reject MSS without any principle more obvious than geographical convenience in collation”.²⁹ But this position flies in the face of the known fact that the Ptolemies scoured the whole of the Greek world for MSS. of Homer and that Aristarchus could consult texts hailing from everywhere from the far west (the Μοσσαλιωτική) to the far east (the Σινωπική).³⁰ This being so, the credentials of a passage - its chances of being genuine - would have to be extremely weak if it were unknown to Aristarchus, or present in only a tiny minority of the many MSS. he consulted.

It is not the purpose of this article to reopen the debate on the internal evidence for or against the lines. I should have little to add to my 1980 discussion, where I argued that the lines, though Homeric in sentiment and style, do not fit well into their immediate context.³¹

In all probability, then, the passage is an interpolation, albeit an early one. Others have recently come to much the same conclusion.³²

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²⁶ Cf. Haslam (above, n. 10) p. 72: “Modern scholars sometimes speak of [athetized] verses’ being ‘deleted’ or the like, but this is misleading on more than one count.” Griffin (above, n. 25) also uses such misleading language of athetesis elsewhere: *Il.* 8. 475-6 were “excised” (p. 25), 9. 23-5 “deleted” (p. 78), 682-4 [but read “682-3”] “delete[d]” (p. 145).

²⁷ Loc. cit. (above, n. 4) p. 85.

²⁸ *CR* n.s. 32 (1982) p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.* (above, n. 28).

³⁰ See further Haslam (above, n. 10) pp. 69-71.

³¹ Loc. cit. (above, n. 5).

³² E.g. H. van Thiel, *Iliaden und Ilias* (Basle 1982) p. 319; Griffin, loc. cit. (above, n. 25); Haslam (above, n. 10) p. 79: “It seems we have here another sample of an ‘eccentric’ text. That puts the lines on a par with the plus-verses of the early papyri and quotations, unusual only in their uniqueness. Such verses are much more readily accounted for as additions which did not permeate than as excisions which did.” Walter Leaf made much the same point a century ago in his second edition of the *Iliad* (London 1900-02) ad loc.: “[Plutarch’s] statement that Ar[istarchus] ‘took [the lines] out’ can only be true in the sense that they may very likely have been found in some of the editions current in the book-trade, such as the early papyri recently discovered” Among those in the opposite camp is M. Lynn-George, who unquestioningly accepts both the authenticity of the passage and the veracity of Plutarch’s story: “The reverberations of the contemplated deed were so great that Aristarchus attempted to repress the text” (*Epos: Word, Narrative and the Iliad* [London 1988] p. 136). While Lynn-George displays an impressive familiarity with the likes of Bakhtin, Lacan, Foucault and Derrida, his naivety in textual matters is unfortunately typical of the chasm between Homeric literary and textual criticism to which I have previously drawn attention, op. cit. (above, n. 5) pp. xvii-xviii and Chapter VI.