

THE ASS IN THE LION'S SKIN:¹ THOUGHTS ON THE *LETTERS OF PHALARIS*

I

ANYTHING one says about the *Letters of Phalaris* must be, in some sense, provisional.² We have no critical text, and it is clear from the work of Tudeer³ that exploration of the manuscript tradition might well cast light on the origins and development of this mysterious collection, the most ambitious example of fictitious epistolography that survives from antiquity. But the literary problems are so teasing that even a provisional exploration may serve at least a protreptic purpose.

In the fullest collection, which is the basis of Hercher's and earlier editions, there are 148 letters. These include a few obvious intrusions. One letter (27) appears also in the Libanius corpus (27 = Liban. *Epist.* 1574), and the brief note to Hiero (86) on the theme that 'the elephant pays no attention to the mosquito' is chronologically too absurd to be part of any planned fiction. There is also an exchange of letters with Abaris (56–57), the only instance of a correspondent's reply.⁴ The corpus is preserved in various selections and various orders, of which the most that can be said is that none of the orders make sense: that is to say, no ancient or mediaeval compiler or scribe within our knowledge put the letters together on any thematic or chronological principle. The first attempts to disregard the tradition and produce some kind of order were made in the Renaissance, especially by the Latin translator, Francesco Griffolini, who did more than anyone to establish the *Letters* as a minor classic.⁵ His attempt however was half-hearted compared with that of van Lennep, a Dutch scholar whose edition was published posthumously in 1777. He has had little but abuse for his caprice; Hercher called it *prava libido*, but fortunately printed his suggestions.⁶ They are a necessary preliminary to any intelligent reading, or any investigation on internal grounds of the question of authorship.

II

Before approaching this, it may be well to say something about the relationship between the *Letters* and what we know of the Phalaris tradition from other sources. Like the *Letters* of

This paper is based on lectures given in 1985–6 in Cambridge, Harvard and Cologne. I am grateful to patient and encouraging audiences.

¹ 'The Sophist, whoever he was, that wrote a small Book of Letters in the name and character of Phalaris . . . had not so bad a hand at humouring and personating, but that several believed it was the Tyrant himself that talked so big, and could not discover the Ass under the skin of that Lion' (R. Bentley, *Dissertation upon the epistles of Phalaris* [1699], Introduction [=i, 89, ed. A. Dyce, 1836]).

² Since Bentley, few things have been usefully written about the Letters; but note Th. Lenschau in *RE* xix, 1652; E. A. Freeman, *History of Sicily* ii, 469 ff.; H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis* 751 ff.; some recent articles will be mentioned in their place. See also n. 73 below.

³ L. O. Th. Tudeer, 'The Epistles of Phalaris: preliminary investigations of the manuscripts' (Helsinki 1931). Meanwhile, the standard edition is that in R. Hercher, *Epistolographi Graeci* (Paris 1872) 409–59, with his *adnotatio critica*, *ibid.* pp. lii–lix.

⁴ See Tudeer III, who adduces reasons for thinking

57 did not belong to the collection. For the background, see now Gottschalk, *Heraclides Ponticus*, 124 ff.

⁵ Tudeer 121.

⁶ Hercher lii. For convenience I list the letters in Hercher's numbering as van Lennep would re-arrange them: 18, 67, 20, 119, 122, 94, 109, 121, 92, 108, 88, 93, 147, 73, 72, 22, 146, 63, 78, 144, 79, 65, 12, 51, 76, 24, 90, 115, 86, 96, 58, 112, 53, 5, 4, 40, 32, 85, 30, 104, 52, 2, 7, 8, 130, 60, 114, 101, 75, 136, 82, 105, 125, 126, 10, 133, 134, 113, 116, 118, 44, 48, 138, 46, 83, 117, 110, 77, 95, 107, 27, 41, 42, 55, 62, 43, 106, 57, 23, 74, 38, 139, 29, 91, 28, 145, 132, 141, 47, 39, 11, 35, 97, 66, 128, 54, 103, 31, 15, 33, 59, 98, 19, 68, 69, 70, 1, 21, 71, 84, 140, 148, 137, 81, 37, 87, 3, 13, 14, 6, 9, 64, 45, 123, 89, 129, 26, 102, 49, 127, 50, 99, 16, 17, 34, 56, 142, 143, 138, 135, 131, 59, 25, 80, 120, 100, 36, 111, 124. This kind of order has of course no justification in tradition or in ancient or Byzantine tastes (which preferred letter-books *nullo rerum aut temporum ordine* [cf. Plin. *epist.* 1.1]); its use is purely practical. Some nineteenth-century reference books (e.g. Pape-Benseler, early edd. of Liddell and Scott) will be found using van Lennep's order.

Themistocles, Euripides, Crates and Hippocrates, those of Phalaris select drastically from the events of the hero's career.

Phalaris, we recall, was best known from the first Pythian of Pindar.⁷ Hostile report condemns him, the savage burner with the brazen bull, and no cheerful songs keep his memory fresh. The bull and its use to punish its inventor Perilaus are the best known things in the whole saga. Callimachus (*fr.* 467 Pf.) and the Roman poets gave the theme publicity,⁸ and Lucian's two declamations⁹ are based on it. In the *Letters* it plays a part, but a minor one. The most rhetorical piece in the collection (122), an epistolary declamation, is Phalaris' apologia to the Athenians for putting Perilaus, here their fellow-citizen,¹⁰ to death. The same subject is dealt with in a letter to one Teleclides (66), and correspondents are threatened with the Bull in 113 and 115. Of these, 113 is worth quoting. It is addressed to Lamachus,¹¹ like many of Phalaris' correspondents the possessor of a historic name:

When you make the mob listen to you at Camarina, you tell them that these thirty-seven individuals have been smelted down¹² by my savagery. I wish indeed I could restrict myself to this number, but I perceive that I am not to be allowed to do so. You are forcing me to increase the total to thirty-nine, by adding yourself and that foolish fellow Epitherses.

The original sentence of Pindar, and scholarly comment on it,¹³ generated also two of the commonest commonplaces in the whole 'fardle':¹⁴ the idea that reputation is one thing and reality another, and Phalaris' repeated assertions that his deeds are no fit subject for song.¹⁵ But the overlap between the *Letters* and the rest of the tradition is not great. Absent from the *Letters* are many celebrated topics. There is nothing about Phalaris' mother's dream of blood filling her house, of which Heraclides Ponticus told;¹⁶ nothing either about the way Phalaris came to power by proving his administrative ability as a tax-farmer and so securing the contract for the temple to Zeus Polieus, which in turn opened up the way to a successful coup d'état.¹⁷ It remains true that, in the *Letters* also, Phalaris is a 'man of business and despatch', much involved with money matters, employing an efficient financial controller, Teucer, and fixing salaries for the army, the navy and the court doctor.¹⁸

Again, the traditional Phalaris is a military man. He puts his attendants into blue-grey uniform, with the result that the colour is abhorred ever after;¹⁹ and he figures more than once in collections of *Stratēgēmata*, for his cheating the Sicans of new corn and giving them rotting grain instead, or sending soldiers disguised as women ostensibly to give presents to the daughter of the ruler of Vessa, but really to seize the town.²⁰ In the *Letters* too, he wages many wars, some under his own generalship, some through subordinates; but these specific points are not there. Most of his fighting is with Leontini, Camarina or Tauromenium,²¹ not with the Sicans.

⁷ *Pyth.* 1.95 τὸν δὲ ταύρω χαλκῶ καυτῆρα νηλέα νόον / ἔχθρὰ Φάλαριν κατέχει παντῆ φάτις, / οὐδέ μιν φόρμιγγες ὑπάροφιαί κοινανίαν / μαλθακὰν παιδῶν ὄαροισι δέκονται.

⁸ E.g. Ovid, *Tristia* iii 11.39, *Ibis* 437; Prop. ii 25.11; Silius Italicus xiv 212; Claudian, in *Eutropium* i 163, in *Rufinum* i 253.

⁹ On these see J. Bompair, *Lucien écrivain* (Paris 1958) 167. Lucian also has Phalaris, with Busiris and others, misbehaving in the next world (*Verae Historiae* ii 23).

¹⁰ Only here is he explicitly Athenian; in 66, nothing is said of his origin, and the tradition outside the *Letters* is clear that Perilaos or Perillos is an Acragantine (Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 1.95, Diod. ix 28, 32.25, etc.)

¹¹ On names, see below p. 104.

¹² χαλκευθῆναι.

¹³ It is from the scholion that we know the lines of Callimachus, *l.c.*: πρῶτος ἐπεὶ τὸν ταύρον ἐκαίνισεν, δευτέρως δὲ τὸν ὄλεθρον / εὗρε τὸν ἐν χαλκῷ καὶ πυρὶ γιγνώμενον.

¹⁴ 'Take them in the whole bulk, if a great person would give me leave, I should say they are a fardle of commonplaces, without any life or spirit from action and circumstance . . . you converse with some dreaming pedant with his elbow on his desk; not with an active, ambitious tyrant, with his hand on his sword, commanding a million of subjects: Bentley, *Dissertations* ii, 171 Dyce.

¹⁵ Cf. 79, 80, 146, esp. 146.1: σὺ περὶ ἡμῶν, ὦ Στησίχορε, μηδὲν μῆτε ἐν ὤδαϊς μῆτε ἄλλοθί που λέγε. οὐδὲν γὰρ βούλομαι μάλλον ἢ σιωπᾶσθαι τὰ ἡμέτερα.

¹⁶ Cic. *de div.* 1.46 = Heraclides Ponticus *fr.* 132 Wehrli.

¹⁷ Polyaeus v 1.1, v 1.2.

¹⁸ See 11, 15, 43, 55, 64, 135, 142.

¹⁹ For the γλαύκινα περιζώματα, see Plu. *praec. gen.* r. p. 827e.

²⁰ Polyaeus v 1.3 (=Frontinus ii 4.6), v 1.4.

²¹ Wars with Leontini; 5, 32, 53, 112; with Tauromenium 15, 31, 35; sea battle as well as land battle 8; war

Again, the link with Delphi, the basis to Lucian's declamations, earns only a brief mention (84). A more surprising omission is the absence of the romantic story of Chariton and Melanippus, lovers and conspirators, recorded by Heraclides Ponticus and known to us from Aelian,²² in which Phalaris pardons both because one incriminates himself to save the other. Nearest to this is the dialogue reported in 72, and quoted by Stobaeus,²³ in which the heroic defiance of the wives of certain conspirators earns them an unexpected reprieve. This strange piece, in which Phalaris appears clement and humane and the victims seek martyrdom in vain, is perhaps a more respectable substitute for the tale of the homosexual conspirators. At any rate there is no honourable homosexuality in the *Letters*, whether this is for the sake of a good moral tone or simply ἐν ἡθελί, because any tyrant mindful of Harmodius and Aristogiton is bound to be ill disposed to things of this kind.

If these omissions surprise, a central feature of the story is stranger still. The tradition assumes, and Lucian asserts, that Phalaris was a native Acragantine. The letters make him 'the son of Leodamas, an Astypalaeon by birth', and an exile. He has a wife with the grand name of Erytheia, and a son, Paurolas ('little one'), with whom he conducts an improving correspondence, in which he displays the better side of his nature. Letter 67 is an example of this; like 72, it attracted Stobaeus and appears in his anthology.²⁴ Its gist is as follows.

Phalaris has been to Himera on business. There, he has heard the daughters of Stesichorus singing some of their father's songs and some of their own. (These daughters are known only from the *Letters*: perhaps they are born of a misunderstanding of a poem, something like Pindar's description of his own poems as 'daughters of the Muses'.²⁵) Thrice happy the father, thrice happy the young ladies who, against all nature, have attained such profundity of education. The Little One, on the other hand, is neglecting his studies in favour of hunting and military exercises. But in Hellenic education it is the mind, not the body, that is to be trained, 'unless you are training for the sacred games'. Mental cultivation is essential if a man is to live in honour in a democratically governed city. Or can it be, as some have said, that the boy wants to imitate his father, and thinks physical strength the road to tyranny? 'If you are wise', Phalaris continues, 'accept the view of one who repents of being a monarch, having taken up that life not of his free will but of necessity . . . If the inexperience of youth makes you think a tyrant's lot has something pleasant and agreeable about it . . . your ignorance has led you badly astray. You should pray that God never grant you experience of such a destiny'.

This letter encapsulates several conventional themes: the miseries of a tyrant's life; the comparison between learning and athletics and the link between democracy and Hellenic education; and, most important in the *Letters*, 'Necessitie, the Tyrant's plea', the plea that Milton made Satan use to 'excuse his devilish deeds' (*PL* iv 393 ff.)—not (I suspect) without knowledge of Phalaris, who was much read in those days.

III

Views about the date and authorship of the *Letters* have usually been vague. Recently, M. D. Macleod²⁶ has thought that the author might even be a contemporary of Lucian. This is the position of O. Bruno,²⁷ who wishes to put some important letters as early as the first or second

with Camarina 75, 82; Phalaris wounded 28, *cf.* 33. The mention of Tauromenium is of course a gross anachronism (*cf.* Bentley i, 235 Dyce—'[Phalaris] must either have had the prescience and divination of the Sibyls or his Epistles are as false and commentitious as our Sibylline Oracles'); but it is worth noting that the place appears in the Pythagoras legend, probably from the time of Timaeus (*cf.* Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 33; Levy, *Recherches sur la légende de Pythagore* [Paris 1926] 57).

²² Aelian, *VH* ii 4; Athenaeus xiii 602b; Plu. *Amatorius* 760c (with the names reversed). See Wehrli

on Heraclides Ponticus *fr.* 64–6.

²³ Stobaeus iii 7.70, a somewhat abridged version.

²⁴ Stobaeus iv 8.26, a partial quotation and a distinctly different text.

²⁵ Pind. *Nem.* 4.4; αἱ δὲ σοφαὶ Μοισᾶν θυγατρὲς αἰδοῦναι . . .

²⁶ *Luciani Opera* (Oxford 1987) iv p. xvi.

²⁷ *Helicon* (1967) 323 ff. Bentley (i, 69 Dyce) thought that the *Letters* might date from before the time of Titus.

century. A selection of them does indeed occur in some Lucian manuscripts, including one (Laurentianus 57.51) which is the second oldest in all the Phalaris tradition. It may well be that in Byzantine times some attributed these letters to Lucian: his two Phalaris declamations would lend colour to this, and it is perhaps significant that one of Phalaris' correspondents is called Λυκῖνος, a name in Lucian's dialogues, generally supposed to represent the author himself.²⁸ But this cannot be true of the whole collection; the observation often made since Wilamowitz²⁹ that Byzantine clausulae can be detected in the *Letters* is clearly true, and the widely held view that the collection as a whole is not earlier than the fourth century can hardly be disproved. But perhaps both parties are right and we have to do with a book that has grown over a long period. Certainly Tudeer's remark³⁰ that 'the possibility cannot be wholly denied that the collection . . . may have been enlarged through later additions' seems unnecessarily cautious. There are anyway ample grounds for supposing that the 'ass' in the 'lion's skin' is a pantomime donkey, and to these grounds we must now turn. They fall under two heads: internal inconsistency and stylistic variation. All we can hope to do is to establish the fact of multiple authorship; how many pairs of legs there are in the donkey is beyond reasonable conjecture.

In this paper, I confine myself to internal inconsistencies.³¹ These are most easily seen in the two cycles of letters which most resemble what is commonly called an 'epistolary romance', in other words the letters that seem to tell connected stories. The two principal cycles concern (1) the poet Stesichorus and (2) Philodemus' daughter.³² I take Stesichorus first.

IV

The link with Stesichorus goes back at least to Aristotle.³³ He relates that when the people of Himera were about to grant Phalaris a tyrant's bodyguard, Stesichorus told them a cautionary tale: how the horse asked the man to help him drive away the stag, and so finished the day curbed and enslaved. In the *Letters* too, Himera is the scene of Stesichorus' anti-Phalaris activities. Sometimes these are just demagoguery (109); but there is also action. Stesichorus goes to Alountion and Alaisa—towns on the north coast, neither of which existed in the real Phalaris' day, as Bentley was quick to point out.³⁴ Here he raises an army, and earns a sharp rebuke (92):

Aren't you going to stop this obsessive political activity at your age? Are you not ashamed before the goddesses whose devotee you pride yourself on being, while you disgrace them by intriguing against your betters? Are you not sorry for your sons who are nearly grown men? How can you still be rash enough to build up against them³⁵ so grievous an enemy, to cast them down like a pine tree?³⁶ I

²⁸ Three 'Lycinus' letters (1, 4, 5) come early in the traditional order, and this may be significant.

²⁹ *Textgeschichte der griechischen Lyriker* (Berlin 1900) 35.2. The problem is, however, extremely complicated. It should be possible to follow the techniques proposed by W. Hörandner ('Der Prosarhythmus in der rhetorischen Literatur der Byzantiner', *Wiener Byzantinische Studien* xvi [1981]) and C. Klock ('Untersuchungen zu Stil und Rhythmus bei Gregor von Nyssa', *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* clxxiii [1986]) in order to study this; but the shortness of the individual letters makes any observation hazardous, to say nothing of our lack of a critical text. But that there are wide divergences of practice seems clear. I take a pair of contrasting instances: (a) 41, 42 and 43, all concerned with a person called Hippolytion, observe the regular forms of 'Meyer's Law' in leaving two or four unaccented syllables between the last two accents; (b) 23, a letter to Pythagoras, shows no accentual regularity, but displays elevated quantitative clausulae, viz. ditrochaei and cretic + spondee: φρουρᾶς ὑποπτος, ουμβιῶναι, καὶ

τυράννου, χρηστότης ἀκίνδυνον, συγγενέσθαι, προσβειώση. It seems highly improbable that the same writer wrote in such different ways.

³⁰ Tudeer 110.

³¹ Stylistic observation, apart from rhythm, has a subjective element, especially in short texts. But while some letters seem relatively chaste and dignified (e.g. 72, the dialogue with the conspirators' wives), others are quite bizarre (e.g. 147, with the strange words ἐμπρόσωπος and περισκυθίζω ['scalp']). I hope to deal with some of these points elsewhere.

³² But other contexts could also be investigated: there is a serious inconsistency in the story of Phalaris' wife Erytheia, who brings up the boy Paurolas (18, 69), and yet is killed by a lover (51).

³³ *Rhet.* ii 1393^b.

³⁴ i, 164 Dyce.

³⁵ ἐκτειχίσειν, from Demosth. viii 36.

³⁶ ὅς αὐτοὺς ἐκτρίψει πίτυος δίκην, from Herod. vi 37.

gather that you are writing up the Homecomings of the Achaeans and are severely criticizing the foolishness [ἄβουλίᾳ] of certain of the heroes: yet you take no thought for yourself and how you are to get home safely from Alaisa to Himera. Let me assure you, the cliffs of Caphereus await you, and the Wandering Rocks, and Charybdis, and Nauplius is on the watch.³⁷ You shall not escape my hands, no, not if some god, as you poets say, were to make you invisible.³⁸

It is thus no surprise to find Stesichorus in the tyrant's hands. But we seek in vain for a single account of how this happened. In one place (121) Phalaris asks the citizens of Himera to send him three guilty men: Hermocrates, Stesichorus and a vicious pervert called Conon, who appears in several letters. They fail to do so, and send two respectable citizens instead, thereby forcing Phalaris into a moral dilemma, in which he exercises clemency and does not forget to tell us. We may perhaps suppose that it is after this that the poet makes his ill-starred expedition to Alaisa. At any rate, Letter 93 gives an account of how he was captured there, and then released as a gesture of piety to the Muses and to the gods and heroes of Himera. He is not to share the fate of the infamous Conon, who has been captured with him. Himera is advised, with elaborate irony, to find other leaders, men such that Phalaris need feel no scruple (δεισιδαιμονία) about punishing them, and to leave Stesichorus to pursue his innocent profession. He has been led astray and is not to blame.

But this seems inconsistent with the scenario of Letter 108. Here Stesichorus has been sent by his fellow citizens, together with the infamous Conon and innocent Dropidas, on a mission to Corinth. They have been captured at sea, and brought to Phalaris. Conon is executed on the spot; Dropidas may be sent home; Stesichorus is safe 'until we have decided how he should be punished and put to death'. This version is also assumed in Letter 88, where Phalaris writes to the people of Himera as follows:

You have made it plain to me that it is of no concern to you whether Phalaris is your friend or your foe. But God has served me well, and I am assured that I have a firm sign from him that the rest of my business also will prosper. As I wrote before [i.e. in 108?], I ordered Conon to be killed on the spot, knowing that he was an evil man, and had no parents or other relatives in the city. Dropidas I honoured as best I could and sent home; he has not behaved badly towards me or done me wrong. As to Stesichorus, I shall deliberate.

We may reasonably think that we have here a sequel to 108, in which the tyrant relents. Observe some slight softening even towards Conon; it is implied that if he had had parents living, he might have been spared. Now this is a motive for clemency to which Phalaris succumbs on other occasions (6, 26, 105), and which he exploits ironically in Letter 7, where he tells a father that he will spare his son because it will hurt the father more than if the young man were killed. Moreover, the question about Stesichorus is more open than in Letter 108: it is not now how he should be put to death, but whether he should be killed or spared. There seems no way of telling whether 88 and 108 are by the same hand; but the difference of tone is marked, whether it is deliberate or not.

Nothing in the letters we have considered so far refers specifically to an attempt on Phalaris' life. But that there was such an attempt, made in the precinct of Zeus at Himera, and that Stesichorus was involved in it, is the presupposition of a number of letters. The most striking of these is 147, ambitious and elaborate in style, menacing and heavily ironical in content. The conspiracy has been thwarted; the captured conspirators Eubulus and Aristophon have tried to put the blame on Stesichorus. Stesichorus is not to feel anxious about this:

How near I came to danger at Himera, you know. But I suffered no irremediable harm; and, if you

³⁷ Hercher prints [καὶ ὁ Ναύπλιος στόλος], but perhaps the phrase can be kept with a change to σκοπός 'watcher'.

³⁸ οὐδ' ἂν εἰ θεῶν σέ τις καθ' ὑμᾶς τοὺς ποιητὰς αἰστώσειεν.

consider the accusation these people have made, you ought to feel more pleasure than pain, both on account of the power of your inspired poetry and because of my safety—if, that is, you have any thought for me. You have discovered that your songs have power beyond the range of the lyre, and that Phalaris has power beyond the range of tyrannicides . . . You may perhaps praise tyrannicide in your marvellous verses—and far be it from me to discourage anyone from admiring your eloquence—but you did not praise the killing of Phalaris, which would be murder, not tyrannicide.

Phalaris goes on to explain how Zeus has saved him. The ex-prostitute Conon and all the rest have met their fate—some put in the Bull, some racked, some scalped. Phalaris will never relent towards the sort of people who made his tyranny necessary; towards the good, he will be as he was before he came to power. The would-be tyrannicides have had their reward. Tied down and buried up to the chest where the wild beasts of Himera feed,³⁹ they spend the night in agony.

May you be fortunate for ever! Farewell (ἔρρωσο). P.S. I shall not pray that nothing like this may ever happen to you, because your own righteousness takes care of that. My prayer is rather that Phalaris may never be driven by Necessity to do anything of the kind. May the glorious works of the Muses be your concern; and send me some poems to relieve my present anxieties.

In a word: we have at least two versions of Phalaris' pursuit and capture of Stesichorus, one linking it with the conspiracy of Eubulus, and one not: and this latter version seems to have two different forms.

Let us leave Stesichorus here. He lived twelve years in captivity (103); he obliged his patron by writing to order a poem about Cleariste, the deceased wife of one Nicocles (78, 79, 144); he had a grandson whom Phalaris supplies with olive-oil for the purposes of his expensive office of gymnasiarch (145); and, after his death, Phalaris decrees that he shall be buried at Catana but have a memorial at Himera; his poems are to be written up in temples and private houses throughout the city (54).

V

Unlike Stesichorus, Philodemus and his daughter are not known to us from any other source. Nor is this a tale of war, politics or patronage, but rather a romantic story seen from an unfamiliar point of view.⁴⁰

Philodemus' daughter is a girl to whom Phalaris sends a dowry. The situation is paralleled in the letters of Chion, in which the hero contributes to the dowry of a relative of Plato,⁴¹ and in the Platonic letters themselves, where Plato undertakes to provide for his nieces out of moneys supplied by Dionysius.⁴² If we try to arrange the file in order, as it were, the internal incoherences, if there are any, will become clear.

The first letter (142) signals a new subject: Phalaris writes to his controller, Teucros, who usually sees to financial business, and tells him (he is at Syracuse) to call on Philodemus' wife Cleainete—'you know who I mean'⁴³—and offer a dowry of five talents for the daughter 'not as a present but as a settlement of a debt' that Phalaris owes. 'If he asks how it is that I have so much money of Philodemus', say you don't know, and refer him to me and to Philodemus'. A young man called Leon has been to see Phalaris and proposed himself as a bridegroom. Teucros is to effect this marriage if possible, but if the girl's mother finds a better suitor for her, he is to guarantee *him* the dowry and not interfere further. The thing is to get the girl decently married. Phalaris is anxious to give the money, and will count it gain if he is allowed to do so, despite the

³⁹ εἰς τὴν ἡμερῶν θηρόβοτον. Cf. 34 τὰ θηρόβοτα Νομάδων ἐνδαιτήματα. Hercher gives 'in bestiarum quae Himerae est caveam' in 147, but there seems no reason to suppose different meanings in the two passages, and the supplied noun in our passage is presumably χῶρα.

⁴⁰ The letters involved are 142, 143, 135, 131, 59, 25, 80.

⁴¹ Chion, *epist.* 10 (I. Düring, *Chion of Heraclea* [Göteborg 1951] p. 94).

⁴² [Plato], *epist.* 13.
⁴³ οἶσθα ἣν λέγω—a natural indication to the reader that a new theme is here begun.

dreadful reports of his character that the family evidently believes. The girl is to be given four servants⁴⁴ of her own age, clothing, and sixty gold pieces. Teucros is to send this at once, and take the credit himself. The wedding is to be so conducted that the relatives shall have no call to feel sorry for Philodemus; the splendour of the occasion should outweigh his misfortune. The next letter (143), addressed to Cleainete, reflects the same situation. Phalaris understands that she may enjoy having her daughter at home as a substitute for the company of her husband, but it is not fair to the girl, for this is the twentieth year she has been at home.⁴⁵ 'Widowhood becomes more meritorious the longer it continues; virginity prolonged beyond its reason earns disrepute.' There is no need to worry about money: 'Philodemus at his departure left a dowry of five talents with me'. Nor is it right to wait for Philodemus; she may pray that he returns in time, and can be assured of his safety from the fact of Phalaris' good will, but it is her business to see her daughter well placed. We observe here that Phalaris alleges the money is indeed a deposit from Philodemus, and that Philodemus' precise circumstances are left unclear.

Events seem to move quickly. We find (135) a letter to Teucros, in which Phalaris says that he has heard by rumour about the wedding, even before Teucros wrote to report it. The rumour was discreditable to him, as usual; he does not care. The house in which the lovers were first together is to be given to them: 'Do not make Hymen move from the hearth where his song was sung'. Philodemus, despite his fortunes, is to be envied. 'Let them all hate Phalaris—I do not want to avoid hatred that cannot hurt me—but let them secretly pray, even if they pretend otherwise, to have friends like me themselves'. Phalaris here speaks very much in character, and our curiosity about his part in the affair is aroused. What really happened to Philodemus?

Letter 131 is, surprisingly, addressed to him. One would infer that Phalaris knows where he is.⁴⁶ Philodemus, it seems, is worried lest Phalaris' endowment of Theano, now a mother, should put him in the tyrant's debt; he fears that when Phalaris sends wishes for his safe return, this is simply because he wants his money back. Phalaris denies this; it is Philodemus' company he wants. The five talents can be treated as a debt if he likes, or as a present—and then Philodemus can give five more on his own account. This seems inconsistent with the idea that Phalaris put to Cleainete, namely that the money was a deposit owed to Philodemus. There seems no obvious dramatic reason why Phalaris should not so represent the transaction to Philodemus himself; and this, together with the breach of realism involved (on the assumptions of 142 and 143) in having Philodemus' whereabouts known to Phalaris and to Theano (who has written to her father)⁴⁷, leads to the conclusion that the writer of this letter has a different view of the matter.

However, the letter agrees with the others in making the marriage go smoothly. The bridegroom Leon also writes to thank Phalaris, and the latter replies (25) by saying that the only thanks Leon owes is to love his wife, 'from whom your connection (συνάφεια) with our family takes its origin'. The child also comes into the story (80), for the women want to call it Phalaris, an idea naturally unacceptable to the modest benefactor.

But we have not taken into account Letter 59, placed by van Lennep after 131, which makes the affair less simple. It is addressed to one Nausicles, who appears only here, though Phalaris says he has often written to him on this very subject. In it, it appears that a certain Hermocrates—a good Syracusan name, presumably a kinsman of the bride—has prevented Theano from receiving the wedding presents. This does not worry Phalaris much. He has sent them, and

⁴⁴ The text has θυγατέρας, but Tzetzes in telling the story makes it θεραπαινίδας. Bentley (ii, 2 Dyce) assumes that θυγατήρ (like *filia*) acquired a secondary sense of 'girl', and this is a 'most manifest token of later Greek'. Whether or not he is right, the sense is plain.

⁴⁵ εικοστὸν ἔτος οἰκουρούση. As in classical Greece, it seems, nineteen is very old for a girl to marry, since thirteen or fourteen would be normal. (Below, Phalaris describes her ἑξῶρον . . . οὔσης εἰς γάμον.)

⁴⁶ At least, the assumption of most of the Letters seems to be that they *could* have been written. There is of course another convention of fictitious letter-writing in which the 'correspondent' is unattainable, but the two kinds can hardly be mixed.

⁴⁷ If this follows from the last sentence of 131: μαρτυροῦσα δ' ἡμῖν πρὸς σὲ πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα Θεανῶ χαρᾶς ἡμᾶς ἀνατίμπλησιν· ἃ γὰρ ἔτι παῖς οὔσα ἔπασχε, μήτηρ γενομένη μαρτυρεῖ.

earned the praise due to his good intentions. Indeed, he is specially to be commended because, being a tyrant and no relation to the family, he can be favourably compared with ungenerous relatives like Hermocrates. Some have reproached him with giving presents simply to earn favour; his defence is that it stops the recipients from acting in a violent or hostile spirit.

This letter is inconsistent with all the others. The interception of the presents by Hermocrates is nowhere else hinted at. And Phalaris here claims to be no connection of the family, while in his letter to Leon (25) he makes a point of saying that Leon's marriage has brought him into a family relationship with Phalaris himself.

I conclude that the story has been worked up by at least two, probably three, writers. What legendary tale lies behind it is not clear. The more enigmatic letters (especially 59) seem to imply other facts and details which we are not told. It would be hazardous to conjecture the original basis; but the detail in 25 about Phalaris' relationship with the family, and the proposal in 80 that the baby should be called Phalaris, raise the suspicion that the *Letters* offer the tyrant's own hypocritical version of some very discreditable events: would it not fit the facts to suppose that he was himself the father of the baby, has banished Philodemus, and bribed Leon to take Theano? That at least is how we expect him to behave.

VI

In the last part of this paper, I should like to reflect more generally on the collection as a whole, and raise some questions about its nature and significance. It is natural to cast longing eyes on a passage of Demetrius:

'Dynasts, whether men or women, do not like to hear of their own faults. In advising them against these we shall therefore not speak in direct terms, but either criticize others who have done the like—e.g. in addressing the tyrant Dionysius we shall speak against the tyrant Phalaris and his brutality—or else praise those whose behaviour has been the opposite'.⁴⁸

In one of the few articles to be devoted to Phalaris' problems in recent years, O. Bruno⁴⁹ sought to suggest that fourth-century Sicily was indeed the background to the compilation of the letters. They were a sort of *roman à clef*. Phalaris' doctor Polyclitus has the same name as a doctor connected with Dionysius II; the escape of Stesichorus' party to Corinth recalls the voyage of Dion and Callippus; and there is some general analogy between Phalaris' treatment of Stesichorus and Dionysius' treatment of Plato. These are flimsy similarities. We must, I think, dismiss this seductive line of inquiry. It remains true, however, and it is significant for the development of the legend as a whole, that fourth-century philosophers—Heraclides, Aristotle and the author of the *Magna Moralia*⁵⁰—emphasise the significance of Phalaris as an exemplar of tyranny. This was clearly a formative period. But our collection is certainly much later; and the question which naturally arises is whether the authors meant to convey any message, either of warning or of exhortation, relating to the rulers of the Empire. It is true that tyrannical rulers were often called Phalaris—or Cyclops or Busiris or Sciron or Typhon or Gyges⁵¹—and there would no doubt be a point in showing that even such a person can be capable of clemency, modesty and patronage of the arts, as well as savage irony and a cynical appraisal of human

⁴⁸ Demetrius, π. έρμ., 292: έπειδ ή άηδώς άκούουσιν οί δυνάσται και δυνάστιδες τά αύτών άμαρτήματα, παραινούντες αύτοις μη άμαρτάνειν ούκ έξ εύθείας έροϋμεν, άλλ' ήτοι έτέρους ψέξομέν τινας τά όμοια πεποιηκότας, οϊον πρός Διονύσιον τόν τύραννον κατά Φαλάριδος του τυράννου έροϋμεν και τής Φαλάριδος άποτομίας: ή έπαινεσόμεθά τινας Διονυσίω τά έναντία πεποιηκότας . . .

⁴⁹ Above, n. 27.

⁵⁰ Cf. Aristot. *Pol.* 1310^b28; Heraclides Ponticus *fr.* 65 Wehrli; *Magna Moralia* 1203^a23 (where Phalaris is with Dionysius and Clearchus of Heraclea, Chion's opponent).

⁵¹ *SHA Maximini* 8: 'tam crudelis fuit ut illum alii Cyclopem alii Busirem alii Scirona nonnulli Falarem multi Tyfona vel Gygam vocarent'. (Note also Hyginus, *fab.* 257, where 'Phalaris' is a common noun for tyrant, and is applied to Dionysius.)

corruptibility. But the analogy of historical declamation does not encourage this notion of the motivation of the Letters. In declamation also, cruel tyrants and oppressive moneylenders (Phalaris is an exacting creditor) abound, and only in the most general and remote sense can they be said to have satirical or admonitory purposes. One has an overwhelming sense of the isolation of the school from reality. We should not think very differently of the epistolographers; and it is therefore important to look for educational and rhetorical motives, rather than political ones, for this sort of composition also.

Certain educational aims are plain enough. The letters are a sustained exercise in the grand manner, such as kings and generals may be expected to use. Figures, vocabulary, perhaps rhythm, all contribute to this. A good example is the typically Gorgianic antithesis and personification of a sentence in the first letter in our collection:

σώματος μὲν γὰρ ἀρρωστίαν θεραπεύει τέχνη,
 ψυχῆς δὲ νόσον ἰατρὸς ἰᾶται θάνατος.
 'Art tends the body's weakness
 but it is Doctor Death that cures the soul's disease'.

It is all in high style, and very literary. True, the authors make mistakes and would not satisfy all Atticists. There are at least six instances of the word ἄμυνα, 'revenge', a concept Phalaris often needs: this word is condemned by the lexicographer Moeris as un-Attic.⁵² But the contrast between Phalaris and the vulgarly written letters that make up a large part of another late antique fiction, the *'Historia Alexandri'*, is very marked. Here are the upper and lower ends of the historical fiction market in late antiquity. Bentley of course was not impressed by Phalaris' literary quality:

All that takes or affects you is a stiffness and stateliness and operoseness of style; but as that is improper and unbecoming in all epistles so especially it is quite aliene from the character of Phalaris, a man of business and despatch.⁵³

But, we should reply, these writers want to be grand; it is deliberate ἡθοποιία to avoid the urbanity of ordinary letters, or use it only in heavy irony. Phalaris is not unique in this. The extant correspondence between Brutus and the cities of Asia aims deliberately, as Mithridates' preface tells us, at ἡγεμονικὸν φρόνημα and μεγαλοψυχία.⁵⁴ It is no wonder that Brutus is associated with Phalaris both in manuscripts and in the recommendations of Byzantine teachers.⁵⁵ Nor should we forget the historical context of Bentley's attack: the Battle of the Books, and the tendency of the time towards a lively, vigorous, colloquial, urbane English prose, the growing distrust of the grand, the pretentious and the poetical. Phalaris and Brutus in fact represent a type of fictional epistolography which stands to the comic epistolography of Alciphron or Aristaeetus in much the same relation as the historical declamations about, let us say, Marathon or Alcibiades, for which the rhetor Sopatros recommends τὸ πομπικόν and τὸ μεγάλοφρον,⁵⁶ stand to the miser or the unhappy husband in the comic declamations of Libanius. Indeed, declamation and fictitious epistle have many similarities. Erasmus called the Phalaris collection, like the letters of Paul to Seneca and the letters of Brutus, *declamatiunculae*.⁵⁷ The points of resemblance are perhaps more precise than Erasmus had in mind. For one thing, both exercises have a practical purpose. Sophists not only delivered speeches, they were often employed as secretaries and wrote official letters. Again, both can be exploited in bizarre ways, because that makes the instruction more amusing and tests the pupil's ingenuity. Finally, both are often set in the classical past. Phalaris himself was a good declamation subject. And the whole scenario of tyrants and tyrannicides is characteristic of the rhetoric school. The doctor Polyclitus (*ep.* 1 and 21, *ep.* 70, 71) could have killed Phalaris and claimed a tyrannicide's legal reward.

⁵² Letters 13, 26, 32, 94, 99, 102; Moeris 80 Pierson:
 ἄμυναν δὲ οὐδεὶς τῶν Ἀττικῶν λέγει.

⁵³ ii, 171 Dyce.

⁵⁴ P. 177 Hercher.

⁵⁵ Düring, *Chion of Heraclea* 33; Photius, *epist.* 207.

⁵⁶ Sopatros, *Diairesis Zetematou*, 8.2 Walz.

⁵⁷ *Epist.* 1206 Allen (the Greek letters of Brutus are meant; see T. O. Achelis, *Rh. Mus.* lxx [1921] 316).

Instead, he saves his life, and gets a reward from the tyrant himself: twenty virgin boys and a salary on the taxiarch's scale. What could be more declamatory than this?

But the epistle, from the rhetor's point of view, is a much simpler exercise than the full declamation. It rarely needs to prove a point or marshal arguments; Phalaris' defence of himself for putting Perilaus to death (122) is the most notable exception in this collection. It is more like a simple ἡθοιοιῖα—'What would so-and-so be likely to say in such-and-such a situation?'—such as was practised as a progymnasma.⁵⁸ This simplicity, and also the practical importance of the letter, made it a much more widely studied genre than declamation in Byzantine times. The extant treatises on 'epistolary types' demonstrate this: one has 21 different types, another 41, all supplied with model examples.⁵⁹ Enough of the Phalaris collection can be classified under these headings to make it clear that one of the purposes of the writers must have been to provide examples, none the less useful for being bizarre and paradoxical. So we have letters of reproach (ὄνειδιστική, 2), reproof (ἐπιτιμητική, 3), irony (εἰρωνική, 8), menace (ἀπειλητική, 13, 14, 24, 30, 89, 128: note 1, 14, 21—the minatory 'expect trouble', προσδέχου), invitation (23), release from debt (81, 137), gift presentation (119), and consolation (103). Many of course are loaded with irony, but it is remarkable that some seem 'straight'. A possible, but disputable, example of this is Letter 10, in which a father is comforted for the death of a son who has died fighting bravely in battle. The ἦθος of the tyrant appears in the remark that his 'sterner nature' sees no good in lamentation; it is only when he adds that the boy is lucky to have died 'unaccused', that we begin to wonder whether there is some innuendo and things are less simple than they seem. There seems however little doubt that in some parts of the collection Phalaris teaches fairly straightforward and acceptable moral lessons.

I should like to consider briefly here one group of these letters, because they cast light on the processes of invention of the writers as well as their moral intentions. I mean the letters which are clearly built round familiar sayings or proverbs. This is a form of composition grounded in the practice of the schools—in the progymnasmata of *chreia* and *gnomē*—and important in all kinds of small-scale literary work, epigrams and lyric poems as well as miniature dialogues and letters. Here, for example, is Phalaris writing to his son Paurolas, momentarily in favour (40):

I accepted the gold crown you sent me because of its workmanship and your generosity. I wore it one day, when I was sacrificing to the gods of our fathers in honour of the victory over Leontini, but then I sent it to your mother Erytheia. No one deserves such honour more than a mother. But you yourself will be a fairer and more honourable crown to us, if you are seen to have a mind worthy of your parents' wishes for you.

This is the proverb ἀνδρὸς στέφανος παῖδες, 'children are a man's crown',⁶⁰ vivified by inventing the situation of a child presenting a real crown to his father.

Again, Phalaris writes to Epicharmus (61):

You and Demoteles have been giving me the same advice, to abdicate the tyranny. You bear me no ill will in saying this, but you show your ignorance and inexperience. To begin, if you want a tyranny, is easy: to stop is not easy, just as the archer who has shot his bolt cannot easily get it back.

The basis of this is the proverb about the arrow that cannot be recovered⁶¹; it is used to give colour to Phalaris' refusal to give up his rule.

Similarly with other common sayings: 'no excuses with friends'⁶² (83), 'virtue is true nobility'⁶³ (120), 'fortune favours the brave'⁶⁴ (68), 'consider your own faults before accusing

⁵⁸ Cf. Bentley, i, 83 Dyce.

⁵⁹ For these texts, see V. Weichert, *Demetrii et Libanii qui feruntur τύποι ἐπιστολικοί* (Leipzig 1910).

⁶⁰ *Vita Homeri Herodotea* 31, *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* 281 Allen.

⁶¹ Cf. 'nescit vox missa reverti', and W. F. Otto, *Sprichwörter*, s.v. 'verbum (3)'.

⁶² προφάσεως οὐ δεῖ πρὸς φίλους, Apostolius xiv 79 (from Phalaris?).

⁶³ A common philosophical revaluation: cf. Aristot. *Pol.* 1255^a32.

⁶⁴ Otto, *op. cit.*, s.v. 'fortuna (9)'.

others'⁶⁵ (9), 'it is sweet to die for one's country'⁶⁶ (18). In some at least of these letters, Phalaris seems to be quite serious, and to be uttering acceptable moral truths. This feature of the correspondence had great importance for its survival and popularity.

VII

There is of course one great difference between declamation and this sort of epistolography. Declamation, if it does not involve historical characters, simply needs generalized types—Rich Man, Poor Man, Stepmother, Misanthrope, Hero home from the front. If it has a historical setting, its characteristics are few and well known, and it generally avoids being embarrassed by too much circumstantial detail, because this gets in the way of the argument. The letter writer, on the other hand, unless he is writing simply model letters, needs addresses and allusions to precise events—or of course apparent allusions, enigmas to which there never was an answer. The names in comic letters often tell their own tale, like Alciphron's Limenteros, Capnosphrantes, Philomageiros, Pinakospongisos—Starvegut, Smoke-sniffer, Cooklove and Platesponge. In Phalaris, there are about 120 named characters. No one should doubt that the majority of these are fictitious, and no one should put much credence on the form in which they appear as addressees, for the manuscripts here show bewildering variety.⁶⁷ In having so many fictitious names, Phalaris is not different from other historical characters whose correspondence was invented for them. In *Themistocles* for example, half the names are not attested except in the letters; and Doenges⁶⁸ is surely too optimistic in assigning only four of these to the category of fictional inventions. Euripides also has both real names—Chionides, Mesatos, Laprepes—and invented ones.⁶⁹ In Phalaris, the names are mostly rather grand, as befits the almost epic ethos. However much the Greeks of the empire were inclined to give themselves grandiose names, it is plain that the main source of the Phalaris onomasticon is classical mythology and literature. Thus the following could come from Homer:

Amphinomos (17)	Onetor (50)
Alcinous (76)	Teucer (11, 15, 43, 55, 64, 135, 142)
Alcander (91)	Theano (80, 131)
Amphidamas (64)	

Demosthenes and other orators would yield the following:

Aristophon (16, 26(?), 72, 128, 147)	Lacritus (10, 125, 126, 133)
Telesippe (132)	Lycinus (1, 4, 5)
Aristolochus (60, 63)	Mnesicles (90)
Cleomedon (116)	Nausicles (59)
Conon (88, 93, 108, 121, 147)	Nicocles (65, 78, 144)
Ctesippus (33)	Nicophemus (96)
Callaeschrus (71)	Nicippus (111)
Eubulus (22, 73, 72, 119, 147)	Pasion (107)
Euctemon (100)	Timolaus (129)
Hieronimus (112)	Xenopeithes (29)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, s.v. 'alienus (2)'.

⁶⁶ 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori' or τεθναμέναι γὰρ καλὸν ἐνὶ προμάχοισι πεσόντα (Tyrtaeus 10.1 West); another commonplace.

⁶⁷ Tudeer 72 ff., 81 ff., 88 ff., 99 ff.

⁶⁸ N. A. Doenges, *The Letters of Themistocles* (New York 1981) 64.

⁶⁹ H.-U. Gösswein, *Die Briefe des Euripides* (Meisenheim am Glan 1975) 24.

Plato may give:

Adimantus (45)
Dropides (88, 108)

Gorgias (37)
Herodicus (13)

Famous Spartan names, needing no other authority, include:

Agesilaus (132, 145)
Cleombrotus (116, 136)
Demaratus (76)

Leonidas (53)
Lysander (138)

There are certainly artists, sculptors and poets:

Euenus (70)
Lysicles (123)
Polygnotus (35)

Teleclides (66)
Zeuxippus (6)

Attested in other evidence for the Phalaris saga are Perilaus and Stesichorus, Abaris and Pythagoras; we may add Alcander (despite his Homeric homonym), if the correspondent is the same as the ἐπιεικὴς ἀνὴρ said to have come to power on Phalaris' fall.⁷⁰ It seems that, at least in the giving of names, the writers of the letters gave themselves a free hand, and made no claim to historical accuracy.

VIII

There are clearly some letters—a famous one is Letter 72, where Phalaris pardons the conspirators' wives who are so loyal to their husbands—in which the writer seems to make the point that Phalaris is not simply a savage ogre, but a powerful ruler capable of nobility of mind or at least fits of clemency. On the hypothesis that the letters are by various hands and of various periods, it is not surprising that there should be this sort of difference of tone. The educational motives of the writers will have varied, some attempting merely to display the ἥθος of a tyrant, others to give type letters as models for real correspondence, others again using the framework of the story to turn Phalaris into an acceptable heroic figure. Indeed, we cannot altogether neglect the parallels between Phalaris and the heroes of the epic. He is a figure of the remote past, a fighter, capricious, deeply aware of the necessity that drives him and will one day destroy him. It is tempting to see here one of these continuities which link the earlier phases of Greek literature with the later: a continuity based on a love of grand language, a longing for a splendid past and a fascination with the ambivalent character of the powerful, unpredictable and unhappy leader. It was this epic grandeur, combined with the humaner traits that appear from time to time, that doubtless attracted Byzantine and Renaissance readers. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many read *Phalaris* as offering something like a mirror of princes. Hence his popularity; hence over thirty editions of a Latin translation before 1500. Hence too the praise of the translator, in his letter to Domenico Malatesta Novello, the founder of the Biblioteca Malatestiana in Cesena:

Invenies in Phalaride nullum simulationis argumentum. Invenies maximi animi virum qui neminem formidat, neminem ad gratiam adloquitur . . . Vis in deos, in patriam pietatis exemplum, habes Phalarim . . . Vis studiorum musarumque amatorem, Phalarim intueri, qui Stesichorum poetam inimicissimum captum a se musarum reverentia servaverit. Vis liberalitatem, quem Phalaridi praepones?

Hence the derivative enthusiasm of Sir William Temple, that so moved Bentley to wrath:

Such diversity of passions upon such variety of actions and passages of life and government, such freedom of thought, such boldness of expression, such bounty to his friends, such scorn of his

⁷⁰ Aristotle *fr.* 611.69 Rose.

⁷¹ *Cf.* Tudeer p. 117.

enemies, such honour of learned men, such esteem of good, such knowledge of life, such contempt of death, with such fierceness of nature and cruelty of revenge, could never be represented but by him that possessed them.⁷²

Nonsense, of course, so far as the question of authorship is concerned. But suggestive enough to make one want to unravel the tangled problems of this strange piece of rhetorical and moral fiction, and ask how it was that the old ogre became something like an epic hero in the late imperial schools.⁷³

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⁷² W. Temple, *Essays* i, 166 (ed. 1720).

⁷³ Serena Bianchetti, *Falaride e Pseudofalaride: Storia e leggenda* (Rome 1987) appeared too late for me to use. It

is a valuable survey of the historical background and gives a sober view of many of the problems of the Letters.