Aeolic Reflexes of Labiovelars in Homer

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One of the linguistic features diagnostic of the Aeolic dialects is the development of the inherited labiovelar consonants to labials, even in environments in which a dental is the result elsewhere. Thus all Aeolic dialects have πέμπε for πέντε ‘five’ (< *penke) and πέκτο – πέκτ – for πεκτο – πεκτ – ‘four’ (< *pektw). There are in the Homeric poems a few words containing π β φ from labiovelar consonants before ε/ι in accordance with the Aeolic rule and counter to the Ionic, which would produce τ δ θ. Since the normal dialectal shape of the epic is Ionic, these words have constituted a problem: how can words displaying a non-Ionic linguistic form appear in an (essentially) Ionic poem? The most popular and well-known response to this question has been that the poems, though in their final shape predominantly Ionic, had passed through an Aeolic phase of composition prior to the attested Ionic phase. The words showing π β φ for τ δ θ constitute evidence for the assumed Aeolic stage: because there were no Ionic equivalents at hand to replace the Aeolic words, they remained in their original form. The theory of an Aeolic epic does not rest solely on the aberrant behavior of labiovelar consonants in a few words, but I think it is fair to state that it derives a

1 M. Lejeune, Phonétique historique du mycéen et du grec ancien (Paris 1972) 43–53, esp. 47–50. O. J. L. Szemerényi, SMEA 1 (1966) 29–52, has argued that the labial outcome in Aeolic dialects is due not to regular phonetic change but rather to analogical influences of one sort or another. His view, though skillfully argued, has not found wide acceptance (cf. R. Arena, SMEA 8 [1969] 7–27). For our purposes it matters little how the Aeolic forms arose, for their presence in an essentially Ionic poem still requires explanation, regardless of their (phonological or analogical) development. All references to Szemerényi in this article are to SMEA 1.

2 P. Chantraine, Grammaire homérique 1 (Paris 1959) 113–15 [hereafter, Chantraine].

3 It is not always clear what “Aeolic phase of composition” is intended to mean in the writings of various scholars. There seem to be three possible interpretations of the phrase: (1) The Homeric poems are translations into Ionic of poems originally composed in Aeolic: this is the view of A. Fick (Die homerische Odyssee in der ursprünglichen Sprachform wiederhergestellt [Göttingen 1883]) 12–13, and is no longer accepted as is by anyone. (2) The Ionic epic tradition is a transposition into Ionic of an originally Aeolic epic tradition. Many have held
good deal of its support from these words. It is well to point out, though, that only five words are in question, and that the majority of them are of restricted occurrence: πέλομαι ‘become, be’ (65×), πίσυρες·acet ‘four’ (6×), πελωρ- ‘portentous, ominous’ (33×), Φηρες ‘Centaurs’ (2×), βέρεθρον ‘deep hole’ (?) (2×).

Not all scholars have agreed that these words constitute evidence for an Aeolic stage in the history of Homeric epic. K. Strunk (Die sogenannten Äolismen der homerischen Sprache [Köln 1957] 20–37) endeavored to show that the forms in question need not be specifically Aeolic, since both Aeolic and other dialects show inconsistencies in the handling of labiovelar consonants. His arguments, however, are themselves inconsistent both with the attested facts and with linguistic method, as has been pointed out by O. J. L. Szemerenyi (JHS 79 [1959] 192–93) and, at greater length, by E. Hamp (Glotta 38 [1960] 194–98). Szemerenyi has more recently (SMEA 1 [1966] 31–35) returned to the question and has himself argued that the alleged Homeric instances do not support the theory of an Aeolic stage in the development of Homeric epic. He concludes that all the words in question are susceptible of another, better, explanation. His conclusion is, I believe, correct, but his arguments have not carried general conviction, so that Wathelet (pp.63–91) and Durante (pp.17–62) retain the traditional view. In what follows I shall endeavor to support Szemerenyi’s position with other arguments, in hope of being able to win for it wider acceptance. Before proceeding, however, I would point out, as Chantraine (I 115, 509) and Hamp (op.cit. 198) have done, that all these words are definitely ‘epic’ and have a special flavor or color of their
own. They are not words which would appear in everyday discourse but are on a higher stylistic and emotional level.

Our first task is to show that these words cannot have been derived in a direct line from an Aeolic epic later translated or transposed into Ionic. Those who favor an Aeolic stage in epic composition usually maintain that, when the Aeolic epic was adopted in Ionia, all metrically equivalent words were replaced by their Ionic counterparts: the only words to retain their Aeolic form were those which either were metrically different from their Ionic counterparts or had no Ionic counterpart. Since by this view Aeolic forms cannot have been created by Ionic poets, they must have been preserved intact in old formulas (from which they can have subsequently spread) and have been handed down over the years from bard to bard. As it happens, the word τέλεων 'headland' in the formula τέλεων ἀροῦρης (Iliad 13.707, 18.544, modified in 18.547) both (probably) contains an initial labiovelar (cf. Frisk II 873) and does not occur in Ionic, thus fulfilling the conditions for the preservation of an Aeolic form. In accordance with the theory of an Aeolic epic this word should have been preserved as *πτέλεων. Since we find τέλεων, the traditional view cannot be correct. Furthermore, the word περιτέλελομαι (etymology: Frisk II 869) in the traditional phrase περιτέλελομένους ἐνιαυτοὺς (II. 8.404, 418) was not retained as *περιπτέλελομαι, in spite of the fact that it does not occur in Ionic and in spite of the fact, too, that a labial derivative (περιπτλαμένους ἐνιαυτοὺς II. 23.833) existed in the poems to protect the π- from Ionic corruption. These two words prove that the regular epic development of labiovelar before /e/ was τ-, regardless of whether the word existed in Ionic. Forms with τ- are secondary, not original. The question now facing us is, of course, from what source did the π- forms enter the epic tradition, and why?

πέλομαι 'become, be' (Frisk II 500–01) for expected τέλομαι (Frisk II 870–71) has beside it the aorist ἐπλόμην, and it seems certain that Szemerényi (34) is at least partly correct in holding that the consonantism of the aorist has influenced that of the present. Reducing
all forms of a stem to one single shape is a frequent linguistic occurrence, and where there is a labial-dental conflict in Greek, it does in fact seem that the labial outcome triumphs: cf. λείπω, λείπει (for *λείτει); and ἐπομαι, ἐπέται (for *ἐπεται), though the instance of θείω: ἐπέφην (<_ghw'en- : _ghw'n-, cf. Frisk I 657–58) should caution us against assuming that all such irregular paradigms are leveled in favor of the labial, especially when different aspect stems are involved. Szemerényi apparently assumes that an earlier *τελομαί : ἐπλετό was analogically leveled in favor of πέλομαι : ἐπλετό within the Ionic dialect or within the history of epic. He is perhaps correct in this, but the facts that θείω did not pass to *θείω, τέλλομαι did not pass to *τέλλομαι, and that neither *τέλομαι nor πέλομαι occurs in Ionic, encourage us to look in another direction, while at the same time maintaining the essence of Szemerényi’s explanation. If *kWelomai (in its two root shapes *kWel- and *kWel-) had been part of the epic tradition prior to the elimination of the labiovelars, it must of necessity have appeared at one time as *τέλομαι : ἐπλάμην; it is not likely that ἐπλάμην alone was inherited and that πέλομαι was a new, purely epic creation formed by analogy. One wonders, then, what motive there can have been for the Homeric poets to remodel *τέλομαι, the more so since (περί)τέλλομαι was not remodeled to *(περί)πέλομαι.

We can cite as a possible motive the fact that πέλομαι was unknown in Ionic, was supported by no analogies, and was therefore isolated in epic. Its isolation cannot be the sole reason for its reshaping, however, for the remodeling of an attested word on the basis of its aorist is a far from obvious solution, one resorted to only when communication is likely to be seriously impaired or when the effort required to remember the correct form exceeds the amount of informational yield. Both of these factors may have played a role in the reshaping of *τέλομαι, but it seems to me that there is another factor which accounts both for the reshaping and for the Aeolic appearance of the word. πέλομαι is not an epic word only, for it occurs frequently also in

7 Forms of τέλομαι occur in some Doric dialects: Cyrene τένα (SEG IX 3.38, 72.18, 86: this latter inscription is Buck no.115=C. D. Buck, The Greek Dialects [Chicago 1955]): on this form cf. Szemerényi, Syncope in Greek and Indo-European and the Nature of the Indo-European Accent (Quaderni Napoli 3, 1964) 165–67; Dreher τελομαι ICr I.ix 1.46, 63; συνθλεκα 1.69–70 (=Buck no.120). Hierapytna τελομαι ICr III.iii 4.68.

8 In the case of this latter word we can posit that the common ἀνεῖλλω 'rise' (of any heavenly body) preserved περίτελλομαι from analogical change. Such is, however, not necessary: the form remained because there was no reason to change it.
the poems of Sappho (50.1, 81(b)3, 79.5, 94.26 L-P) and Alcaeus (E2.6, Z37.2, Z50 L-P) in the same meanings that it has in epic. In the Aeolic poets it does not give the appearance of being a peculiarly poetic word, and it thus stands a good chance of being relatively colloquial. It is most natural to assume, then, that epic poets borrowed the shape πέλομαι from Lesbian Aeolic. In so doing they will have both regularized the paradigm, thus rendering it more clear, and will have incorporated an easily comprehensible word for one that could have caused difficulties in comprehension. They may, indeed, have felt that πέλομαι was the 'correct' epic form and τέλομαι some sort of mistake in the tradition. πέλομαι, though a Lesbian form and hence an Aeolism, represents a surface Aeolism in the poems—an Aeolism, that is, which replaces a form nonexistent in Ionic with an existent (though not Ionic) word. It is doubtful, however, that the poets thought in terms of Ionic and Aeolic dialects, or even of Ionic and Lesbian or local and foreign. Rather they probably thought in terms of existent and nonexistent words.

The same explanation does not work so neatly in the case of πέκυρος 'four' (πέκυρος Od. 5.70, 16.249, πέκυρος ll. 15.680, 23.171, 24.233, Od. 22.111). Indeed this word constitutes a problem both for those who posit an Aeolic epic and for those who do not. The form occurs as such only in Homer, appears in no Aeolic dialect, and therefore cannot without further argument be labeled Aeolic. All the Aeolic dialects agree in showing an e-vowel in the first syllable, and all show -ss-(-tt-); πέκυρος cannot have entered the epic tradition from a living Aeolic source. There the matter may rest so far as the theory of an Aeolic epic is concerned. There is, however, the further problem that πέκυρος cannot be Ionic either, since Ionic always has τεκκ- and never has a u-vowel. It must therefore be a compromise form, and must replace an earlier form of identical metrical but different phonological shape. Szemerényi (34) holds that πέκυρος is an approximation to

* Πέκυρος has been frequently assumed as an Aeolic (Lesbian) form on the basis of ΥΡΕΣΚΑΙΔΕΚΟΣ (IG XII 282.3), which occurs in a clear numerical sequence. The restoration Πέκυρος looks convincing in the editor's transcription into standard Greek letters, but his representation of what actually appeared on the original reveals that the left hand margin is not even. One can then restore either ΠΕΣ or ΠΕΣΣ, but given the unanimous testimony of the other Aeolic dialects in showing τεκκ- and Hesychius' πέκυρος, it seems all but certain that τεκκ- is to be restored here. Balbilla (O. Hoffmann, Die griechischen Dialekte II (Göttingen 1893) no.177.6 p.128) has πέκυρος, and this is to my knowledge the only evidence for -c- in any Aeolic dialect (unless the Homeric form be included).
neighboring Lesbian of an earlier (regular Ionic) *τευπακ or *τικυπακ, the Ionic development of the accusative *κουτόμενος. He is surely correct in his assumption of an approximation to Aeolic, and his *κουτόμενος, amply supported from the Indo-European point of view (cf. Skt. *caturāḥ, accusative plural masculine), economically accounts for the presumed early Ionic form. The only objection to his view is that nowhere else in Greek is any development of a form *κουτόμενος attested. Hence I would set beside—not against—his explanation the possibility that πικυπακ is an accommodation to Aeolic either of τέτορεκ or of an Ionic phonological development of it, e.g. *τευπακ or *τικυπακ (< *τικυπακ < *τικυτοκοκ). τέτορεκ is required for Greek, since the West Greek dialects have it, and for epic, since Hesiod has τέτορ(α) (Er 698). The operative consideration is not, however, what the replaced form was, for we shall probably never know. What is important is that πικυπακ is, as Szemerényi holds, an approximation by an Ionic poet to a (presumed) Aeolic word. We must posit an early epic form of 'four', the first two syllables of which were short, and which probably derived either from *τευτορεκ or *τευπακ. Why the epic poets replaced their own unclear form with what must have been the equally unclear πικυπακ is nonetheless a mystery, a mystery for which I have no convincing solution. The best I can do is to suggest that Ionic epic poets found themselves singing a nonexistent word to which there corresponded in neighboring Lesbos a near phonological and metrical equivalent. Feeling that the Lesbian form, though not an exact metrical equivalent, was nonetheless likely to be closer to the old epic form than the form they had learned, they adopted it.  

πέλωρ- seems also to have been borrowed from an Aeolic source, this time Thessaly. Szemerényi (32-33) has a different solution, one that seems less satisfactory. He is inclined to deny (1) that πέλωρ- and πέλωρ- are the same word and (2) that πέλωρ is connected with τέρας 'ominous sign' (< *κουτόμενος, cf. Frisk II 878): he holds that πέλωρ "can be


11 It is interesting that in most instances Homer provides contextual evidence to show that πικυπακ means 'four', or at least that a number is involved: (1) the number four is inevitable (Od. 22.111). Here πικυπακ occurs in the previous line, and there are only four people to be equipped with armor. (2) The number four is implied, though not inevitable. At IL 15.680β reference is made to a team of horses, probably four (Leaf ad 15.683): that teams of four horses were known in the Homeric heroic world is clear from 11.699-700 and 8.185 (cf. Leaf ad loc.). For the yoking of four horses in the Homeric poems cf. J. Wiesner,
suspected of 'Eastern' provenience.' One cannot argue this last point, though it seems reasonable enough, but the first two are not likely to be correct. All the evidence we have points to the correctness of the equation πελώρ = τέλωρ Hesychius has the two glosses τέλωρ· πελώριος, μακρόν, μέγα; τελώριος· μέγας, πελώριος. Though it is true that we cannot know the basis on which Hesychius excerpted these words, we must admit that he or his sources were in a better position than we are to judge the correctness of a semantic equation between rare and poetic words. It is not enough to say that Hesychius may have been misled. The other bit of evidence, cited also by Szemerényi, is a second-century inscription from Egypt, the first line of which reads:12

ετήθι λάον κατανύπα τελώριον έν τριόδοις

To be sure, the poem is queer, full of peculiar expressions, and the first line, with its λάον for λάον, is difficult and scarcely Greek.13 This fact does not, however, affect the equation πελώριος = τελώριος. In fact this poem provides good evidence that, at least in second-century Egypt, τελώριος, known from whatever source, was equated with πελώριος. Szemerényi points out that τελώριος here cannot mean 'immense, gigantic'. He is surely correct, but again this point scarcely affects the issue, since it seems quite likely that the poet of this more or less mystical and religious poem (about the death of a sacred snake) was recalling Odyssey 11.594:

λάον βαστάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφιτέρχου

descriptive of Sisyphus' attempts to roll a rock up a hill. All the evidence we have, such as it is, points clearly to the identification of τελώριος and πελώριος.14

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12 W. Peek, Griechische Vers-Inschriften I (Berlin 1955) 1313.
13 One will compare for the form and scansion of λάον the equally peculiar scansion of ναόν 'temple' as an iamb in Cretan inscriptions, e.g. ICr I xxiii.3.9, 11–12 (Phaistos), xvi.24.2 (Lato), xvn.21.2 (Lebena).
14 The only bit of evidence that might suggest that the π- of πελώρ is original and not from...
Szemerenyi glosses πέλωρ as 'giant' and hence denies connection with τέρας. His gloss is, however, incorrect. Hesychius glosses πέλωρα as θηρία, δείματα, τέρατα, σημεία μεγάλα, and comes much closer to the truth. πέλωρ- in Homer does frequently enough refer to things that are large or huge, but the primary Homeric meaning of the word is 'ominous, portentous', not 'huge'. It refers to people, things and situations which one hopes one will never encounter, and is therefore admirably suited for etymological connection with τέρας, as in the Hesychian gloss. There are two passages in the Homeric poems in which πελωρ- and τέρας are closely connected:

Il. 5.741 ἐν δὲ τε Γοργηνη τε, δεινοῦ πελώρου
742 δεινη τε εμερδή τε, Διός τέρας αιγάλιοι
Od. 15.161 αιετός δάργην χόμα φέρων ὀνύχεσι πελώρου
168 ἤ νῶιν τόδ' ἐφηνε θεὸς τέρας ἢ εοι σανθυ

In neither case is the equation πελώρ-= τέρας assured, for 5.742 is more likely to have referred originally to the aegis described than to the

a labiovelar is the Pamphylian personal name (in the genitive) πελώραυ (E. Schwyzer, Dialectorum graecarum exempla epigraphica potiora [Leipzig 1923] 686a5b). This name, however, is more likely to be connected with Apollo, with the loss of α- common in Pamphylian. Cf. A. Thumb, Handbuch der griechischen Dialekte, rev. A. Scherer, II (Heidelberg 1959) 179.

16 The identification of πελωρ- and τέρας goes back to H. Osthoff, ArchW 8 (1905) 51-68, particularly 51-54. And the definition of πέλωρ- as 'ominous, portentous' is amply supported by the text of Homer. He uses πελωρ-

(1) of portent scenes. In addition to the passages cited in the text the word is used also in the description of the portents at Aulis at Il. 2.321. 'Huge' in general seems inappropriate.

(2) of otherworldly and frightening persons and events. In all these cases something supernatural and possibly threatening is involved.


(3) Only when used of mortals and inanimate objects is the notion 'huge' possible. In most cases, however, the accessory notion of 'portentous, ominous' is present and even prominent.

(a) Agamemnon (Il. 3.166): Priam asks Helen to name the man who, not so big as others, is nonetheless more γεφαρων 'majestic' than the rest. Ajax: Helen identifies Ajax for Priam (3.229); is compared to Ares (7.211); at 17.174 Hector refers to Ajax in response to Glaukos who had chided him with cowardice; at 17.360 Ajax protects the corpse of Patroklos. Achilles: 21.527 describes Priam's watching Achilles rage over the battlefield; 22.92 Hector awaits Achilles (and death). Hector: at 11.820 Hector is irresistible. Periphas (5.842, 847), an Aetolian, killed by Ares just before Ares himself is wounded by Diomedes.

(b) ἄγγελος Il. 5.594 of Ares attacking. κόματα: sent by Zeus (Od. 3.290). κύματα: Il. 10.439 the weapons of Rhesus are like those of the immortals; 18.83 the weapons of Achilles which had been given to Peleus on his wedding day.
Gorgon's head of the previous line; \(^1\) and 15.168 probably refers both to the eagle and the goose of 161 and not the goose alone. Nonetheless there is a connection, if not of grammatical agreement, at least of proximity. Once, however, τέρας is used unequivocally in apposition with a noun which is earlier described as πέλωρος:

II. 12.201 αἰετός ψυπετής, ἐπ' ἄριστερὰ λαῶν ἔφρων,
202 φοινήντα δρᾶκοντα φέρων ἄνυχεςι πέλωρον.
208 Τρῖν ὑ' ἱππίνητα, ὅπως ίδον αἰόλον ὁφων
209 κείμενων εν μέσσοις, Διὸς τέρας αἰγιόχοιο.

The semantic connection between πέλωρ- and τέρας is thus clear, and an etymological connection is by no means excluded. Whether or not the words are of Indo-European origin is a separate question. If they are related, they must be descended from a root *kwer-.

We are thus left with two options: either we know nothing of the origin of πέλωρ-, or it shows a labial development of an old labiovelar. The former is a course of despair, and it is perhaps best to attempt to account for the latter. πέλωρ- occurred in various areas of the Greek world, as is proved by the Hesychius glosses and the Egyptian epigram, and it can be presumed to have occurred at one time in early Ionic. It seems not to have occurred in the Ionic of Homer's day, for no such form is attested in any extant document. An earlier epic *k woes- must of necessity have developed to *πελωρ-, and because it is not attested in Ionic, it must have been isolated in epic and perhaps subject to misunderstanding. We must assume that the epic poets learned of a πέλωρ- synonymous with their isolated *πελωρ- and adopted it for epic.

We cannot of course know whence Homer or his predecessors borrowed the Aeolic form of the word: it may also have been current in Lesbian Aeolic, but we have no evidence from any source to indicate that it was. We do, however, have evidence for Aeolic provenience of the root, though not perhaps in its Homeric meanings.

\(^1\) The Gorgon's head in this passage is notoriously a late feature, possibly seventh century. Cf. Leaf ad loc.; H. L. Lorimer, Homer and the Monuments 190 (London 1950); G. S. Kirk, The Songs of Homer (Cambridge 1962) 186; M. L. West, Theogony (Oxford 1966) 46 n.2. The passage, prior to its elaboration, will have contained only lines 738 and 742 (modified for grammatical agreement):

738 ἄμφι δ' ἄρ' ὄμουσιν βάλετ' αἰγίδα τις κανές
742 δεινὴν τε εμπερὶ τε, Διὸς τέρας αἰγιόχοι.

For a similar expansion of a passage cf. Ζία Αντίκα 21 (1971) 55-64.
Baton of Sinope (FGrHist 268 f 5) refers to a Thessalian festival, the Πελώρια, dedicated to Zeus Πελώρ, which he says is similar to the Roman Saturnalia and was celebrated in his own day. It is true that F. Jacoby in commenting on the passage (FGrHist IIIA Comm. pp.208-211) is strongly inclined to deny any sort of authority to Baton’s account. He may be correct in his main contention, but he has not provided any reason why Baton should have come up with the epithet Πελώρ. It seems most reasonable to assume that Baton was correct in assigning the epithet to Thessaly and that the epic poets knew of the words πελώρ from a Thessalian source and replaced their own difficult στερεωρ- with an actually occurring form.

Φηρές ‘Centaurs’ (ll. 1.268, 2.743) also stems from a Thessalian source. The word quite clearly belongs amongst the sure Aeolisms in the Homeric poems, is the Aeolic development of earlier *γκωρές (Frisk I 671–72), and is the counterpart of Ionic *Θηρές. Szemerényi (34) hesitantly suggests that Φηρές may be a borrowed word, like Κένταυροι, but this suggestion is unlikely to be correct (Arena, SMEA 8 [1969] 9–11): it is most natural, though not inevitable, to retain the traditional connection. How, then, did Φηρές make their way into the Homeric poems? Szemerényi (34–35) maintains that “it is quite possible that the story of the φηρές, first sung by local bards in Thessaly, was received into the mainstream of epic poetry, naturally with the local form of the name.” He is quite possibly correct, but he is forced on this explanation to assume a Thessalian (epic?) poetic tradition for which we have no other evidence. It is rather more likely that Homer (or one of his predecessors) had from the tradition the phonologically correct *Θηρές, which corresponded to nothing in Ionic if referred to human(oid)s and which could not refer to animals in the passages in question. Both Sappho (φηρ[ 19.2 L-P) and Alcaeus (φηρα 01(b)3 L-P) have φηρ, but in neither case does the context indicate that the word refers to Centaurs. We cannot rule out the possibility—even the likelihood—that Φηρές= ‘Centaurs’ was known on Lesbos and adopted by the Homeric poets from Lesbian. Since the word is striking and has elicited comment by both ancient and modern scholars (cf. Leaf ad ll. 1.268), it is rather more likely that it is a γλωττα in Homer.18 Somehow the epic poets—and we must not

17 The Thessalian connection of the term is further strengthened by the notice in Schol. T to ll. 16.176 that the giant Πελώρ was killed by Poseidon in the Spercheius river.

18 So, from a different point of view, K. Witte, Glotta 5 (1914) 48 n2.
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imagine that they were isolated from contacts with the mainland—
learned that to the difficult *Θηρες of epic there corresponded the
Thessalian form Φηρες, a word which referred to the equally Thes­
salian Centaurs. Hence, since there was no metrical cost and great
poetic gain, they substituted the ‘correct’ Φηρες for the incompre­
hensible *Θηρες. Φηρες is an Aeolism but a secondary one, and
Szemerényi (34) is correct in maintaining that Φηρες “does not guaran­
tee an Aeolic stratum.” The most that it can do is guarantee an aware­
ness on the part of the Homeric poets of words and names current
elsewhere in the Greek world.19

Szemerényi (33) has said what needs to be said about βερέθρον ‘deep
hole (?): there is no linguistic reason to consider it an Aeolism. There
is, however, perhaps a thematic reason for considering it a borrowing
from Aeolic or an adaptation to Aeolic of an earlier Ionic form
(*δέρεθρον? cf. Frisk I 219). The word occurs twice in the poems. At
Iliad 8.13–14 Zeus threatens any god who aids either the Greeks or the
Trojans:

\[τῇ μεν ἔλων ῥύσω εἰς Τάρταρον ἱερόεντα
tήλε μᾶλ', ἧξι βάβιστον ὑπὸ χθόνος ἐκτι βέρεθρον.\]

And at Odyssey 12.93–94 the Scylla is described:

\[μέση γε μὲν τε κατὰ σπέιοις κοῖλοιο δέδυκεν
ἐξε δ' ἔξεσε κεφαλὰς δεινοῦ βερέθρον.\]

In both cases mythical and terrifying places are described, and
βέρεθρον thus falls into the same category as πελώρια and Φηρες. We
might therefore be tempted to label βέρεθρον Aeolic, if by that term
we intend remote and frightening things. I can, however, point to no
Aeolic source for the word in Homer and therefore adopt Szemerényi’s
solution.

19 The battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs is referred to also at Od. 21.295–304 but without
mention of Φηρες. In that passage, however, the word φηρψ occurs twice (φέναι 297, φρείν 301), and it is possible that Homer used this word because he had made an etymological
connection between φηρψ and φηρ. Πειρόμος also makes his appearance twice in the same
passage (296, 298), as well as at ll. 1.263, a passage in which Φηρες also appear (268). All this
suggests both that Homer was thinking of the word Φηρες in the Odyssey passage as well,
and that he connected Πειρόμος and Φηρες etymologically (cf. my Metrical Lengthening in
Homer [Incunabula Graeca 35, Rome 1969] 199–200) and that he felt that φηρψ was related to
both.

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Thus we see that forms in Homer displaying the Aeolic development of the labiovelar must be secondary and cannot in any way support the assumption of an Aeolic stage of epic composition. I have also suggested motives which might have induced the Homeric poets to replace the inherited Ionic forms of certain words with Aeolic forms. These motives may seem insufficient, and I add here further general considerations which contributed to the poets’ willingness to include Aeolic words and forms. First of all, Aeolic, at least in the Lesbian variety, was spoken nearby and was known to Homer and his hearers. Secondly, some of the heroes, Achilles included, lived in areas in which, during the archaic period, an Aeolic dialect was spoken, and some of the action reported in the Iliad was situated near Lesbos. Furthermore, Lesbian was spoken in roughly the same area in which Troy was located. In addition to these thematic reasons there were also linguistic: many archaïsms of Homeric epic—such as ἅκε for ἄν, apocope of prepositions, -οιο of the genitive singular masculine—actually occurred in contemporary Aeolic dialects, particularly Thessalian. This sharing of archaïsms with Aeolic dialects called forth in the mind of the Homeric poets the equation of archaïsms with Aeolic forms generally. Thus, in cases—such as those discussed in this paper—in which an archaic Ionic form was (a) no longer present in Ionic, and (b) had a metrically equivalent Aeolic form, the poets adopted the Aeolic form on the grounds that in so doing they were ‘correcting’ the epic tradition.  

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April, 1975

I hope to develop this notion in greater detail elsewhere. For the moment, cf. my “Homer’s Linguistic Ancestors,” Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ετερυκτ'ils 14 (1975) 133–47.