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# SOPHOCLES THE *KŌMŌIDOUMENOS*: TWO FORGOTTEN COMIC FRAGMENTS*

In his biography of Polemon, head of the Academy from 313 to 269, Diogenes Laertius comments on Polemon's fondness for Sophocles after detailing Polemon's relationship with his predecessor, Xenocrates (4.19–20):

ἐῴκει δὴ ὁ Πολέμων κατὰ πάντα ἐζηλωκέναι τὸν Ξενοκράτην· καὶ ἐρασθῆναι αὐτοῦ φησιν Ἀρίστιππος ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ Περὶ παλαιᾶς τρυφῆς. ἀεὶ γοῦν ἐμέμνητο ὁ Πολέμων αὐτοῦ, τήν τ' ἀκακίαν καὶ τὸν αὐχμὸν ἐνεδέδυτο τἀνδρὸς καὶ τὸ βάρος οἱονεὶ Δώριός τις οἰκονομία. ἦν δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφοκλῆς, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν ἐκείνοις ὅπου κατὰ τὸν κωμικὸν τὰ ποιήματα αὐτῷ
κύων τις ἐδόκει συμποιεῖν Μολοττικός,
καὶ ἔνθα ἦν κατὰ τὸν Φρύνιχον
οὐ γλύξις οὐδ' ὑπόχυτος, ἀλλὰ Πράμνιος.
ἔλεγεν οὖν τὸν μὲν Ὅμηρον ἐπικὸν εἶναι Σοφοκλέα, τὸν δὲ Σοφοκλέα Ὅμηρον τραγικόν.

It would seem that Polemon imitated Xenocrates in all respects. In the fourth book of *On the Luxury of the Ancients,* Aristippos says that he loved him. Certainly Polemon kept him in mind and, like him, wore that simple, dry dignity that is proper of the Dorian mode. He also loved Sophocles, particularly in those passages where it seemed as if, in the words of the comic poet, 'a Molossian dog co-authored' plays with him and where the poet was, in the words of Phrynichus, 'neither bland nor doctored but Pramnian'. Thus he would call Homer the epic Sophocles and Sophocles the tragic Homer.

The main source of Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Polemon* is Antigonus of Carystus, who was active in Athens and (apparently) Pergamon around the mid third century.[1] In addition to being generally considered a reliable author, Antigonus is also chronologically close to Polemon's lifetime. He is also the source of Philodemus' *History of Philosophers*, a work preserved by two important papyri from Herculaneum. Philodemus, too, mentions Polemon's admiration for Sophocles, although he gives a shorter version than Diogenes Laertius: λέγεται δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφοκλῆς γενέσθαι καὶ μά || λιστα τὸ ΠΑ[.]Α[…….] | τῆς φωνῆς καὶ παρα[….] ἀποδέχεσθαι. In Dorandi's translation, Philodemus records that 'si dice che [Polemone] fu ammiratore

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[1] Although Antigonus is cited only once (Diog. Laert. 4.17), he is to be considered Diogenes' main source. See T. Dorandi, 'Il quarto libro delle 'Vite' di Diogene Laerzio: l'Accademia da Speusippo a Clitomaco', *ANRW* 2.36.5 (1992), 3761–92, at 3770.

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di Sofocle e soprattutto ne apprezzò l'audacia (del suono della lingua) e ciò che suonava duro'.[2]

Polemon's definitions of Homer as the epic Sophocles and Sophocles as the tragic Homer are famous ones. Repeated by later sources, they belong to the rich tradition that associates these two authors and their works.[3] In his magisterial edition of Sophocles' testimonia and fragments, Radt divided Diogenes Laertius' passage into two testimonia, which he placed under the headings 'Sophocles Ὁμηρικός' and the non-descriptive 'Cetera' respectively. These editorial decisions are probably the main reason why the two comic fragments embedded in this passage, which are atypically critical of Sophocles, have been largely forgotten in scholarly discussions of both Sophocles and Old Comedy.[4] My intention is to examine both fragments and to place them within the reception of Sophocles and his plays, in Classical Athens and beyond. There has been much scholarly interest in comedy's engagement with tragedy in its twin aspects, paratragedy and parody.[5] As recent works have demonstrated, neither trend was distinctively Aristophanic: Cratinus, Strattis and a host of other contemporary poets freely drew from tragedy, incorporating it into their own plays.[6] Comedy both engaged with the content of tragedies and picked on their authors and performers. Whether targeted for their artistic skills or personal defects, individuals connected with tragedy became popular *kōmōidoumenoi*. They form an entire category of *kōmōidoumenoi*, 'the idols of the theatre', which is squarely dominated by Euripides.[7] The lack of such comic material for Sophocles has justifiably led to the suspicion that he 'was somehow a special case, immune from mockery just as he was resistant to criticism'.[8] The two fragments preserved by Diogenes Laertius help correct the current view on Sophocles' treatment in

[2] Philodemus, *History of Philosophers*, XIV.46-XV.1. Greek text and Italian translation are from T. Dorandi, *Filodemo. Storia dei filosofi* (Naples, 1991). Gaiser integrates τὸ πα[ρ]α[κινδυνευθὲν] | τῆς φωνῆς καὶ παρά[φωνον] | ἀποδέχεσθαι on the basis of Diog. Laert. 4.20 and *P.Herc.* 164, fr. 30. See Dorandi (this note), 237.

[3] *Suda* π 1887; see also the corrupted passage from the *Life* (20) cited below (Soph. *TrGF* T 115b; 1.86–7 R.).

[4] Soph. *TrGF* T 115a, 144 R. To my knowledge, these two fragments are (briefly) mentioned only in the following scholarly discussions of Greek drama: C. Mauduit, 'Sophocle, l'abeille et le miel', in A. Billault and C. Mauduit (edd.), *Lectures antiques de la tragédie grecque* (Paris, 2001), 27–42, at 37; E.L. Bowie, 'Wine in Old Comedy', in O. Murray and M. Teçusan (edd.), *In vino veritas* (Rome, 1995), 113–25, at 121; A.H. Sommerstein, 'Old Comedians on Old Comedy', in B. Zimmermann (ed.), *Antike Dramentheorien und ihre Rezeption* (Stuttgart, 1992), 14–33, at 26 n. 75. By contrast, they are regularly mentioned in scholarly works on Polemon and the Academy in general; see most fully M. Gigante, 'Poesia e critica letteraria nell'Accademia antica', *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in memoria di A. Rostagni* (Turin, 1963), 234–48, at 241.

[5] P. Rau, *Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes* (Munich, 1967) remains the invaluable starting point. For the distinction between paratragedy (generic use of tragedy) and parody (distortion of a specific model), see M.S. Silk, 'Aristophanic paratragedy', in A.H. Sommerstein et al. (edd.), *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis* (Bari, 1993), 477–504.

[6] See E. Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy* (Oxford, 2010), esp. ch. 3 for Cratinus; S. Miles, 'Strattis, tragedy, and comedy' (Ph.D. Diss., Nottingham, 2009) for Strattis, with a survey of the development of paratragedy in the works of other fifth-century comic poets (ch. 2). On the role of comedy in the development of literary criticism, see M. Wright, *The Comedian as Critic* (London, 2012).

[7] A.H. Sommerstein, 'How to avoid being a *komodoumenos*', *CQ* 46 (1996), 327–56, at 329–30, 348-9. Comic references to tragic poets later found their way into the tragedians' biographies; see M.R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore, 2012), *passim*.

[8] M. Wright, 'The reception of Sophocles in antiquity', in A. Markantonatos (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (Leiden, 2012), 581–99, at 592. The only widely acknowledged instance of comic ridicule of Sophocles is the joke from Aristophanes' *Pax* cited below.

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fifth-century comedy. Furthermore, unlike very many comic fragments, they are not preserved by keen scholiasts or learned lexicographers with little or no context. Both lines are put into the mouth of a specific figure, Polemon, for a specific purpose: to detail his admiration for Sophocles. Therefore, they also provide evidence for both the afterlife and the use of comic ridicule of Sophocles in Early Hellenistic Athens.

Explicitly ascribed to Phrynichus, the second comic fragment cited by Polemon compares Sophocles to Pramnian wine: οὐ γλύξις οὐδ' ὑπόχυτος, ἀλλὰ Πράμνιος. This image is easier to interpret than the one in the first fragment. Stretching back as early as Archilochus, the association between poetry and wine boasts a long-standing tradition often exploited in Old Comedy.[9] Cratinus, for instance, drew on this tradition by both creating his own stage biography as a drunk and by dubbing the comic poet Ecphantides 'smoky'. Variously explained as 'too old' or 'unclear', 'smoky' was used to characterize wine.[10] The Pramnian wine mentioned by Phrynichus was produced throughout the eastern Aegean area and is attested in Greek literature as early as the Homeric poems. Mixed with goat-cheese, barley and honey, Pramnian wine is served in Nestor's hut as on Circe's island.[11] It is found also in a range of texts, from comedy to medical treatises and encyclopedic collections such as Athenaeus' *Sophists at Banquet*.[12] Among miscellaneous information on the Pramnian wine—places of production, origin of its name and related scholarly debates—Athenaeus includes two passages specifically relevant to Phrynichus' comparison of Sophoclean tragedy to this kind of wine. While the first passage glosses Phrynichus' line by mentioning a 'doctored wine' from Rhodes and defining γλύξις ('bland wine' or 'sweet insipid wine'),[13] the second passage is key to understanding both the quality of Pramnian wine and its association with poetry and poets. According to Athenaeus (1.30b-c; Ar. F 688 K.-A.):

γίνεται δὲ ἐν Ἰκάρῳ, φησὶν Ἐπαρχίδης, ὁ Πράμνιος. ἐστὶ δὲ οὗτος γένος τι οἴνου. καί ἐστιν οὗτος οὔτε γλυκὺς οὔτε παχύς, ἀλλ' αὐστηρὸς καὶ σκληρὸς καὶ δύναμιν ἔχων διαφέρουσαν· οἷῳ Ἀριστοφάνης οὐχ ἥδεσθαι Ἀθηναίους φησί, λέγων τὸν Ἀθηναίων δῆμον οὔτε ποιηταῖς ἥδεσθαι σκληροῖς καὶ ἀστεμφέσιν οὔτε πραμνίοις [σκληροῖσιν *CE*] οἴνοις συνάγουσι τὰς ὀφρῦς τε καὶ τὴν κοιλίαν, ἀλλ' ἀνθοσμίᾳ καὶ πέπονι νεκταροσταγεῖ.

Eparchides (*FGrHist* 437 F1) says that Pramnian wine comes from Ikaros. This is a kind of wine that is neither sweet nor thick, but dry, harsh and outstanding in power. According to Aristophanes, the Athenians do not like it. He says that the Athenian people dislike both poets who are harsh and stiff and Pramnian wines that contract the eyebrows and the stomach. They prefer a fragrant wine, ripe and dripping with nectar.

[9] Archil. fr. 120. J. Wilkins, *The Boastful Chef. The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy* (Oxford, 2000), ch. 5, esp. 243–56 provides a detailed review of poetry and wine in Old Comedy.

[10] For Cratinus as a drunk, see Z.P. Biles, 'Intertextual biography in the rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes', *AJPh* 123 (2002), 169–204; Bakola (n. 6), esp. ch. 1. For Cratinus and Ecphantides, see Cratinus, F 462 K.-A. with schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 151b and Hsch. κ 716. See also Wright (n. 6), 8–9, and further below.

[11] Hom. *Il.* 11.638–40; *Od.* 10.234-5 (Circe adds honey to the same mixture mentioned in the *Iliad*).

[12] Comedy: Ar. *Eq.* 107 (libation of Pramnian wine), *Second Thesmophoriazusae* F 334 K.-A. (the Pramnian wine is listed among the wines 'that raise the ram'); Ephippus, F 28 K.-A. (a character claims to love the Pramnian from Lesbos); see also below. Hippocrates (1.90, 2.192 Littre) notes the use of Pramnian wine to treat ulcers and menstruation. Athenaeus (1.30e) also preserves a few explanations for both the origin and the name of this wine.

[13] Ath.1.31d-e: 'Timachidas of Rhodes calls a doctored wine from Rhodes similar to sweet wine. Bland wine is the name for wine that has been boiled.' (Τιμαχίδας δὲ ὁ Ῥόδιος ὑπόχυτόν τινα οἶνον ἐν Ῥόδῳ καλεῖ παραπλήσιον τῷ γλεύκει. καὶ γλύξις δ' οἶνος καλεῖται ὁ τὸ ἔψημα ἔχων.) See Wilkins (n. 9), 219 n. 72.

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Aristophanes qualifies Pramnian wine as harsh and extremely strong, and, like Phrynichus, clearly contrasts it with sweet wine.[14] He also compares Pramnian wine to a poet who is 'harsh and stiff'. Elsewhere presented as a feature of Aeschylus' tragedy, which is as tough as chine, stiffness does not win Aristophanes' approval (Plato's Socrates thought otherwise).[15] Both the Phrynichus fragment cited by Diogenes Laertius and the Aristophanes fragment cited by Athenaeus come without a context, so that the relative chronology is impossible to establish. Whoever first likened poets to Pramnian wine, however, Aristophanes makes it clear that in fifth-century Athens this association was a negative one.

The first comic fragment preserved by Polemon, too, is not flattering. Ascribed to Aristophanes by Kassel and Austin (F 958), it brings together Sophocles and a Molossian dog: κύων τις ἐδόκει συμποιεῖν Μολοττικός. Originally reared on the mountains of Epirus, Molossian dogs make more than one appearance in Greek and Latin literature, and are consistently singled out for their ferocity. The suspicious husbands of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* use them to guard their wives, whom they hold prisoners in their houses with bolted doors and locks; 'on top of that', Mika adds, 'they raise Molossian dogs as bogeys for their lovers'. Aristotle notes the 'size and courage in facing wild animals' as typical of this breed, Horace compares himself to a Molossian dog to counter-attack his opponents, and Lucretius vividly describes Molossian dogs growling, drawing back their jaws and bearing their teeth.[16] What has a Molossian dog to do with Sophocles? As Halliwell has shown, the verb used by Aristophanes, συμποιεῖν, indicates 'poetic collaboration'. Aristophanes uses the same verb when mentioning the tradition that Cephisophon wrote songs for Euripides (Κηφισοφῶν ἄριστε καὶ μελάντατε, | σὺ δὲ συνέζης ὡς τὰ πόλλ' Εὐριπίδῃ | καὶ συνεποίεις, ὥς φασι, τὴν μελῳδίαν). So does Eupolis in his *Baptai*: charged by Aristophanes with plagiarizing *Knights* in his *Marikas*, Eupolis claims to have co-authored *Knights* with Aristophanes and then given him the play (τοὺς Ἱππέας ξυνεποίησα τῷ φαλακρῷ).[17] Consider also later authors referring to fifth-century practice. Cephisophon is only one of Euripides' alleged collaborators: Euripides' father-in-law, Mnesilochus, and Socrates are two additional ones. Teleclides likens the composition of Euripides' tragedy to food-preparation: Socrates 'feeds the fire', that is, supplies ideas, while Teleclides 'roasts' the play, thus contributing something that, although not clearly identified, seems related to the formal aspect of playwriting. The sources preserving Teleclides' lines, the *Life of Euripides* and Diogenes Laertius, both qualify Mnesilochus' and Socrates' partnership with Euripides by using the verb συμποιεῖν.[18] Also relevant are a fragment by Cratinus, χοιριλεκφαντίδης, and Hesychius' note on it. Since this expression

[14] See also Galen on Hippoc. 19.132.10, πράμνιος: οἶνός τις οὕτως ὀνομάζεται μέλας καὶ αὐστηρός. The scholar cited by Athenaeus, Eparchides, was possibly an Ikarian from the *polis* of Oine and is generally dated to the third century. See further C. Constantakopoulou, 'Eparchides (437)', *Brill's New Jacoby* (Brill Online).

[15] Ar. F 663 K.-A. with *Etym. Gen.* AB (*Etym. Magn*. 526.19): Ἀριστοφάνης τὴν σκληρότητα Αἰσχύλου ἐνδεικνύμενος, ἔφη, οἶμαι γὰρ αὐτὸν κόλλοπι ἐοικέναι. Pl. *Resp*. 3.398a: αὐτοὶ δ' ἂν τῷ αὐστηροτέρῳ καὶ ἀηδεστέρῳ ποιητῇ χρώμεθα.

[16] Ar. *Thesm*. 416–17, Arist. *Hist. an.* 608a28-31, Hor. *Epod.* 6.5, Lucr. 5.1063–6.

[17] Ar. F 596 K.-A., Eup. F 89 K.-A. with S. Halliwell, 'Authorial collaboration in the Athenian comic theatre', *GRBS* 30 (1989), 515–28.

[18] Teleclides, F 41 K.-A.: Μνησίλοχός ἐστ' ἐκεῖνος, ὃς φρύγει τι δρᾶμα καινόν | Εὐριπίδῃ, καὶ Σωκράτης τὰ φρύγαν' ὑποτίθησιν, on which see S.D. Olson, *Broken Laughter* (Oxford, 2007), 237–8. *Life of Euripides* 2: δοκεῖ δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ Σωκράτης ὁ φιλόσοφος καὶ Μνησίλοχος συμπεποιηκέναι τινά. Diog. Laert. 2.18: Σωκράτης Σωφρονίσκου μὲν ἦν υἱὸς λιθουργοῦ καὶ Φαιναρέτης μαίας, ὡς

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closely recalls Cratinus' εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν, the implication is that Ecphantides drew inspiration from Choerilus' tragedies, and this may explain the 'smokiness' of Ecphantides' poetry. According to Hesychius, however, Choerilus was a servant of Ecphantides who 'co-authored his comedies' (συνεποιεῖτο κωμῳδίας): the (clearly questionable) collaboration between Choerilus and Ecphantides provides a parallel for Euripides and Cephisophon.[19] Aristophanes' amusing image of Sophocles joining forces with a Molossian dog to write plays is yet another instance of poetic collaboration in Classical Athens. The implication seems clear enough—there was something aggressive about Sophocles' drama—but the exact details are hard to pinpoint. I offer two possible interpretations: vituperative debates and 'harsh' songs.

There are at least a few examples of violent debates in Sophocles' surviving plays: Creon and Haimon in *Antigone*, Oedipus and Tiresias in *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus and Polynices in *Oedipus at Colonus*.[20] Haimon's arrival on the stage in the third episode of *Antigone* is not unexpected. The chorus anticipates Haimon's grief (ἀχνύμενος, 627; ὑπεραλγῶν, 630), but Creon can sense his anger: he immediately asks his son if he is 'raving' (λυσσαίνων, 633), a very strong expression earlier spoken by Creon about Antigone (492). The *agōn* between father and son is symmetrically structured and its rigid formalism helps create 'the current of pent-up emotion and tension that pervades the scene'.[21] There is some evidence for the impact of this debate in fifth-century Athens. Trying to reason with his father, Haimon pleads for flexibility by using the image of trees by the banks of storm-swollen rivers and by noting that only the trees that bend their branches can save themselves from utter destruction. Haimon's lines quickly found their way into Eupolis' *Prospaltians*, where an unidentified character tries to persuade a second unidentified figure by using Sophocles' image of bending trees.[22] From the end of Haimon's speech onwards, the pace quickens as the temper of both characters flares up. The taunts fly in the strict and bitter stichomythia.[23] When Haimon claims his right to respond ('do you wish to speak and not listen to the one who speaks to you?'), Creon can hardly control himself and threatens to kill Antigone 'right away, close at hand, before her fiancé's eyes',[24] introducing his line with an expression that marks the climax of his indignation, '*What!*' (ἄληθες, with its distinctive accentuation, 758). This is

καὶ Πλάτων ἐν Θεαιτήτῳ φησίν, Ἀθηναῖος, τῶν δήμων Ἀλωπεκῆθεν. ἐδόκει δὲ συμποιεῖν Εὐριπίδῃ.

[19] Cratinus, F 502, 342, 462 K.-A. (on which see also above); Hsch. ε 1439. See also Ar. *Thesm*. 157–8 for the 'collaboration' between Agathon and In-law. On Euripides and Cephisophon, see A.H. Sommerstein, 'Cuckoos in tragic nests? Kephisophon and others', *Leeds International Classical Studies* 3.1 (2003/2004), 1–13.

[20] Soph. *Ant*. 626–766; *OC* 1254-446; *OT* 300–462. Two of these *agōnes* involve fathers and adult sons, two figures who meet rarely and uncomfortably on the tragic stage. See M. Griffith, 'The king and eye: the rule of the father in Greek tragedy', *PCPhS* 44 (1998), 20–84.

[21] Soph. *Ant.* 631–8, 639-80, 683–723, 726–9, 730–57, 758–65. The quotation is from M. Griffith, *Sophocles Antigone* (Cambridge, 1999), 232. The stichomythia between Haimon and Creon is well treated by S. Pfeiffer-Petersen, *Konfliktstichomythien bei Sophokles. Funktion und Gestaltung* (Wiesbaden, 1996), 60–5 as an example of what the author calls *Konfliktstichomythien.* See also S. Goldhill, *Sophocles and the Language of Tragedy* (Oxford, 2012), 58–63.

[22] Soph. *Ant*. 712–15: ὁρᾷς παρὰ ῥείθροισι χειμάρροις ὅσα | δένδρων ὑπείκει, κλῶνας ὡς ἐκσῴζεται, | τὰ δ' ἀντιτείνοντ' αὐτόπρεμν' ἀπόλλυται. Eup. *Prospaltians* F 260.23–5 K.-A.: ὁρᾷς παρὰ ῥείθροισιν ὅταν η[…]δ[ | ἢν μέν τις εἴκηι τοῖς λόγοις ἐκσώιζε[ται, | ὁ δ' ἀντιτείνων αὐτόπρεμνος οἴχ[εται. Antiphanes, F 228.3–7 K.-A. is also a parody of Sophocles' metaphor. On the fragment from Eupolis' *Prospaltians*, see further I. Storey, *Eupolis. Poet of Old Comedy* (Oxford, 2003), 233–8.

[23] See in particular Soph. *Ant.* 746, 750 with Griffith (n. 21), 250.

[24] Soph. *Ant*. 757, 760–1. For Creon's order and its immediacy in time and space, see H. Dik, *Word Order in Greek Tragic Dialogue* (Oxford, 2007), 62–3.

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the same expression that Sophocles puts into the mouth of Tiresias in *Oedipus the King* (350), as Oedipus reviles him during the *agōn* scene in the first episode. By this point in the confrontation, Oedipus has completely lost his temper. Provoked by Tiresias' obstinate silence, he abuses the seer by calling him 'vilest of vile men' (ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε), a sudden attack expressed 'in language of abnormal vehemence', and eventually accusing him of plotting to kill Laius.[25] Angered, in turn, Tiresias hurls the insults back to Oedipus. Their exchange is heated. The word 'anger' (ὀργή) and related expressions abound: they recur six times in the space of eleven lines early in the *agōn* scene.[26] In making his predictions, Tiresias mentions the troubles that 'will bring you level with your true self and with your children' (ἅ σ' ἐξισώσει σοί τε καὶ τοῖς σοῖς τέκνοις, 425). Note the sigmatism of his line. Tiresias is literally spitting his bile at Oedipus, in the same way as Medea spits hers at Jason in the famous Euripidean line variously parodied by comic poets.[27] More vehement language comes later, as Oedipus sends Tiresias away: 'Enough! Such filth from him? Insufferable—what, still alive? Get out—faster, back where you come from—vanish!' Here too, anger translates into specific stylistic choices. As often in angry utterances on the tragic stage, Oedipus resorts to colloquialism.[28]

The confrontation between Oedipus and Tiresias in *Oedipus the King* mirrors the debate between Oedipus and his son Polynices in *Oedipus at Colonus*.[29] In *Oedipus at Colonus*, however, Oedipus speaks only once, delivering a furious denunciation of his son: Oedipus now makes Polynices alone responsible for his exile, which earlier in the play he blamed on the city, 'my own seed' and Creon.[30] In a highly charged dramatic moment, Oedipus, too, abuses his son by calling him 'vilest of vile men'. He curses him, conveying the violence of his words by means of alliteration (π, κ) in the first two lines (σὺ δ' ἔρρ' ἀπόπτυστός τε κἀπάτωρ ἐμοῦ, | κακῶν κάκιστε, τάσδε συλλαβὼν ἀράς, 1383–4) and juxtaposition of terms (θανεῖν κτανεῖν, 1388).[31] An Apulian calyx-krater painted in the 340s and now in the Geddes Collection in Melbourne shows the impact of this specific scene. Seated on an altar in the grove sacred to the Eumenides between his two daughters, the old and blind Oedipus holds onto his staff with his covered left hand while exposing the right one. Polynices stands on the right and (most likely) Theseus on the left. The painter gives us the gesture that

[25] Soph. *OT* 334, 346–9. The quotation is from R.D. Dawe, *Sophocles Oedipus Rex* (Cambridge, 2006), 103. On the expression κακῶν κάκιστε, see also below.

[26] Soph. *OT* 335–45 with L. Edmunds, 'The Teiresias scene in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*', *SyllClass* 11 (2000), 34–73, at 44. On the debate between Oedipus and Tiresias, see also F. Ahl, 'Oedipus and Teiresias', in H. Bloom (ed.), *Sophocles' Oedipus Rex* (New York, 2007), 105–40, esp. 118–20, 'the angered Oedipus'.

[27] Eur. *Med*. 476 ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι, variously parodied by Plato, *Eortai* F 29 K.-A. and Eubulus, *Dionysos* F 26 K.-A. Note also the alliteration in Oedipus' abuse of Tiresias at 371 (τυφλὸς τά τ' ὦτα τόν τε νοῦν τά τ' ὄμματ' εἶ), on which see further A. Rodighiero, *La parola, la morte, l'eroe. Aspetti di poetica sofoclea* (Padua, 2000), 23–5.

[28] *OT* 429–31 (ἦ ταῦτα δῆτ' ἀνεκτὰ πρὸς τούτου κλύειν; | οὐκ εἰς ὄλεθρον; οὐχὶ θᾶσσον; οὐ πάλιν ἄψορρος οἴκων τῶνδ' ἀποστραφεὶς ἄπει;) with the lively translation by R. Fagles, *Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays* (New York, 1984). On the tone of these lines, see C. Collard, 'Colloquial language in tragedy', *CQ* 55 (2005), 350–86, at 358; R.B. Rutherford, *Greek Tragic Style. Form, Language and Interpretation* (Cambridge, 2012), 169.

[29] B. Seidensticker, 'Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Oidipusdramen des Sophokles', *Hermes* 100 (1972), 255–74, at 268–9.

[30] *OC* 1356–7, 440–1, 599–601, 770. Oedipus' accusation against his son contradicts Ismene's claim that the strife between the two brothers is recent (*OC* 361–84). See A. Kelly, *Sophocles: Oedipus at Colonus* (London, 2009), 64. On Oedipus' speech and this scene in general, see P.E. Easterling, 'Oedipus and Polynices', *PCPhS* 13 (1967), 1–13.

[31] See Rutherford (n. 28), 199.

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accompanies the curse: Oedipus points emphatically to his son with his three fingers up. He also shows how other characters react to Oedipus' words: Polynices, like one of his sisters, is raising his right hand to his chin, in standard gesture of surprise or dismay in Greek art.[32] Rather than representing stage action, the artist 'has chosen to illustrate what seemed to him the most striking moment from the play as it lasted in his memory'.[33]

It is unclear to me if fifth-century audiences, like modern scholars, felt the debates in *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* to be particularly fierce. For Sophocles' *Ajax*, however, we do have some clues, at least in the ancient scholarly tradition. In the second half of the play, Teucer argues with Menelaus and Agamemnon over Ajax's burial in two debates (1052–162, 1223–315). Here too the taunts fly: Teucer, for instance, deploys ad hominem abuse by calling Menelaus' retinue 'those full of much labour' and by referring to Menelaus as a 'nobody' whose words are just 'bluster'.[34] The chorus comments on both debates. They try to control Menelaus' anger (1091–2); they condemn the words spoken by both Menelaus and Teucer ('Nor again do I like such language in times of trouble. | Harsh words cause grief, no matter how just they are', 1118–19), and wish that both Agamemnon and Teucer would show moderation (1264–5). Since the scholia on Sophocles are generally very respectful of Sophocles, it is interesting that they disapprove of the tone used here.[35] Their comments cluster around the stichomythia between Teucer and Menelaus. Teucer is ready to fight Menelaus—'even with no shield I could deal with you fully armed', 1123—and, when Menelaus calls Ajax 'my murderer' (1126), Teucer replies, 'Your murderer? You have said a formidable thing, if you have died but are alive!' (1123). Ancient scholars criticized both lines, judging them to be comic rather than tragic (τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον κωμῳδίας μᾶλλον ἢ τραγῳδίας). Another note reads: 'this kind of quibbling is inappropriate to tragedy. Wishing to draw out the play after the death of Ajax, Sophocles grew cold and undid its tragic pathos (ἐψυχρεύσατο καὶ ἔλυσε τὸ τραγικὸν πάθος).'[36]

The aggressive element that Aristophanes targets in Sophocles' play may consist of vehement debates like the ones I singled out, but there is also a second interpretation, which is to my mind more likely. The referent of Aristophanes' image could be a musical one. Since the stories about Euripides' partners are the closest parallel to Sophocles and his Molossian mastiff, it is possibly relevant that two of them, Cephisophon and Timocrates of Argos, were thought to have composed Euripides' songs. In Sommerstein's words, they were 'musical assistants', 'purveyors

[32] Melbourne, Geddes Collection A5:8 with J.R. Green in J.R. Green (ed.), *Ancient Voices, Modern Echoes. Theatre in the Greek World* (Sydney, 2003), 27–9. See also P.E. Easterling, 'Sophocles: the first thousand years', in J. Davidson, F. Muecke and P.J. Wilson (edd.), *Greek Drama III: Essays in Honour of Kevin Lee* (*BICS* Suppl. 87) (London, 2006), 1–15, at 9; O. Taplin, *Pots and Plays. Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-Painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles, 2007), 100–2, who, however, identifies the figure on the left with Creon rather than Theseus.

[33] Green (n. 32), 29.

[34] Soph. *Aj.* 1112, 1114, 1116 with P.J. Finglass, *Sophocles Ajax* (Cambridge, 2011), esp. 450.

[35] P. Easterling, 'Notes on notes: the ancient scholia on Sophocles', in S. Eklund (ed.), *Συγχάρματα: Studies in Honour of Jan Fredrik Kindstrand* (Uppsala, 2007), 21–36 discusses many positive comments on Sophocles' playwriting in the ancient scholia.

[36] Schol. on Soph. *Aj.* 1127, 1123. On these and other scholia juxtaposing the 'tragic' with the 'comic', see R. Meijering, *Literary and Rhetorical Theories in Greek Scholia* (Groningen, 1987), 219. See also J. Jouanna, 'La lecture de Sophocle dans les scholies: remarques sur les scholies anciennes d' *Ajax*', in A. Billault and C. Mauduit (edd.), *Lectures antiques de la tragédie grecque* (Paris, 2001), 9–26, at 13, who defines these notes on *Ajax* exceptional ('mais de tels reproches sont exceptionnels'). Finglass (n. 34), 454 rightly points out that the lowering of the tone in *Ajax* is meant to portray characters as unattractive.

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of music'.[37] Could it be that some of Sophocles' songs sounded like the barking or the howling of a wild mastiff? On the one hand, Sophocles was widely praised for his lyrics. In Aristophanes' *Peace* of 425, Trygaeus includes them among the blessings of peace, juxtaposing Sophocles the songwriter with Euripides the speechwriter.[38] Aristophanes' passage testifies to the popularity of Sophocles' songs in Classical Athens; the related scholion identifies the one feature that made them so successful, their sweetness. As a token of their impact on contemporary audiences, at least a couple of Sophoclean songs made their way into fifth-century comedy. In the *Birds*, Aristophanes has his parricide walk on the stage singing about his wish to become an eagle and fly high over the sea. As noted by an ancient scholiast, Aristophanes is here citing Sophocles' *Oenomaus*, probably lifting the quotation from a choral song.[39] A second, less well-known instance comes from Sophocles' *Epigoni*. In an unfortunately lacunose passage dealing with the effects of music and their power to settle fierce quarrels, Philodemus mentions the case of 'Sopho[cles in th]e *Epigoni*' and makes clear elsewhere in his work the specific reference: a 'song' (μέλος) somehow also mentioned by a comic poet.[40] The sweetness of Sophocles' songs is never clearly defined but a few scholiasts exemplify it. One of them mentions the songs 'about old times and happiness in *Inachus:* "Blessed were they who in those days had an immortal birth as their lot!"' Following the widespread principle that 'you are what you write', another scholiast considers Sophocles' sweet music a by-product of Sophocles' proverbial good nature. He includes this remark in his comments on the third stasimon of *Ajax* and the contrast it describes between the toils of war and the joy of the symposion.[41] According to him, Sophocles' sweet music also accounts for Sophocles being called 'honeybee', a nickname ascribed to comic poets by another ancient commentator.[42] Given that Aristophanes associates Sophocles with honey and beeswax, Sophocles does seem to have been known as 'honeybee' already in Classical Athens.[43] He must have been aware that his contemporaries were fond of his songs and probably took their appreciation into account when, towards the very end of his long life, he wrote his most lyrical tragedy, *Oedipus at Colonus*.

On the other hand, there was more than vaunted sweetness in Sophocles' songs. A passage in the *Life* (20; Soph. *TrGF* T 1. 87–9 R.) gives a different explanation for

[37] Two of the earliest mentions of Cephisophon credit him with Euripides' songs, Ar. *Ran*. 944 and F 596 K.-A. (cited above). The same point is made by the biographic tradition, where Timocrates is also named: οἱ δὲ τὰ μέλη αὐτῷ φασι Κηφισοφῶντα ποιεῖν ἢ Τιμοκράτην Ἀργεῖον (*Family and Life of Euripides* 3; Eur. *TrGF* T1.IA.13 R.). The quotations are from Sommerstein (n. 19), 11 and 12.

[38] Ar. *Pax* 530–4 with schol. V on 531; Soph. *TrGF* T 113a-b R.

[39] Ar. *Av.* 1337–9 with scholion; Soph. *Oinomaos*, *TrGF* F 476 R. See furher T.H. Talboy and A.H. Sommerstein, *Sophocles. Selected Fragmentary Plays II* (Oxford, 2012), 105–6.

[40] Philodemus, *On Music* coll. 47.30–46, 133.4–134.27; Adespota, F 477 K.-A. The song in question was probably delivered by the chorus towards the end of the play, to settle the quarrel between Alcmeon and Adrastus. The parodos of *Epigoni*, which described war preparations (Soph. *Epigoni, TrGF* F 890 R.; see now *P.Oxy.* 4807, which preserves a more extended version), was variously recalled in several comedies, from Hermippos' *Moirai* (F 47, 48 K.-A.) to Aristophanes' *Holkades* (F 427 K.-A.). On both songs, see Sommerstein (n. 39), 50–1, 53.

[41] Schol. *Pax* 531, citing Soph. *Inachus*, *TrGF* F 278 R.; schol. *Aj.* 1199.

[42] For Sophocles as 'honeybee', see Soph. *TrGF* T 1.88-9, 2.5, 78, 109–12 R. The source for the comic pedigree of Sophocles' nickname is schol. LR Soph. *OC* 17; Soph. *TrGF* T 110 R. Mauduit (n. 4), 32, however, points out that the earliest direct evidence for Sophocles' nickname comes from an epigram by Hermesianax of Colophon, who was active in the early third century (fr. 7.57 Powell; Soph. *TrGF* T 78 R.). See also below.

[43] Ar. F 598, 679 K.-A.; see also Adespota, F *480 K.-A. with M.G. Bonanno, 'Un nuovo frammento di Aristofane? (Com. adesp. Fr. *480 K.-A.)', *Eikasmos* 16 (2005), 105–9.

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Sophocles' nickname: 'many others have imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but Sophocles alone plucked what was brilliant from each, and on account of this he was called "honeybee". He introduced a mixture of elements: good timing, sweetness, boldness and complexity.' As Timothy Power has recently noted in his comment on this passage, 'complexity' (ποικιλία) is the hallmark of the musical avant-garde of the later fifth century fiercely attacked by conservatives like Plato (*Resp*. 399e, *Leg*. 812d–e).[44] The *Life* is here placing Sophocles within the musical innovations of the so-called New Music—note the reference to Sophocles imitating both his predecessors and his contemporaries—and presenting him as responding to the trends that coincided with much of his career. If this passage does go back to Ion of Chios, as has often been suggested, Sophocles experimented with tragic music from early on: Ion of Chios died shortly before the spring of 421, well before Sophocles' career came to an end.[45] Not that Sophocles seems to have only responded to New Musical trends. A fragment by Aristoxenus, also preserved in the *Life* (23), makes Sophocles a leading innovator by claiming that he 'first of the poets from Athens took Phrygian *melopoiia* for his own songs and mixed in the dithyrambic style of music'. That Sophocles adopted the Phrygian mode and a dithyrambic style betrays his engagement with the new musical fashions associated with the dithyramb. At least by the time of Aristotle, the Phrygian mode was regarded as one of the only two true musical modes. The other one was the Dorian, which ancient scholars set in binary opposition with the Phrygian. Whereas the Dorian mode expressed manliness, nobility and self-control, the Phrygian one was considered to have 'the same effect as the pipe […], for both are orgiastic and emotional'.[46]

Although surviving plays do not convey the idea that Sophocles was as bold as Euripides and Agathon, there are some remarkable examples of Sophocles' engagement with the New Music.[47] Consider the astrophic generic pastiche of *Trachiniae* (205–24), a play produced as early as the 450s. The chorus rejoices—ironically as often in Sophocles, since Iole's imminent arrival leads to the disaster—and delivers a song that displays several of the hallmarks of the New Music, from the astrophic form to the prominence of the *aulos*, 'the tyrant of my mind' (217), and the references to the chorus' own dancing. Probably a few years later, in the 440s, Sophocles brought on the stage his *Thamyras*. This was one of his most popular plays, not least because Sophocles himself performed in it, most likely as the protagonist. Sophocles played the kithara onstage—a *coup de théâtre* and a memorable *tableau* reportedly painted on the Stoa Poikile—and plucked out of its strings Thamyras' spell-binding music that induced frenzy to its hearers.[48] Although scanty, the fragments of this play offer

[44] T. Power, 'The power of music: the lyric Sophocles', in A. Markantonatos (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (Leiden, 2012), 283–304, at 286–7.

[45] C. Pelling, 'Sophocles' learning curve', in C. Collard, P.J. Finglass and N.J. Richardson (edd.), *Hesperos: Essays in Honour of Martin West* (Oxford, 2007), 204–27, at 206; Power (n. 44), 286 (Ion of Chios as the possible source of *Life* 20); Ar. *Pax* 835–7 (Aristophanes' joke suggests that Ion of Chios died shortly before the production of this comedy).

[46] Arist. *Pol.* 1290a19-29, 1342b13, 1342a32-1342b3. See further E. Csapo, 'The politics of the New Music', in P. Murray and P.J. Wilson (edd.), *Music and the Muses: The Culture of 'Mousikē' in the Classical Athenian City* (Oxford, 2004), 207–48, at 232–5.

[47] See Power (n. 44), 293-8. Note also, with Power ([n. 44], 288–90), that Sophocles was reportedly taught by the musician Lamprus, whom a strand of the ancient tradition presents as a member of the musical avant-garde (*Life* 3, Soph. *TrGF* T 1.16–17 R.; Phrynichus F 78 K.-A.).

[48] F 245. On Sophocles playing the kithara in *Thamyras*, see *Life* 5; Ath. 1.20e–f; Soph. *TrGF* T 1.24–5, 28 R. On the date of the play, see P.J. Wilson, 'Thamyris the Thracian: the archetypal

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some clues to Sophocles' use of the Phrygian mode as mentioned by Aristoxenus. A fragment features resolved tetrapodies of trochaic rhythm, one of the two rhythms characteristic of the Phrygian mode. Musical instruments abound in the sparse remains of the play: harps, lyres, monauloi and finally the *trigonos* and the *phoenix*, two instruments banned by arch-conservatives such as Plato and Aristotle. Peter Wilson considers Sophocles' *Thamyras* against the musical and political changes afoot around the mid fifth century: by portraying the Thracian hero as a 'proto-New Musician' confident in his skill like the contemporary virtuosi, Sophocles' *Thamyras* can be seen as 'a harbinger' of the contemporary musical revolution.[49] A musical contest probably also took place in another play now fragmentary: the (probably satyric) *Inachus*. We know that in *Inachus* Argos walked onto the stage singing and that Hermes' syrinx was heard during the play, perhaps as Hermes was made invisible by his cap. The two parties presumably engaged in a musical competition won by Hermes, as in most versions of the story. The actor performing the role of Hermes either played the syrinx onstage (a unique instance in Greek tragedy, as far as we know) or had the music supplied by the dramatic *aulos*-player, here 'given a virtuosic part'.[50]

*Tympanistai* is yet another play that problematizes Sophocles' music and its celebrated sweetness. The few remaining fragments suggest that this tragedy dealt with the myth of the Thracian king Phineus, possibly with his marriage with Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Oreithyia. Judging from the title of the play, the chorus was formed by male drummers variously identified with worshippers of Dionysus or Cybele.[51] Imported from the East, the tympanon was used only within orgiastic cults, typically by women or by effeminate men, and is not definitely attested in Greek literature and art before the fifth century.[52] One fragment preserves the name of an unequal pipe, the *elymoi*, glossed by Athenaeus as 'Phrygian pipes' (F 644 with Ath. 4.176f). Another refers to the Sarpedonian rock where Boreas brought Oreithyia (F 637). It is impossible to determine if Boreas had any part in this play, but he does appear among Sophocles' unassigned fragments, interestingly connected with the *aulos* and its music. Sophocles compares Boreas to a piper, 'for he blows no longer on small pipes (σμικροῖσιν αὐλίσκοις), but with wild blasts, without a head-band (φορβειᾶς ἄτερ)'.[53]

wandering poet?', in R. Hunter and I. Rutherford (edd.), *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture: Travel, Locality and Pan-Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2009), 46–79, at 61.

[49] F 240, 241, 239 and 239a with Wilson (n. 48), 59–79. The quotation is on p. 75. See also T. Power, *The Culture of Kitharôidia* (Washington, 2010), 49–50.

[50] Schol. [Aesch.] *PV* 574a, F 281a (singing Argos); F 269c.7, 'I hear the syrinx'; see also F 269c.21. The presence of a musical competition in this play was first suggested by H. Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles III: Fragments* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 115–16 and has been widely accepted. See Power (n. 44), 297–8 (citation); C. Heynen and R. Krumeich, in R. Krumeich, N. Pechstein and B. Seidensticker (edd.), *Das griechische Satyrspiel* (Darmstadt, 1999), 342–3; P. O'Sullivan and C. Collard, *Euripides Cyclops and Major Fragments of Greek Satyric Drama* (Oxford, 2013), 316.

[51] I. Giudice Rizzo, *Inquieti "commerci" tra uomini e dei* (Rome, 2002), 13-63 (with earlier literature) has recently re-examined the fragments of *Tympanistai*, providing a thorough discussion of the relationship between this play and Sophocles' two tragedies titled *Phineus*. For the identity of the chorus, see pp. 45-6 with earlier literature.

[52] M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1992), 124. Note also that the chorus of the *Ajax* refers to 'Mysian and Cnossian dances' (*Aj.* 699–700) in their jubilant song evoking a paian. See further A. Rodighiero, *Generi lirico-corali nella produzione drammatica di Sofocle* (Tübingen, 2012), 29–40.

[53] F 768; Aesch. F 281; [Longinus], *Subl.* 3.1. The assignment of the two fragments cited by Longinus is debated. Radt assigns the first fragment cited by Longinus to Aeschylus' *Oreithyia*; by

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Longinus, who quotes these lines making clear the reference to Boreas here compared to an *aulos*-player, also cites a second tragic excerpt shortly before, in a fragmentary passage. The speaker of these lines, which may also be by Sophocles, is Boreas, who ends his piece by claiming: 'but not yet have I blown the noble strain'. Here too, as in *Inachus*, Sophocles may have given the *aulos*-player a virtuoso part.

Whatever the exact referent of Sophocles' partnership with a Molossian dog, the two comic fragments quoted by Polemon are not complimentary about Sophocles and his drama. They interestingly jar with the overwhelmingly positive picture that emerges from fifth-century comedy as from other sources. By 422, when Aristophanes staged his *Wasps*, Euripides had already become a fixture of comedy. Aristophanes' Xanthias presents 'Euripides once again taking outrageous abuse' (αὖθις ἀνασελγαινόμενος Εὐριπίδης, *Vesp.* 61) as part of the comic routine, like jokes from Megara, slaves giving out nuts and Heracles cheated of his dinner. Sophocles, by contrast, is almost universally cast in a positive light, as one would expect for the most prolific and successful dramatist of Classical Athens. Variously credited with 123 or, less likely, 113 plays, Sophocles won 18 times at the Great Dionysia in Athens.[54] His great success is a leitmotif in ancient sources.[55] By the time he died, Sophocles could be regarded as the master of the tragic genre. Aristophanes' *Frogs* presents him as the legitimate candidate for the Chair of Tragedy (something that he will get by the end of the comedy) while praising both his talent and his good nature: Sophocles was an excellent poet and an amiable man. Phrynichus' *Muses*, which competed against Aristophanes' *Frogs* in 405, also eulogizes Sophocles' successful life and work, crediting him with 'many and beautiful plays'.[56] Fifth-century comedy does not simply 'seal' Sophocles' status as a classic; it also gives us the picture of a classic in the making. A character in Cratinus' *Boukoloi* shames the archon that denied a chorus to Sophocles while granting one to Gnesippus. By the 430s or the early 420s, the date assigned to Cratinus' play, Sophocles had already made quite a reputation for himself, given that his missed chorus outraged his contemporaries.[57] Scholarly discussions about Sophocles consistently speak of his 'comic exemption' noting only one exception, an obscure joke in Aristophanes' *Peace.* When Peace asks Trygaeus about Sophocles (695), Trygaeus explains that 'he is turning from Sophocles into Simonides', adding that, 'even though he is old and decrepit, | he would sail even on a wicker mat to make money' (696–9). According to the scholion to this passage, Aristophanes is here referring to Sophocles' alleged embezzlement of money during the Samian expedition in 440, but Peace's interest in the recent past makes the inference unlikely.[58] Whatever the exact interpretation of

contrast, D. Russell, *'Longinus'* On the Sublime (Oxford, 1964), 67–8 makes a case for its Sophoclean paternity.

[54] Sophocles' total output: *The Family and Life of Sophocles* 18 (Aristophanes of Byzantium knew of 130 plays by Sophocles, 7 of which were considered spurious), *Suda* σ 815; Soph. *TrGF* T 1.76–7, 2.9–10 R. See further A.H. Sommerstein, 'Fragments and lost tragedies', in A. Markantonatos (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (Leiden, 2012), 191–209, at 192. Sophocles' victories: *IG* II$^2$ 2325.5. Diod. Sic. 13.103.4 (*TrGF* DID A 3a 15; Soph. *TrGF* T 85 R.). Higher figures are recorded by the *Suda* (24) and by Karystios (20); Soph. *TrGF* T 2, 1.33 R. For a recent discussion of Sophocles' competitive record, see B.W. Millis and S.D. Olson, *Inscriptional Records for the Dramatic Festivals in Athens: IG II$^2$ 2318–2325 and Related Texts* (Leiden, 2012), 147.

[55] For a referenced discussion, see Wright (n. 8), 583–4.

[56] Ar. *Ran.* 71–82, 771–93, 1515–19; Phrynichus, *Muses* F 32 K.-A.; Soph. *TrGF* T 101–3, 105 R.

[57] Cratinus, *Boukoloi* F 17 K.-A.; Soph. *TrGF* T 31 R. For the date of Cratinus' *Boukoloi*, see I. Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy* 1 (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 275.

[58] Schol. *Pax* RVT 607; Ar. *Pax* 694 with S.D. Olson, *Aristophanes* Peace (Oxford, 1998), 211.

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Aristophanes' lines,[59] they are considered to 'run contrary to the consistently favorable attitude towards Sophocles elsewhere in Aristophanes […] and his contemporaries'.[60]

The two comic fragments preserved by Diogenes Laertius are additional evidence for the existence of a competitive strand in the contemporary reception of Sophocles and his drama. They are to be placed next to Aristophanes' joke in *Peace* and to the fact that Sophocles' plays, too, were exploited for comic effect. In the prologue of Aristophanes' *Birds*, the Hoopoe has a scathing remark about Sophocles: 'This is the injury that Sophocles inflicts | on me, Tereus, in his tragedies.'[61] These two comic fragments also allow us to reconstruct the reception of this tradition in the post-Classical period. Polemon was only one of Sophocles' fans in Early Hellenistic Athens. Aristotle speaks highly of Sophocles, making *Oedipus the King* exemplary in many ways.[62] According to Aristotle, Euripides qualifies as 'the most tragic poet', but Lynceus of Samos thought otherwise. Lynceus probably took issue with Aristotle when claiming that 'in regard to tragic sufferings, Euripides is in no way superior to Sophocles'. Already in Early Hellenistic Athens there are signs of the debate familiar to Quintilian: Sophocles and Euripides, Quintilian writes, have two different styles and 'very many discuss which one is the best poet'.[63] Polemon was, however, unconventional in his fondness for specific passages in Sophocles' drama—those passages that fifth-century comedy selected for teasing. Also remarkably Polemon draws his comparison between Sophocles and Homer on the grounds of these comic fragments, although the relationship between the two is not immediately clear. That Sophocles admired and imitated Homer is a staple of ancient literary criticism, where the two authors are associated on two main levels: language and subject-matter. Generations of ancient scholars working on Sophocles' texts noted that Sophocles variously borrowed words, sentences and expressions from Homer in over 170 instances.[64] In his commentaries on Homer's poems, Eustathius, too, keenly drew attention to Sophocles' linguistic debts to Homer, identifying over 70 cases.[65] Beyond linguistic issues, however, Sophocles' specific ties to the epic tradition are not a matter of

[59] Aristophanes' joke has been variously explained with (i) the story that Sophocles claimed the reward of a talent for helping recover a golden crown stolen from the Acropolis (S. Halliwell, 'Notes on some Aristophanic jokes', *LCM* 7 [1982], 153–4); (ii) Sophocles' involvement in a risky business venture (A.H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Peace* [Oxford, 2005; 1985[1]], 165); or (iii) specific lines or a scene from a recent play by Sophocles (H. Grégoire, *Euripides*, vol. 3 [Paris, 1923], 162). Aristophanes' point remains obscure.

[60] Olson (n. 18), 211. Sommerstein (n. 7), 345 includes Sophocles among the five living Athenians favourably mentioned in comedy during the years 431/404, noting that 'Sophocles, presumably, got this treatment because he and his works were so universally admired'.

[61] Ar. *Av*. 100–1: τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται | ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαισιν ἐμέ, τὸν Τηρέα. I owe this point to Patricia Easterling.

[62] Aristotle names Sophocles as representative of tragedy in the way as Homer exemplifies epic and Aristophanes comedy, and praises Sophocles' use of the chorus (*Poet.* 1448a25-8, 1456a25-8). As for Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Aristotle praises its plot construction (1453b3-7, where the reference to *Oedipus* is generally taken as Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*), recognition scene (1455a16-18, 1453b29-31; cf. 1454a2-4) and avoidance of irrationality in the events within the play (1454b6-8, 1460a26-30). Note, however, that Aristotle is critical of Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Electra* (1453b37-1454a2, 1460a30-1). For a general and recent discussion of Aristotle's view of Sophocles, see J.T. Kirby, 'Aristotle on Sophocles', in K. Ormand (ed.), *A Companion to Sophocles* (Malden, MA, 2012), 411–23.

[63] Arist. *Poet*. 1453a27-30; Ath. 14.652c-d; Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.67.

[64] R. Cantarella, 'Imitazioni e reminiscenze omeriche in Sofocle, secondo la critica antica', in id. (ed.), *Scritti minori sul teatro greco* (Brescia, 1970), 307–19, at 313.

[65] H.M. Miller, 'Ὁ φιλόμηρος Σοφοκλῆς and Eustathios', *CPh* 41 (1946), 99–102.

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universal agreement in the ancient tradition. On the one hand, the *Life* points to Homer and the *Odyssey* as Sophocles' main models by claiming that Sophocles 'copies the *Odyssey* in many dramas' and 'produces his plots in the poet's footsteps'. On the other hand, Zoilus, who was a hostile critic of Homer, noted that 'Sophocles took delight in the Epic Cycle, so as to compose whole dramas following its plot-line'.[66] Zoilus' claim finds support in what we know about Sophocles' overall production: both the titles and the fragments of lost plays show that Sophocles preferred stories drawn from the Trojan War and its aftermath, beyond the scope of the two Homeric poems.[67]

Neither the subject matter nor the borrowing of specific words seems to be relevant to Polemon's statement. The *Suda* offers a different interpretation by repeating Polemon's judgement in an extended form and by referring to the 'wisdom' of both authors: 'Polemon […] used to enjoy both Homer and Sophocles and said that each of them was equally wise (ἴσως ἔχειν ἑκάτερον αὐτῶν σοφίας); so that he would call Homer the epic Sophocles and Sophocles the tragic Homer.'[68] That Sophocles and Homer share a reputation for wisdom is otherwise attested in the ancient tradition,[69] but this issue, too, does not seem to be Polemon's point in the passage cited by Diogenes Laertius. Note also that, although fragmentary, Philodemus' passage, which is drawn from the same source as Diogenes Laertius', mentions 'sound' (φωνή): the reference is to how Sophocles' lines sound. Polemon liked those passages in Sophocles written in a style different from the usual one, and, by doing so, he emphasized stylistic variation in Sophocles' tragedy. This feature, ποικιλία, is probably the point of the comparison between Sophocles and Homer. Consider also a passage from the *Life*. Shortly before explaining Sophocles' nickname of 'honeybee' with his eclectic lyrics, the *Life* records that Sophocles 'delineates character, displays a varied style (ποικίλλει) and uses contrivances artfully, reproducing the charm of Homer. This is why †a certain Ionian† (†Ἰωνικόν τινα†) claims that Sophocles alone is a student of Homer'. Whatever the name hidden in the textual corruption, ποικιλία is here presented as one of the grounds for making Sophocles a close follower of Homer. There is no lack of evidence for Homer's skilful use of all styles, in the scholia as in the later rhetorical tradition. Pseudo-Plutarch, for instance, explicitly emphasises this point.[70] That both Sophocles and Homer blend styles is also noted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his discussion of the various types of composition, austere, polished and well-blended. The austere type is characterized by harsh collocations of sounds, dignified rhythms and paratactic syntax, while the polished type features euphonious words well arranged together with hypotactic syntax. Dionysius stresses how differently these two types sound: the first

[66] *Life* 20; Soph. *TrGF* T 1.80–1 R.: τὸ πᾶν μὲν οὖν Ὁμηρικῶς ὠνόμαζε. τούς τε γὰρ μύθους φέρει κατ' ἴχνος τοῦ ποιητοῦ· καὶ τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν δὲ ἐν πολλοῖς δράμασιν ἀπογράφεται. Ath. 7.277c; Soph. *TrGF* T 136 R.: ἔχαιρε δὲ Σοφοκλῆς τῷ ἐπικῷ κύκλῳ, ὡς καὶ ὅλα δράματα ποιῆσαι κατακολουθῶν τῇ ἐν τούτῳ μυθοποιίᾳ. On Zoilus' criticism of Homer, see J.F. Lockwood and R. Browning, *OCD*[4], s.v.

[67] S. Radt, 'Sophocles in seinen Fragmenten', in J. de Romilly (ed.), *Sophocle: Sept exposés suivis de discussions* (Genève, 1983), 185–231. See also J. Jouanna, *Sophocle* (Paris, 2007), 187–94.

[68] *Suda*, π 1887; Soph. *TrGF* T 115b.

[69] See Xen. *Mem*. 1.4.3: asked by Socrates to name the men whom he admires 'for wisdom' (ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ), Aristodemus names 'Homer in epic poetry, Melanippides in dithyramb, Sophocles in tragedy, Polycleitus in sculpture and Zeuxis in painting'.

[70] [Plut.] *Vit. Hom.* 2.72–3; see also Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.46–7. For scholiasts commenting on Homer's stylistic features and their variety, see N.J. Richardson, 'Literary criticism in the exegetical scholia to the *Iliad*: a sketch', *CQ* 30 (1980), 265–87, at 275–7.

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does not glide through the ear, but 'shows many features that are discordant, rough and harsh'; the second is 'smooth and easy-flowing', with no waves at all. A sophisticated pastiche of both types produces the well-blended type. The supreme representative of this style is Homer, who finds his tragic equivalent in Sophocles alone.[71] In this too, the comic fragments cited by Polemon diverge from other sources. For Dionysius, Sophocles skilfully mixes all styles. Aristophanes and Phrynichus, on the other hand, target the harsh side of Sophocles' style—those passages that taste like Pramnian wine and sound as if written with the help of a Molossian dog.

Polemon neither was the only one to admire Sophocles, nor was he the only one to turn Sophocles' perceived or real faults into merits. The work *On the Sublime*, arguably written by Cassius Longinus in the third century A.D., provides the closest parallel.[72] In discussing one of the sources for the sublime, noble words (30–8), Longinus illustrates the difference between genius and faultlessness by considering Greek lyric and tragedy (33):

ἐν μέλεσι μᾶλλον ἂν εἶναι Βακχυλίδης ἕλοιο ἢ Πίνδαρος, καὶ ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ Ἴων ὁ Χῖος ἢ νὴ Δία Σοφοκλῆς; ἐπειδὴ οἱ μὲν ἀδιάπτωτοι καὶ ἐν τῷ γλαφυρῷ πάντη κεκαλλιγραφημένοι, ὁ δὲ Πίνδαρος καὶ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ὁτὲ μὲν οἷον πάντα ἐπιφλέγουσι τῇ φορᾷ, σβέννυνται δ'ἀλόγως πολλάκις καὶ πίπτουσιν ἀτυχέστατα. ἦ οὐδεὶς ἂν εὖ φρονῶν ἑνὸς δράματος, τοῦ Οἰδίποδος, εἰς ταὐτὸ συνθεὶς τὰ Ἴωνος <πάντ'> ἀντιτιμήσαιτο ἑξῆς.

Consider lyric poetry: would you rather be Bacchylides or Pindar? And in tragedy, Ion of Chios or, by god, Sophocles? Ion and Bacchylides are faultless and accomplished writers in the smooth style, while Pindar and Sophocles sometimes burn everything in their vehemence, often absurdly lose their fire and fall most pitifully. Nobody in his senses would trade one single play, *Oedipus*, for all of Ion's works put together.

The comparison between Sophocles and Ion is atypical (our sources often compare Sophocles with Aeschylus and, more frequently, with Euripides) and may go back to a Peripatetic work. Since Longinus presents his treatise as a response to Caecilius of Calacte, it is possible that Caecilius expressed a positive view on Ion and his tragedies.[73] Whatever the case, Longinus points to Sophocles' faults only to highlight his merits: like Polemon, Longinus was aware of Sophocles' shortcomings and, like Polemon, he put them, too, into service to celebrate Sophocles' genius.

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[71] Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 22: αὕτη ἡ λέξις ὅτι μὲν οὐκ ἔχει λείας οὐδὲ συνεξεσμένας ἀκριβῶς τὰς ἁρμονίας οὐδ' ἔστιν εὐεπὴς καὶ μαλακὴ καὶ λεληθότως ὀλισθάνουσα διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς ἀλλὰ πολὺ τὸ ἀντίτυπον καὶ τραχὺ καὶ στρυφνὸν ἐμφαίνει. 23: εἰκότως δὴ γέγονεν εὕρους τις ἡ λέξις καὶ μαλακή, τῆς ἁρμονίας τῶν ὀνομάτων μηδὲν ἀποκυματιζούσης τὸν ἦχον. For Sophocles' blended style, see *Comp*. 24; Soph. *TrGF* T 119 R.

[72] For both the authorship and the date of *On the Sublime*, see M. Heath, 'Longinus, «On sublimity»', *PCPhS* 45 (1990), 43–73.

[73] L. Leurini, 'Appunti sulla produzione scenica di Ione di Chio', *AFLC* 48 (1990), 5–31, at 7.

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