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Revisiting Sophocles' *Poimenes*: Tragedy or Satyr Play?

Ralph M. Rosen
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Nearly seventy years ago W. N. Bates took a dim, but fairly common, view of Sophoclean satyr play: 'When one looks over what is left of these satyr dramas he cannot help being surprised that the great tragic poet who produced such masterpieces as the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Antigone* and the *Electra* could stoop to such composition.'¹ With an attitude like this, it is no wonder that scholars have long resisted ascribing Sophoclean fragments to lost satyr plays while there was *any* possibility that they might have come from the more 'respectable' sibling genre of tragedy. Indeed, such anxieties have colored discussion of the fragments of Sophocles' *Poimenes* (*Shepherds*) for more than a century and a half, and the ongoing debate has divided scholars into two camps: those who believe it to be a proper tragedy, and those who suspect that it must rather be a satyr play.

Very few fragments of *Poimenes* survive, and the title itself, while suspicious (as we will soon see), does not *per se* assure its generic identity, so scholars have naturally begun with the assumption that it was a tragedy. As early as the 1840's, however, some began to wonder whether *Poimenes* might instead have been a satyr play. In 1846 Bothe wittily noted of fr. 501 that it seemed to belong more to the 'comic shoe than the tragic boot' (*sane haec socco sunt aptiora quam cothurno*),² and a year later (1847) Hermann even suggested (though only in passing) that *Poimenes* was 'of the sort that took the place of satyrs' (*ex illo genere fuit, quod satyrorum locum tenebat*),³ by which he presumably meant that it was generically akin to Euripides' *Alcestis*, which appeared as

¹ Bates (1936) 23.

² Bothe (1846) 129.

³ Hermann (1847) 135.

the last play in a tetralogy where one would have expected a satyr play.⁴ The meager evidence we have about the play will never allow for a consensus, but it is easy to see what has inspired so many at least to entertain the idea: quite a few of the fragments employ diction that simply seems out of place in a tragedy. Even those who are convinced that the play was a genuine tragedy usually agree that there is something rather ‘un-tragic’ about some of the fragments. Pearson, for example, in his 1917 commentary on the fragments, conceded that the play’s ‘comic touches’ were ‘undeniable,’ even though he concluded that ‘there is no ground for affirming that its general character was satyric rather than tragic.’⁵

Pearson and others skeptical of satyric claims for *Poimenes* would point to the fact that the plot dealt with one of the most famous and poignant scenes of the Homeric cycle, namely the arrival of the Greeks at the shores of Troy. This episode led to the emblematic ‘first deaths’ of the Trojan war, Protesilaus and Kyknos, killed by Hector and Achilles, respectively. Many are simply unable to imagine how such a plot-line could be anything but tragic in its character. For more recent generations of skeptics, the publication of the papyrus P.Oxy. 2256 fr. 3 in 1952, offered some mild encouragement, insofar as this has been taken by some to indicate that *Poimenes* must have been a Sophoclean tragedy. This papyrus is otherwise famous for recording that Aeschylus defeated Sophocles at the City Dionysia with a tetralogy that included the extant *Supplices*, and so for encouraging scholars to down-date that play to 463 BC.⁶ Unfortunately, only the first four lines of the papyrus, which contain the information about *Supplices*, are reasonably clear, while the remaining four lines of the fragment,

⁴ For discussion, see Dale (1954) xviii-xxix.

⁵ Pearson (1917) 149-50. See Garvie (1969) 6, for an overview of scholarly opinion on the matter; also Radt *TGF* 4.395.

where the word Ποιμήσιον appears, remain ultimately intractable. It may well be the case, in fact, that this title does not even belong to Sophocles, and even if it does, the text does not allow us to identify it with any certainty as either a tragedy or a satyr play.⁷

As is so often the case with controversies that rely on such incomplete evidence, arguments on both sides of the issue have routinely fallen back on what ‘feels tragic’ or what ‘could only belong to a satyr play.’ I believe, however, that a closer and more systematic examination of the diction of the fragments will allow for some progress on the issue, and while relying more on an understanding of the literary practices of the time than on mere intuition. I will, therefore, review in this paper the fragments of *Poimenes* that have been deemed unsuitable for a tragedy, and attempt to determine whether we can in fact make any generic claims about the diction they deploy. I would like ultimately to

⁶ Full discussion, with bibliography, in Garvie (1969) 1-28.

⁷ As Garvie (1969) 5 puts it: ‘The remainder of the fragment is hopelessly confused, and it is doubtful whether the truth will ever certainly be obtained.’ The papyrus reads as follows (*TGF* 1.44-45):

ἔπά ὑρ[
 ἐν'κα [Α Γ]εχῶλο[ε
 Δαν[α] 'εὐ ωΑμυ[μῆνη] σατ^υ
 δεῶτ[ε]ρ[ο]ε Σοφοκλ [ε, τρ'τος
 Μῆσατος [[N . . . [5
 [[Βίχαιε Κωφοῶ[ε
 Ποιμήσιον Κυκ . [
 σατ^υ

Garvie was evidently persuaded by the 19th-century scholars who argued that *Poimenes* was probably not a tragedy, and so was willing to entertain the notion that *Poimenes* (along with whatever Κυκ . [was) in the papyrus should be attributed to one Mesatos (in line 5). See Garvie's detailed discussion, with bibliography, pp. 5-10. Kannicht, in *TGF* 1 (2nd ed.) 44-45, finds it incredible that this *Poimenes* would not be the one by Sophocles, but remains at a loss to explain the lines: ‘forsitan igitur utraque tetralogia sit Sophoclis, superior falso huc tracta, posterior recte ad hoc certamen revocata et suppleta. Sed difficile creditu post “τρ'τος Μῆσατος” Mesati tetralogiam omnino omissam esse.’ Lloyd-Jones (1996) 257, remains non-committal, but seems to lean towards accepting the papyrus as evidence that *Poimenes* was a tragedy.

suggest that the play does indeed contain diction and possible scenes that point to the likelihood of its being a satyr play. I will also discuss a number of its possible affinities with comedy and suggest that a satyr-version of such a central episode of the Trojan cycle would not have been especially incongruous or unique. I would like, in particular, to propose as an analogy Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*, which, like *Poimenes*, dealt with the early stages of the Trojan War, and may help us to imagine a number of ways in which Sophocles might have made a plausible satyr play out of that first skirmish on the Trojan coast.

Only twenty-five fragments of *Poimenes* survive; of these only six offer more than a single line, and of these none is more than three lines. But the basic story line seems assured from combining the testimony of several fragments with Proclus' summary (*Chrestom.* 148-50) of the *Cypria*.⁸ A scholion on Lycophron 530 (= Sophocles fr. 497) says: 'Sophocles recounts in *Poimenes* that Protesilaus was slain by Hector' (ἱστορεῖ δὲ Σοφοκλῆς ἐν Ποιμῆσιν ὡς πρῶτον Ἰεκτορος ὑναιρεθῆναι τῶν Πρωτεσίλων). This incident conjures up, of course, that moment when the invading Greeks first set foot on Trojan soil. In this famous scene, foretold to Achilles by Thetis, Protesilaus disembarks first, kills several Trojans, but is then killed himself by Hector. Achilles, then, lands with his men and kills Poseidon's son Kyknos. Kyknos himself almost certainly figures in *Poimenes* (cf. Frr. 499 and 501),⁹ and the general setting seems unambiguous. As an episode in the Trojan cycle, it seems like adequate material for a

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ἤπειτα ὑποβάνοντας ἀώτοῆς εἰς ἄλιον ἐργουσιν οἱ Τρῆες, κατὰ θνήσκει Πρωτεσίλαος ὡς Ἰεκτορος. ἤπειτα ὡς Ἀχιλλεῆς ἀώτοῆς τρῆπεται ὑνελεῖν Κῶκνον τῶν Ποσειδῆνος. κατὰ τοῆς νεκροῆς ὑναιροῶνται.

tragedy, and, one might well ask, what could be more tragic than the poignant story of Protesilaus and his poor wife Laodamia, overwhelmed with a grief that ultimately led to her own death?¹⁰

In addressing the generic identity of *Poimenes*, we might, in fact, begin with the title of the play itself. If the play really dramatized such a famously tragic story, why would Sophocles choose a chorus of *shepherds* to advertise it?¹¹ This seems only a recipe for trouble, since such a chorus would so easily evoke the unflattering stereotypes of rustics that prevailed in fifth-century Athens, and the generally ‘unelevated’ associations of, and prejudices against, professions of this sort.¹² The fragments seem to indicate that the story was told somewhat unusually from the Trojan perspective, and one is then left

⁹ Fr. 499 (= Steph. Byz. 392.6): βοῶν Κυκνᾶτιν; Fr. 501 (= Hesych. ρ 537 Schmidt): ΚΥΚΝΟΣ· καὰ μῶν ὠβρῆζοντ’ ἀώτ’κ’ ἕκ βίθρων ἔλ], ἢ ῥυτ ρι κροῶων γλουτῆρ ν ὠπτ’ου ποδῶς. For discussion of fr. 501, see below p. [000].

¹⁰ See Homer, *Il.* 2.698-702. That the story itself was regarded in the fifth century as appropriate tragic material is evident from the fragments of a lost *Protesilaus* of Euripides (frr. 647-57 N). Other sources of the myth are discussed in Gantz (1993) 592-95.

¹¹ The evidence of Euripides’ treatment of the story (see previous note) might suggest that the more ‘normal’ title would be *Protesilaus*.

¹² It is noteworthy that in our only extant complete satyr play, Euripides’ *Cyclops*, the satyrs find themselves reluctantly enslaved to the Cyclops as his shepherds, as Silenus relates at the opening of the play: καλοῶσι δ’ ἀώτῶν ἄι λατρεῶμεν ἢ Πολῶφημον· ὑντά δ’ ἐῶων βακχευμίτων ἢ πόμνας Κῶκλωπος ὑνοσ’ου ποιμᾶνομεν. (*Cycl.* 24-26). Seaford (1984) 33-36 notes that it was something of a convention in satyr play for the satyrs to find themselves as slaves to a harsh master, a situation that allowed them to contrast their current unenviable lot with the pleasant life they once lived in the service of Dionysus. While it is not explicit in *Cyclops* that the shepherding profession was in itself unworthy, their attitude toward it implies that it was on the low end of social spectrum; the fact that they have no objection in principle to servitude (since they are happily Dionysus’ slaves), but rather to the type of servitude indicates that their disdain for their present occupation arises from basic snobbishness. Certainly lines 77-81, where the chorus of satyrs complains that they now have to wear the lowly goat-skin as a mark of their new status, imply as much, as Seaford (1984) 118, notes: ἔγ’ δ’ ἰ σῶς πρῶπολος ἢ Κῶκλωπι θητεῶω

to decide whether the plot was sympathetic, like Aeschylus' portrayal of the Persians, or buffoonish like the portrayal of non-Athenian Greeks and barbarians in Old Comedy. Certainly a chorus of shepherds makes it easy to construct a plot of the latter sort. Further, while shepherds are not explicitly satyrs, they both are associated with the pastoral, non-urban and untamed world. It is no coincidence that the satyrs of Euripides' *Cyclops* are cast as Polyphemus' shepherds (unhappy as they are about their new occupation; see note 11), or that in Vergil's sixth *Eclogue* (6.13-30) it was the shepherds Chromis and Mnasyllus who catch the king of the satyrs, Silenus, and make him sing. It may not, in short, have been inconceivable for shepherds to be portrayed sympathetically in a tragedy, but actually entitling a tragedy after such a conspicuously lowly chorus does seem a little unlikely.

The play's title, however, is only the beginning, and might not have caused much anxiety were it not for fr.501:

ΚΥΚΝΟΣ· καὰ μῶν ὠβρ'ζοντῶ ἀώτικῶ ἐκ βῖθρων ἔλ],
 ῥυτ ρι κροῶων γλουτῶν ὠπτ'ου ποδῶς

1 μῶν Brunck μῶ cod. σῶ ante ὠβρ. add Dindorf

...that I destroy you utterly who do violence [to me], hitting your buttocks with the bottom of my foot serving as a whip.

This fragment is cited by Hesychius for the phrase ῥυτ ρι κροῶων, and is ascribed to a character Kyknos. The second line is also quoted by Photius and attributed explicitly to Sophocles. Welcker first made the connection with *Poimenes*, which seems reasonable,

|| τ]ι μονοδηρκαται δοῶλος ὑλάνων || σῆν τυιδε τρίγου χλάναι μεληαι ||
 σὺς χωράς φιλάς.

given what is known of Kyknos' role in the myth behind the play.¹³ The text of the first line is not entirely certain, but in Radt's version seems to mean 'that I destroy you utterly who do violence [to me], hitting your buttocks with the bottom of my foot serving as a whip.'¹⁴ Hesychius records an alternative explanation, namely that the foot referred to is not Kyknos', but rather that of the enemy as he flees, meaning that he will run away so vigorously that the flat of his own feet will hit his buttocks. Now, this is one of those cases in which scholars have assessed the tone of the passage largely by intuition: as a boastful threat, it is hardly out of place in a tragedy, but both the word γλουτῶς, and the image of someone's foot kicking that anatomical part, shade over into comic slapstick. The word γλουτῶς itself is curious, for it is not intrinsically comic—in fact it does not even occur in Aristophanes. Yet, insofar as it is essentially a technical term, common enough in the Hippocratic corpus (17 times) and Galen (32 times), though relatively rare elsewhere, when it does occur outside of a technical context, it seems inevitably to draw a smile.

K. J. Dover has discussed the category of 'technical language' on several occasions, especially as it pertains to the analysis of comic diction,¹⁵ and he rightly suggests caution in designating an expression technical. In particular, he urges that 'before we label any phenomenon "technical" we ask ourselves "how else could it be expressed"?'¹⁶ In the case of γλουτῶς, this is a trickier question to answer than might

¹³ Welcker (1839-1841) 115.

¹⁴ Other variations are possible, depending on one's reading of ὠβρ'ζοντῶ. Lloyd-Jones (1996) prints Dindorf's supplement, καὶ μὲν ἄσῶν ὠβρ'ζων, and translates: 'and in case I do you violence and wreck you utterly...' For textual discussion see Pearson (1917) ad loc, p. 151, and Radt ad loc. p. 396.

¹⁵ Dover (1987 [1970]) 224-25; see also (1997) 114-19, and Elizabeth Craik's study of medical language in Sophocles in this volume [000-000].

¹⁶ Dover (1996) 115.

first appear, for in fact if one wanted to say ‘kick in the buttocks,’ *anatomically* speaking, probably there was no other way to put it. Homer certainly uses it matter-of-factly to describe where spears occasionally land.¹⁷ But there *were* several other ways to express the idea of kicking the posterior with less physiological precision than γλουτῶς — forms of πυγῶ, for example. Πυγῶ virtually always had a comic flavor,¹⁸ but in fact, graphic as it is, it is less graphic than γλουτῶς, which is even more anatomically precise. In this sense, γλουτῶς turns out to have a valence rather like our word ‘buttocks’: that is, in ordinary speech, we would probably say ‘butt,’ ‘bum,’ ‘ass,’ etc. But our doctors (for example) would not use these words; rather he or she would refer to a condition in that area as one that affected the ‘buttocks.’ It might in fact be mildly amusing to hear even a doctor utter the term, but not *nearly* as funny as hearing it in a non-medical context. The hunches of previous scholars about the tone of γλουτῶς in fr. 501 seem, therefore, dictionally justified: it is likely that Kyknos’ boast, and his choice of words, was written to provoke some level of laughter. Certainly, the rhetoric of mockery and boasting—which must have suffused this passage—easily encouraged the use of words which, if not always overtly aischrological, could raise a smile by their off-color usage.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Iliad* 5.66, 8.340, 13.651.

¹⁸ See Henderson (1975) 201-202; Henderson notes that πυγῶ is not especially common in Old Comedy (unlike πρωκτῶς, which is), and that in its many occurrences outside of comedy, especially in compound words, it has only a mildly vulgar (and so, I would add, humorous) tone.

¹⁹ See, for example, forms of πυγῶ in derisive iambographic contexts in Archilochus, fr. 187 and 313W (the latter suspected by West).

It is difficult, of course, to assert categorically that under no circumstance could γλουτῶς have appeared in a tragedy,²⁰ but other fragments of *Poimenes* reinforce strongly the idea that its plot was not ‘serious.’ In fact, fragments 503 and 504 nearly clinch the identification of the play as non-tragic, although, surprisingly enough, scholars who have argued that it was a satyr play have not marshalled these two fr. with any particular vigor. To put it simply, these fragments are demonstrably at home in a comic genre, while very awkward in a tragedy:

Fr. 503

ἦνθῶ δ πῖροικος πηλαμῆς χειμῖζεται
 πῖραυλος ὦΕλλησποντῆς, ῥα’α θῆρους
 τὰ Βοσπορ’τῆ· τᾶδε γῖρ θαμῖζεται

there where the neighboring pelamys [an immature tuna] spends the winter,
 dwelling nearby in the Hellespont, fully mature in the summer
 for the Bosphorus dweller; for that’s where it usually goes

Fr. 504

κημοῦσι πλεκτοῦς πορφῶρας φθέρει γῆνος

(he?) destroys the race of the purple fish [myrex trunculus LSJ] with [in?] woven fishing-basket

One might think that early commentators would have been suspicious of the source of fr. 503, namely Athenaeus. At 319a Athenaeus is in the thick of a long catalogue of seafood: immediately preceding our citations was a prolonged discussion about octopuses, and a short entry about crabs. Then begins the paragraph on the ‘pelamys,’ the term for tuna under a year old:

²⁰ One might, for example, imagine a situation in which the word was used to describe an instance of wounding on the battlefield, in a deliberate allusion to Homer (especially in the legendarily ‘Homeric’ Sophocles). But there can be little doubt that the tone of its usage in fr. 501 is mockingly humorous and deprecating.

Πηλαμῶς· Φρῶνιχος ἔν Μοῦσαις μνημονεῶει ὡΑριστοτῆλης δ' ἔν πῆμπ
 τ' ζῶων μορῶων 'απ πηλαμῶδες,'
 φησ', 'καά οπ θῶννοι τ'κτουσιν ἔν τὰ Πῶντ', ὕλλοθι δὲ οῶ.' μνημονεῶει
 ἀώτ]ν καά Σοφοκλ ς ἔν Ποιμῆσιν... (fr. 503)

Pelamys: Phrynichus mentions them in *Muses*. Aristotle, in the fifth book of *Parts of Animals*, says: 'the "pelamyds" and the tunnies spawn in the Black Sea, but nowhere else.' Sophocles also mentions them in *Shepherds*. (fr. 503).

Throughout such passages about foods, Athenaeus consistently cites two basic types of evidence: writers in comic genres and technical or scientific writers. While it is not inconceivable that a tragedy would mention a species of fish, one is hard pressed to imagine how the level of humorously trivial detail in this particular fragment would have worked in a tragedy. Welcker and assigned fr. 503 to a messenger who announced the arrival of the Greeks at Troy,²¹ though if so, he speaks more like someone anticipating a new shipment of caviar than one fearful of an imminent war!

Pearson suggested that fr. 504 also occurred 'in the same context'; but this does not make his case any more palatable; needless to say, it is rather unsettling to see yet more detail about fish in a context that is supposed to be about war. The scholiast on Aristophanes *Knights* 1150 preserves the quotation from Sophocles that gives us fr. 504 in describing the use of the κημῶς.²²

Κημῶς...πλήγμα τι ἔκ σχοινῶων γινῶμενον ἄμοιον ἡθμᾶ, Δ τῖς πορφῶρα
 ς λαμβῖνουσιν, ε[ς ἔ α] πορφῶραι καά τῖ κογχῶλια ε[σῆ]ρπουσιν. ἔν ἀώ
 τοᾶς δὲ τοῶτοις ἔστά καά τῶ δῆλεαρ, "ς φησάν ὡΗρωδιανῶς, παρατιθ
 ῆμενος τῖ Σοφοκλῆους ἔκ Ποιμῆων...(Fr. 504)

²¹ Welcker (1839-41) 113-17. Pearson (1917) 148.

²² *Kemoi* in this fragment are like eel-pots or lobster-traps, i.e., baskets shaped something like an upside-down funnel so as to make it difficult for the animal to escape. See Pearson (1917) ad loc. 154.

The *kêmos* is something like an *êthmos*, with which they catch purple-fish, into which the purple-fish and shellfish go. In these devices there is also bait, as Herodian says, citing Sophocles from *Poimenes*...

The scene itself is pedestrian and unelevated, even if in itself not unimaginable in a tragedy. But what could *φθέρπει* possibly refer to? It felt out of place long ago, and Tucker emended it away in 1904 with *θηρόν*.²³ Pearson accepted the reading—thus for a while officially taming an otherwise peculiar expression—although Radt restored *φθέρπει* in his edition of the fragments. Needless to say, the bathos that results from the juxtaposition of the hyperbolic *φθέρπει* and its lowly object, purple-fish, is a trope common in comic genres, and even smacks of paratragedy. Taken together, fr. 503 and 504 seem to indicate a scene familiar from comedy in which the food delicacies are described with an excessive—and so comic—attention to detail, often with an emphasis on their exotic provenance.²⁴

Much later, in a very different genre, we even find a scene that bears an uncanny resemblance to our two Sophoclean fragments, and further strengthen the case that they are in a comic, rather than tragic, vein.²⁵ In the second half of Juvenal *Satire* 4 (34ff.), which satirizes Domitian's court as it frantically deliberates how to present an enormous fish to the emperor, the provenance of the fish is described, mock-heroically, as follows:

²³ Tucker (1904) 245.

²⁴ Two exemplary passages (and there are indeed many) can be found in Aristophanes *Peace* 999-1015, and Plato Comicus *Phaon*, fr. 189KA.

²⁵ I assume that the connection between the two texts is coincidental, although there is no question that Juvenal had some familiarity with Sophocles, as *Satire* 6.634-37 implies (the passage offers a response to the hypothetical charge that the theme of this satire has required a shift to tragic bombast): *fingimus haec altum satura sumente coturnum // scilicet, et finem egressi legemque priorum // grande Sophocleo carmen bacchamur hiatu, // montibus ignotum Rutulis caeloque Latino?* The similarity of the two passages seems close enough to suggest that the elaborate origin of these Pontic fish became something of a proverbial trope for an exotic delicacy in antiquity.

incidit Hadriaci spatium admirabile rhombi
ante domum Veneris, quam Dorica sustinet Ancon,
implevitque sinus; neque enim minor haeserat illis
quos operit glacies Maeotica ruptaque tandem
solibus effundit torrentis ad ostia Ponti
desidia tardos et longo frigore pingues. (39-44)

an amazingly huge turbot showed up
down by Venus' temple, which Doric Ancona supports,
and it filled up the net. And it stuck in it, no smaller than those [fish]
which the ice of the Maeotic Sea covers over; when finally
the ice is broken by the sun, it sweeps them down to the mouth of the rushing
Pontus, slow from inactivity and fattened by the long period of cold.

The rhombus, or turbot, was actually caught in Ancona and whisked to Rome, but Juvenal compares its size to the kind of fish that spend the winters in the frozen Sea of Azov (*glacies Maeotica*; which empties into the Black Sea proper) and then burst forth with the warmth of the summer down to the Hellespont, 'slow from inactivity and fat from the long cold.' *Illis* in line 41 is ambiguous: it could refer to turbot, but has been thought as well to refer to tuna, since, as Athenaeus attests, that was a fish closely associated with the Black Sea.²⁶ The notion of the Black Sea fish maturing in winter and migrating south in the summer is, of course, identical to that in fr. 503, and as if to signal the tone of both passages, Juvenal introduces his lines with a mock-epic invocation to the Muses which establishes it as deliberately unelevated and humorous:²⁷

incipi Calliope. licet et considerare: non est
cantandum, res vera agitur. narrate, puellae
Pierides, prosit mihi vos dixisse puellas. (34-36)

Begin, Calliope. And feel free to sit down: this is not
Stuff for singing; we're talking about a real event here. So tell it,
You girls of Pieria—and I hope I get some good from calling you 'girls.'

²⁶ See Courtney (1980) ad loc., p. 209.

²⁷ See now Luisi (1998) 110-12.

We may allow, then, that the diction of the *Poimenes* fragments points toward a satyr play rather than a tragedy; but what about the plot? How could such a seemingly solemn story have been dramatized as a satyr play? In dealing with works as fragmentary as *Poimenes*, we must always resist the temptation to fill in the details of the plot without extremely good reason. Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*, however, a comedy that would have been roughly contemporary with *Poimenes*,²⁸ offers a few significant contacts with the Sophoclean play, which can at least show how action surrounding the advent of the Trojan War might be humorously dramatized.²⁹

In *Dionysalexandros*, to judge from the detailed hypothesis of P. Oxy. 663 (p. 140 K-A), the action appears to begin on Trojan soil, probably on Mt. Ida, where Dionysus impersonates Paris. We may reasonably assume that Paris is depicted in his traditional role here as a shepherd on Mt. Ida, and the hypothesis leaves some suspicion that the play featured at least a second- or half-chorus of Idaean shepherds.³⁰ Two facts, however, are clear from the fragments: first, the plot of the play begins with the pre-war judgment of

²⁸ The date of *Dionysalexandros* is reasonably, if not certainly, assigned 430 BC; cf. Kassel-Austin ad loc., p. 141, with bibliography.

²⁹ Another of Sophocles' fragmentary plays, *Syndeipnoi*, also dramatized events leading up to the Trojan war, and drew on material from the *Cypria*, specifically the banquet of the Achaean leaders at Tenedos, and Achilles' anger at either being excluded or invited too late. Like *Poimenes*, this play too has been suspected by many over the years as a satyr play. If it was, in fact, a satyr play, it would further suggest that travesties even of rather dark moments of the Trojan war were not taboo. For discussion of, and bibliography on, the controversy over *Syndeipnoi*, see Pearson (1917) 2.198-201 and Radt p. 426. See also Voelke (pro satyr play) and Sommerstein (contra) in this volume, pp. [000].

³⁰ Otherwise it is difficult to account for the fact that at the beginning of the hypothesis, one group of men mocks and insults Dionysus when he appears on Ida, while at the end, a chorus of satyrs (mentioned as such, l. 42) vow never to betray their leader. See Luppe (1966) 184-88.

Paris, and extends well beyond the arrival of the Greeks.³¹ As the hypothesis states: (23-29):

...ὕκοῶει δὲ με-
 τῶ ᾄλ'γον τοῆς ὠΑχαιοῆς πυρ-
 πολ]εᾶν τῶν χΗ(ραν) (καά) [ζητεᾶν
 τῶν ὠΑληξανδ(ρον). τῶν μ(έν) οῶν ὠΕλῆνη(ν)
 εἴτ' ἰλαρον ᾄτ' ἰχ[ιστα
 κρῶψας, ᾄαυτῶν δῶ εἴτ' κριῶ[ν
 μ(ε)τ(α)σκευῖσας ὠπομῆνει
 τῶ μῆλλον.

[Dionysus] after a bit heard that the Achaeans were ravaging the land and looking for Alexander. So he hid Helen in a basket as quickly as he could, turned himself into a ram, and cooled his heels.

Second, sheep and shepherds seem conspicuous in this play: Dionysus, we have seen, becomes a ram, and Paris, presumably in his capacity as a shepherd, penetrates the disguise, perhaps with the help of his own band of fellow shepherds. Evidently Paris sees through Dionysus easily and comically, as fr. 45KA suggests:

ἰ δ' ἠλ'θιος ἦσπερ πρῶβατον β β λῆγων βαδ'ζει. (fr. 45KA)

The fool walks around like a sheep going 'baah, baah'

Fr. 43KA hints at a rustic setting for the play, possibly referring to Paris' house:

οῶκ, ὕλλῖ βῶλιτα χλωρῖ καά οἴσπωτῶν πατεᾶν.

no, you'll have to walk through fresh cow dung and sheep droppings...

Fr. 39KA mentions shepherds, and fr. 49KA lists 'goose-farmers' and 'cowherds':

ἦνεισιν δῶ ἔνταυθοᾶ μῖχαιραι κουρ'δες,
 ἀῆς κέρομεν τῖ πρῶβατα καά τοῆς ποιμῆνας. (fr. 39KA)

³¹ For discussion see Schwarze (1971) 6-24.

here are some shearing knives, with which we shear the sheep and even the shepherds themselves...

...χηνοβοσκό', βουκῶλοι (fr. 49 KA)

goose-farmers, cowherds

If nothing else, therefore, *Dionysalexandros* shows that shepherds and their particular habits of life could form a natural backdrop for a comic version of the early events of the Trojan War, especially those which took place at the coastline, where shepherds would serve as the first human contact in the 'barbarian' world. For Cratinus, at least, the rustic world, with its stereotypically unelevated and bumbling cast of characters, was fodder for comedy.³²

Cratinus, of course, was composing comedies, not satyr plays, and even if it were possible—which it is not—for us to establish a direct connection between some of the details of *Dionysalexandros* and *Poimenes*, the generic demands of each would presumably have yielded distinct plot-lines. Still, there is no question that satyr plays had at least as many affinities with comic drama as with the tragic trilogies that preceded them in performance, and there is no reason why it could not have appropriated tropes and conceits from Old Comedy.³³ Earlier we saw some of the internal reasons why Sophocles' *Poimenes* was likely a satyr play; Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros* adds some measure of external evidence, I believe, by addressing of the counterarguments often

³² Cratinus also composed play called *Boukoloi* (*Cowherds*), which probably included humor of this sort, although we know almost nothing about its content. See Kassel-Austin pp. 130-31, with bibliography. It is noteworthy also that the verb βουκολῆω could have decidedly negative connotations in Attic, usually meaning in such contexts something like 'deceive.' Examples can be found in LSJ s.v. II. See also above n. [11] on the unflattering stereotypes of rustic occupations.

³³ On comedy and the 'laughable' in satyr play, see Krumeich, Pechstein and Seidensticker (1999) 32-33, and Voelke (2000).

adduced against this position. In other words: the early scenes of the Trojan War could be treated lightly and irreverently, a chorus of shepherds (or at least rustics of some sort as important figures in the plot) seemed a natural and fertile choice for making a scene on Mt. Ida humorous,³⁴ and—perhaps most significant of all—Dionysus himself, perennial king of the satyrs, could easily be the ringleader of a plot that travestied the tragically fraught action at the beginning of the Trojan War.

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³⁴ Sophocles also composed another satyr play that took place on Mt. Ida, *Krisis*, evidently dramatizing the judgment of Paris. It preceded, therefore, the Trojan War proper, but seems to have situated satyrs comfortably among the shepherds of Ida. See Pearson (1917) 3.29 and Lloyd-Jones (1996) 194-95. Bates (1936) 22, makes notes the parallel between the scenes of this play and Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*.

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