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Introduction

One of the emotional climaxes of Sophocles's *Antigone* comes when the eponymous heroine is led to her death. In the original Greek composition, Antigone sings throughout this scene, lamenting her fate. The chorus, a group of Theban elders, at first offer their compassion, straightforwardly expressing their sorrow at Antigone's situation.[1] But as the scene progresses, we hear the chorus by and large refusing to accept her interpretation of the situation. When she compares herself to Niobe, whose petrification she describes as a living entombment similar to her own, the chorus find it inappropriate that Antigone should put herself on par with a descendant of the gods. Even though the chorus do suggest a way in which the mythical comparison can be a source of consolation—namely, as a measure of Antigone's posthumous fame—they miss the mark entirely in their comment that Antigone is similar to Niobe "while living and later, after she died" (838). For Antigone, the horror of her situation is precisely the lack of clear and socially sanctioned separation between life and death, and she reacts violently to the chorus's misrepresentation: "Oimoi [a common tragic exclamation of grief and misery], I am mocked! By gods, why do you insult me?" (839–841).[2] The verbal exchange here makes clear that, as far as Antigone is concerned, the chorus have flagrantly failed to listen to her. But the ethical and emotional separation between the two sides of the dialogue is also expressed by the chorus's consistent avoidance of musically participating in Antigone's song. While she sings, they use almost only spoken or chanted vocalizations. Indeed, the scene

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ends with Antigone's solo song of loneliness: "unmourned, friendless . . . not one of my loved ones laments my uncried-for fate," she sings (876–877). She experiences her condition as abandonment-through-song.

I do not presume to have covered, within a single paragraph, the complex dynamics of admiration and criticism, compassion and frustration, solitude and heroic spirit, that develop in the shared scene between Antigone and the chorus. The point of this short example is to purposefully, if abruptly, plunge the reader into the multilayered experience which the sung dialogue of Sophoclean tragedy offers. Meaning—our understanding of what happens in the scene—is not just a question of verbal semantics; meaning is created also through musical and sonic effects, some of which we can evoke or approximate, and others to which we are effectively deaf. Yet other factors, which I shall only address here in passing, come into play when we try to interpret a dramatic interaction and the relationship between the characters (for our purposes here, the chorus is a single character). These factors include but are not limited to the characters' social roles, determined by their gender, age, and status; whether other characters are present onstage; and the audience's expectations set up by the mythical framework. In this article I concentrate on the auditory dimension of tragic dialogue—on how, in Sophocles's poetry, the voice produces and carries forth meaning beyond the verbal.

The aim of the article is to elucidate how empathy develops, deepens, fluctuates, or founders through the multilayered vocal interaction of Sophoclean dialogue. The *Antigone* example illustrated my approach—namely, how I glean nuances of empathy from Sophocles's composition, or how the interplay between the different sonic layers of dialogue may be read as a complex representation of empathy. Moreover, empathy in these Sophoclean situations is a potentially therapeutic response to suffering. In developing this reading of empathy as a vocal phenomenon, I have been influenced by the work of psychoanalysts and therapists, as well as by writers in the phenomenological tradition of philosophy of sound, writings that I present below in the third section, "The Voice in Psychotherapy and Philosophy." The basic premise of my approach is that one's vo-

cal responses are the manifest end of an internal and intangible action. When doing what we call listening, one's voice is the external effect of the empathic stance they embody. Thus, the fundamental question guiding this article can be formulated as follows: *What does listening sound like?* The assumption here is that listening is not a passive position but an active one, an ethical standpoint that comes about through the voice and can be heard. Empathy, or empathic listening, can be expressed in dialogue through the materiality of the voice, through the musical and auditory—that is, the nonverbal—aspects of the communication.

Methodologically, my focus here is on scenes of a particular kind, namely, dialogues where the protagonist and/or the chorus *sing*; I proceed by means of a close reading of the poetic and sonic effects in three scenes, one from *Oedipus the King* and two from *Oedipus at Colonus* (in the second and fourth sections, respectively). In ancient Greek tragedy, musical scenes come at emotional and dramatic climaxes. They showcase the richness of the voice in dialogic interaction, and offer multiple planes on which empathic listening may or may not take root. These songs unleashed the full potential of *mousikê*, a term far broader than its contemporary counterpart, *music*. In ancient Greek culture, *mousikê* denotes the combination of poetry, melody, rhythm, and dance (Murray & Wilson, 2004, p. 1; Taplin, 2005, p. 235). Like the "numbers" performed between the spoken sections of contemporary musical drama, the songs of ancient Greek tragedy were scenes of great emotional intensity and brought to fulfillment the genre's expressive means. While the melody of tragic songs is all but lost to us, we can still access their complex rhythmic patterns, or their *meter*, for these are defined by syllable length and inscribed in the surviving text.[3]

Through the metrical aspect of Sophoclean sung dialogues we can recognize different shades of harmony between the singers, from a stark opposition between them to a very close bond.[4] When the two sides in the dialogue vocalize in markedly different musical-rhythmic patterns—for example, one melodically sung and the other spoken or chanted (like the scene in *Antigone*)—this is often read as a disconnect between them, as if they are embodying separate spheres, musically and mentally

(Scott, 1996). The opening paragraph already showed how the chorus's refusal to harmonize with Antigone's voice at a moment of profound suffering intensified her misery. A different phenomenon, which we encounter below, is when the voices of two characters are tightly knit so that one singer completes the metrical pattern that the other started. This is a distinctive feature of Sophocles's sung dialogues, reflecting a very intense level of intimacy between the singers. However, vocal intimacy between Sophoclean characters does not necessarily reflect, or make, successful empathic listening, as I demonstrate below. This counterintuitive effect suggests that closeness is sometimes at odds with successful empathy. In the first dialogue at Colonus, for example, glimmers of empathy are present even when the overall effect is a failure to empathically listen, and, significantly, a tight vocal interaction leads to fear and violent rejection. My interpretation thus expands our notions of how empathic listening comes about and how it may sound when it is therapeutic.

Oedipus the King

Rather than laying out the theoretical terms of the discussion just yet, I invite the reader to immerse themself in the sounds of another sung dialogue, the one between Oedipus and his chorus of Thebans. The scene presents an idiosyncratic mix of (auditory) foreignness and (emotional) familiarity. Before turning to the philosophical and practical-therapeutic underpinnings of my approach, I would like to first read this scene carefully. Interpreting it through its auditory dimension—listening to it—will, I hope, present a more compelling case for taking Sophoclean dialogues as case studies for empathic interaction.

The sung dialogue near the end of Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* typifies the kind of empathic partnership-in-song between protagonist and chorus for which Antigone longs. It is further paradigmatic to my concerns here in that voice and listening are thematically central to the action dramatized in the song. As opposed to the relationship between the young Antigone and "her" chorus, Oedipus's chorus is a group of Theban elders who have expressed their reverence for and dependency

on their king throughout the play. The dialogue is performed after Oedipus's identity as the son of Laius and Jocasta has been confirmed, and following Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus's self-mutilation. The chorus, looking on in terror as Oedipus steps onstage, start chanting in anapests, a meter usually used in motion. Anapestic feet (bars) are comprised of two long beats or two short and one long. In this case, the anapestic pattern probably conforms to Oedipus's movement as he slowly, blindly makes his way toward the chorus. The chorus repeatedly refer to Oedipus as a horrific visual spectacle from which they cannot avert their gaze (cf. Seale, 1982, p. 248; Nooter, 2012, p. 90): "Feu, feu [another common exclamation of grief], miserable! I cannot look at you, though I wish to ask much, to learn much, to gaze much" (1303–1305). Let us examine the original composition of the line. The Greek corresponding to the underlined text is transliterated, and the metrical pattern is marked in a way that approximates its rhythmic effect (short and long syllables represented by eighth and quarter notes; feet are separated by a vertical line, like musical bars):

> *feu feu, dustēn!* . . . ♩♩ | ♩♩
> *ethelon poll' aneresthai,* ♪♪♩ | ♩♪♪ | ♩♩
> *polla puthesthai, polla d'athrēsai.*
> ♩♪♪ | ♩♩ | ♩♪♪ | ♩♩

The meter is made up of common anapestic variations and is very regular. The sequence ♩♪♪ | ♩♩ repeats thrice, corresponding to a repetition of sound pattern (*poll* — — *es*(*th*)*sai*) and syntax. The entire section is full of labial and dental sounds, both aspirated and not (p, ph, t, th, s). Taken together, these sounds create an effect of a breathless, urgent whisper, a shocked chant. The chorus's words reflect restraint while still betraying their impending panic.

Oedipus then sings, but he does not address the chorus and seems to have not registered their presence yet. Abandoning himself to his grief and pain, he sings: "Where is my voice being swept away? Fate, how far have you plunged?" (1309–1311). It should be noted that Oedipus's song is in a melodic variant of anapests: rhythmically, it is made up of the same parts as the above choral pattern, but with less strict regularity. Despite the

sense of deep solitude that Oedipus's words convey, I argue that his song is an organic expansion of the chorus's previous rhythm rather than a total break from it, and that there is a measure of continuity between the two voices.[5] This runs contrary to the common reading wherein the different modes of vocal delivery reflect the separation between Oedipus and the choral group (Scott, 1996, p. 144).

Indeed, though Oedipus sings and the chorus chant, and though he cannot hear them, they respond to his words: to his rhetorical questions, the chorus reply, "to somewhere awful, beyond what can be heard or seen" (1312). These words are syntactically dependent on Oedipus's previous sentence, but they are not sung or chanted. Rather, the chorus respond here with an iambic trimeter, the most common meter of spoken tragic diction (three repetitions of ♪♩♪♩ or ♩♩♪♩). Oedipus's words verbally describing his loneliness were musically distinct from the chorus's but were rhythmically connected to them; in the chorus's reaction now, the syntactic level produces harmoniousness while the metrical-musical plane has the opposite effect. This is not to say that the interaction makes no sense, but that the different layers on which it unfolds allow for a complexity, a push-and-pull between intimacy and distance, responsiveness and reserve.

One could counter that the harmony has more to do with the conventions of the genre than the actual emotional dynamics between the characters. To this I would suggest that the performative is another dimension making up the complexity of the interaction: it is precisely the level through which the materiality of vocal interaction is articulated. In other words, the auditory is an important aspect of the performative dimension. Sophocles could have unified the voices of Oedipus and the chorus in different ways, but that he chose to have them answer his rhetorical question plays into the dynamics of listening and responsiveness between them. Thus, Oedipus's feeling that his voice wanders aimlessly highlights his isolation and is a poignant symbolic counterpart to the psychic and physical trauma he is undergoing. Yet his voice hits the mark entirely, for the chorus answer the very questions that he utters seemingly with no expectation for a response. In doing so, they expand the

thematic significance of sight and sound ("beyond what can be heard or seen") and affirm his sense of incomprehensible grief. Their response is thus an act of listening and an index of their empathy. It validates and amplifies Oedipus's seemingly futile voice and facilitates the expression of his misery as meaningful. This, as we shall see below, is the kernel of empathic listening: therein lies the therapeutic potential of empathy.

The following strophes progressively deepen the connection between Oedipus and the chorus even as the formal separation between them seems fixed, with Oedipus singing and the chorus speaking. Oedipus's song is primarily in a meter called dochmiac, which can present a rather irregular rhythmic pattern and is commonly used in tragedy in scenes of great distress. But his song is also interspersed with the musical version of iambics. Thus, the chorus's responses, spoken in iambic trimeters, are not as incongruous as they might seem when we simply read them off the page, where the sung and spoken passages are clearly demarcated. The implicit closeness between the interlocutors is not only rhythmic. When Oedipus shouts out "Oimoi! Again, oimoi!" (1316–1317), the chorus respond: "No wonder that in such great misery you cry out twice, you shout out twice" (1319–1320). While talk about exclamations may feel strangely detached to us, it does recur in tragic lamentations.[6] Once again, there seems to be a signal of harmonizing within the pattern of distinct modes of delivery; in other words, listening, or an attempt to listen, happens in the song even through what may seem its disjointedness. Even though the chorus remain more composed than Oedipus, they resonate with his concerns as much as with his meter. Importantly, the chorus accept Oedipus's vocal outburst, finding it rhetorically and emotionally appropriate. This seems to be the first choral utterance that Oedipus hears, and he replies with an outpouring of gratitude and affection (1321–1326):

> Oh, my friend,
> you alone are still my steadfast companion,
> still patiently caring for me, blind as I am.
> *Feu feu!*
> I know it is you. I recognize your voice clearly,
> even though I am clouded in darkness.

What Oedipus receives from the choral utterance about the appropriateness of his exclamations is, above all, the reassuring familiarity of their voice (cf. van Erp Taalman Kip, 2006, pp. 40–41). As Oedipus sings of his ability to recognize the loved voice, he confirms the significance of their very responsiveness in this moment of utter suffering, a responsiveness that expresses empathy.

At the same time, this attention to the voice alludes to a radical shift in his interaction with his surroundings and an expansion of his sonic sensibilities. The shared song between Oedipus and the chorus is a direct response to his blindness not simply as the climax of his misfortunes and the occasion for deeper grief. Rather, it bespeaks the inherent transformation in his character: a man who has lost physical sight and gained essential insight to the meaning of his life. The first two strophes end with the chorus posing the same question they voiced earlier: "How did you dare do such a horrible thing, putting your eyes out?" (1327–1328). This is no longer exclaimed for rhetorical effect, but is now an opportunity for Oedipus to answer. The choral voice is here quite literally a facilitator for Oedipus's expression of his point of view. Throughout the next two strophes, the chorus no longer speak and chant but now participate in Oedipus's song while he expounds on his feelings and perceptions: for example, he holds Apollo accountable for the evils that befell him yet firmly takes responsibility for his self-mutilation. At times, the chorus express their inability to grasp his decision: "I cannot say that you made the right choice" (1367). But even in their profound grief and horror, the chorus ultimately serve Oedipus's voice, allowing him to explain his perspective more precisely, including his decision to live in self-inflicted blindness, as he does coherently in the speech following the sung dialogue (1369ff).

Thus, through the empathic dialogic participation with the chorus, Oedipus manages to articulate his point of view out of the ruins of a shattered, aimless voice. The sung dialogue is thus thematically momentous in putting sound and vocalization center stage, and dramatizing their newfound importance. The relationship between Oedipus and the chorus demonstrates how empathic listening can affirm the suffering voice, guide

it to coherence, and allow for a transformative understanding of suffering to emerge. The dialogue further shows that empathy may develop—or waver—on several dimensions of the interaction, whether the verbal per se or other purely auditory dimensions.

The Voice in Psychotherapy and Philosophy

Can this scene in *Oedipus the King* be taken to resonate with real-life therapeutic situations? In attempting to answer this question, I take psychotherapy as the paradigmatic practice of empathic dialogue and active listening (with important caveats that I delineate below). From its inception, psychoanalysis prioritized the auditory dimension and demanded listening as a practical and ethical commitment. In his "Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis," Freud (1912) wrote that the analyst "must adjust himself to the patient as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone" (pp. 115–116). Vocal communication and the therapist's active listening are what drive forward the therapeutic process, and the situation is, by definition and almost exclusively, dialogic. Empathy is a crucial part of the dialogic practice in psychotherapy, and the range of vocal reactions at the therapist's disposal, from reinterpretation to silence, offers a variety of tools to express empathy. Therapists often think of their empathic responsiveness through a deep-seated metaphorical link to the material attributes of sound, as revealed in idioms like *resonating* or *being on the same wavelength.* Psychoanalysis, "both as a therapeutic practice and as a critical theory of subject and culture," has influenced philosophers engaging with sound and the voice; indeed, that the listening of the therapist is "both concrete and metaphorical" has made it a model for dialogic interaction and for sonic being-in-the-world (Välimäki, 2015, pp. 152, 154). It is to formulations of listening and empathy by therapeutic practitioners and by philosophers that I now turn.

Seminal to this discussion is psychologist Carl Rogers's work from the 1950s (Rogers, 1959). Rogers focused on empathy as one of the core conditions for successful therapy. His approach

puts less stress on verbal communication than on the emotional relationship between therapist and patient. He further believed that empathy was important for enabling patients to articulate their experiences and consider themselves the agents of those experiences (Coplan & Goldie, 2014, pp. xviii–xix). In clinical case studies of Rogers-inspired therapy, successful empathic interactions have been described that did not depend (primarily or at all) on the therapist's speech, and progressed rather by means of attentive silence (Bozarth, 2009, pp. 106–109).

Empathy in psychoanalysis has been conceptualized through a figurative expansion of the sphere of sound, as in Heinz Kohut's (1985) definition of empathy as "the *resonance* of the self in the self of others, of being understood, of somebody making an effort to understand you" (p. 222, emphasis added)—a definition that stresses the deliberate, active attention entailed in empathy. Within his psychoanalytic method, Kohut thought of empathy as an epistemological tool for data gathering, *and* as a form of responsiveness (Kohut, 2011, p. 527; Bacal & Carlton, 2010). In his last lecture, "On Empathy," he demonstrated that empathic response, though usually verbal, can sometimes be appropriately achieved by nonverbal gestures. Yet this is the exception that points back to the rule: according to Kohut (2011, pp. 525–535), analysis cures not through the bodily, maternal-like empathy, or by offering an empathic echo of the patient's words, but rather by actively interpreting them.

In Rogers's and Kohut's views, empathy is firmly on the side of the therapist, and their practices highlight the hierarchy between therapist and patient. But empathy can also be thought of in more mutual terms. Godfrey Barrett-Lennard's (1981) therapeutic model, "Empathy Cycle," makes dialogue a joint effort between therapist and patient, a deepening empathic stance through which the patient more accurately expresses their experiences. In this model we find the figurative language of auditory phenomena especially operative, with a repeated use of the attributes of sound waves to describe interpersonal communication. Thus, according to this model, the therapist's "empathic attunement," or their "effortful engagement in empathic resonance," casts them as a "tuning fork" (Dekeyser et al., 2009, pp. 114, 116, 117).[7] Rather than a transaction of

fixed directionality, with information flowing from patient to therapist and interpretation from therapist to patient, dialogue becomes a reciprocal interaction, a chain reaction of responses between them.

Such emphasis on the reciprocity of empathy is particularly relevant to the reading I advance here, of the sung dialogues of Sophocles as embodied listening. One of the important differences between Sophoclean drama and psychotherapy is that the therapeutic model is based on a certain separation between therapist and patient, wherein the former has not only expertise in dealing with the other's suffering, but a perceived measure of objectivity. In contrast, the tragic crisis in Sophocles has a direct effect on both the individual protagonist and the choral group, and their dialogic interactions reflect this shared traumatic experience. All the scenes examined here take place at moments where not only the individual protagonist but also the collective represented by the chorus are experiencing a crisis; often, both sides of the dialogue are in great misery. Such scenes embody—and vocalize—the way that the community confronts or works through their experience of shared suffering with the protagonist. The heroic crisis has consequences for the choral group, and the group, in turn, affects the protagonist's tragic experience (Gould, 1996; Foley, 2003; Murnaghan, 2009). Among scholars of tragedy, focus has been put on the chorus's role as witnesses to the hero's suffering, often using a visual paradigm to assess the group's participation (e.g., Easterling, 1996, p. 177). In other words, the chorus have been considered as *spectators*. In focusing on listening and, by implication, vocalizing, I prioritize the chorus's ability and obligation to respond. In highlighting their musical role, I bring to the fore a reciprocity that depends not on their listening skills, so to speak (such as therapists hone over years of training and experience), but on the very materiality of the voice.

Indeed, an understanding of listening as part of the vocal fabric of dialogue itself foregrounds notions of listening as a mutual, interdependent activity. Philosophers who have promoted a view of listening-and-responding as a fundamental mode of being have been inspired by psychoanalytic notions of

attentive listening (Välimäki, 2015). Roland Barthes (1985) has famously joined his musical sensibilities, specifically his analysis of the singing voice, with a perspective on the psychoanalyst's practice, referring directly to Freud's (1912) comments in the "Recommendations" mentioned above. Barthes (1985) takes listening in psychoanalysis as "exemplary" for listening that "speaks" (p. 252). "Listening to the voice inaugurates the relation to the Other" (p. 254), he writes, for the voice is the innermost of one's physical movements and a reflection of emotional interiority: it reveals the "materiality of the body" and "a whole psychology" (p. 255).[8] While hearing already presupposes at least an understandable context, listening, as Jean-Luc Nancy (2002) writes, is an *attempt* to understand (p. 19), a distinction that resonates with Kohut's (1985) definition of empathy quoted earlier.[9] In Don Ihde's (1976) systematic attempt to unsettle the "latent, presupposed, and dominant visualism of our understanding of experience," voice is metaphorically attributed even to inanimate things (p. 6).[10] Ihde thereby stresses the relationality that constitutes our experience of sound—things, bodies, and selves "give voice" to one another—and foregrounds "the essential intersubjectivity of humankind as being-in-language" (pp. 67–68, 168). He also frequently uses the terms *duet* and *polyphony*: not coincidentally, musical terms that imply equality between the participants (pp. 82–83, 168–170, 178, 190).

Adriana Cavarero (2005) has similarly emphasized that paying attention to the voice entails a plurality of voices, as the title of her book neatly captures. Writing of the embodied nature of vocal interaction, she stresses the relationality of the voice as it presupposes and prescribes listening: "each voice, as it is *for* the ear, demands at the same time an ear that is *for* the voice. . . . In the uniqueness that makes itself heard as a voice, there is an embodied existence, or rather, a 'being-there' in its radical finitude" (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 170, 173).[11] In Lisbeth Lipari's (2014) more recent work, listening is conceived as an intersubjective process of attentiveness. The embodied nature of vocalizing and listening is stressed through the recurring comparison to the physicality of vibrating musical instruments. Such listening, which Lipari (2014) calls *interlistening*, is "an

enactment of responsibility," a receptivity of the other "without assimilation or appropriation" (pp. 185, 197).[12] These notions inevitably recall Emmanuel Levinas's influential reformulation of ethics and subjectivity, where "response or responsibility" is "the authentic relationship with the Other."[13]

These thinkers share a conviction that listening to the voice forces us to pay attention to the physical vocalizing body as an undeniable presence. Concomitantly, they all emphasize that such attention to the voice entails a re-evaluation of the ethics (and politics explicitly in Cavarero, 2005, and Dolar, 2006) of interpersonal relations. Even for those who are less concerned with the materiality and the sonority of the voice per se, the notions of "receptive hospitality" or "responsibility" recall Cavarero's formulation of the reciprocality between ear and voice. For Cavarero (2005), the mother–infant relation, so central in psychoanalysis, is the model for understanding the relationality of vocal expression in its sonic and physical dimensions (pp. 131–145). By figuratively expanding the maternal model, Cavarero considers the importance of pre- and nonlinguistic features of vocal communication, thereby undoing the dynamics of authority inherent in a claim to knowledge of a philosophical or psychoanalytic kind. This turn to the purely sonic features of language—to the musicality of language—is again linked to the body, since the "the combinatorial play of tones, sounds, repetitions, and rhythms" makes present the materiality of the vocal apparatus (Cavarero, 2005, p. 136). Cavarero's insights on the voice explicitly connect the sonic effects of poetic language with an understanding of vocal communication as an embodied interaction.

It may now be clearer how psychotherapeutic discourse and philosophical writing on the voice come together in my approach to Sophoclean sung dialogues. Both fields recognize that listening is not just a passive reception of auditory information, but an action and an ethical commitment: a form of responsivity. This recognition promotes a musical understanding of dialogue, either implicitly through a figurative borrowing of the language of music (*harmony*, *attunement*, *duet*), or explicitly as a sphere that encompasses a musical sonority. Thinking of dialogue in terms of voice and listening brings to

the fore the musicality of language itself, with poetic language being paradigmatic for such sonority, and deliberate about it. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, ancient Greek tragic performance is an extraordinarily rich musical medium, where poetry, melody, and rhythm are all entwined and embodied—where the sonority of poetic language is concretely embedded in a dramatic interaction. Sophoclean dialogue is thus an example of the materiality of the voice in action, with this vocal richness both performed and thematized.

Oedipus at Colonus

In the remainder of this article, I offer a close reading of two sung dialogues from *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles's last tragedy. These dialogues are exemplary for dialogic situations where empathic responsivity, or presence-with-suffering, is negotiated. They illustrate the materiality of the voice within dialogue, the fragility of empathy, and, ultimately, the therapeutic capacity of empathic dialogue. Broadly speaking, the first song is an attempt at empathy that fails; in the second, reciprocal vocalizing takes place, creating an empathic space for a restorative (re)interpretation of suffering. What is distinctive about this play is that Oedipus's voice is, literally, center stage: because of his blindness, he barely moves from the central seat he occupies at the opening scene of the play, and in this immobility he commands attention and authority. For the same reason, his voice gains a special significance as an index of his sightless body. As such, it is paradigmatic of the human voice as discussed above: the voice as a feature of personal identity, emanating from a specific body and pointing toward its physicality while resonating beyond its boundaries, and the voice as the medium of responsivity and the ultimate incentive for empathic listening.

The play dramatizes the last hours of Oedipus's life. He arrives at Colonus, a precinct of Athens, and realizes that he is at his divinely appointed place of death. If the city should accept him and allow his body to be buried there, he will bestow blessings on Athens. He delivers scathing curses against his warring sons and adamantly refuses to return to Thebes, from which he was banished years ago. Since that time, he has been

wandering like a beggar, accompanied only by his daughter, Antigone. The opening scene presents Oedipus's complete dependence on her and the intimacy between them. Antigone physically supports the blind old man, and mediates between him and his surroundings by visually describing them to him. Once he learns that they are at the grove of the Eumenides, which was prophesied as his burial ground, he gains a surprising clarity and independence, and refuses to move. Yet his presence at the holy site offends the local mores. A resident who happens on Oedipus and Antigone alerts others; they come searching for Oedipus, who goes into hiding inside the grove. The first musical scene of the play is a sung dialogue between the chorus, this group of local old men, and Oedipus with Antigone. The locals consider Oedipus a trespasser and ask that he move, while he begs for pity. In the course of the song, his identity is revealed, and the chorus react with abject horror. They no longer allow him to stay seated nearby, but demand that he leave altogether. The song ends with Antigone's plea for mercy, after which the Colonians agree to call their king, Theseus, to arbitrate the matter.

The song is an explicit negotiation of the terms on which dialogue can take place, with Oedipus's body creating a spatial interruption and at the same time arousing the problem of empathy, a duality essential to his figure. Throughout the song, Oedipus attempts to avoid answering what the chorus ask from the moment they arrive on stage: "Who is he?" (118). They already brand him as the "most shameless man of all" (120), and they continue to sing about him as a violator of their sacred customs. Even speaking, in the form of praying out loud, is forbidden in the grove of the Eumenides, we learn from the chorus (131, 156–157). Thus, listening is a priori hindered because Oedipus desecrates the space. His first utterance in the dialogue is "I am that man: for I see through voice" (137). With this announcement of blindness, Oedipus reveals his exact position, the frightening scars on his face, and his command of the environment despite his bodily impairment all at once (Murnaghan, 1988, p. 40; van Erp Taalman Kip, 2006, p. 43). The chorus fittingly react to his presence with a nonverbal interjection before articulating their horror: "Io, io! Terrible to see, terrible to hear" (140–141). Even as Oedipus speaks,

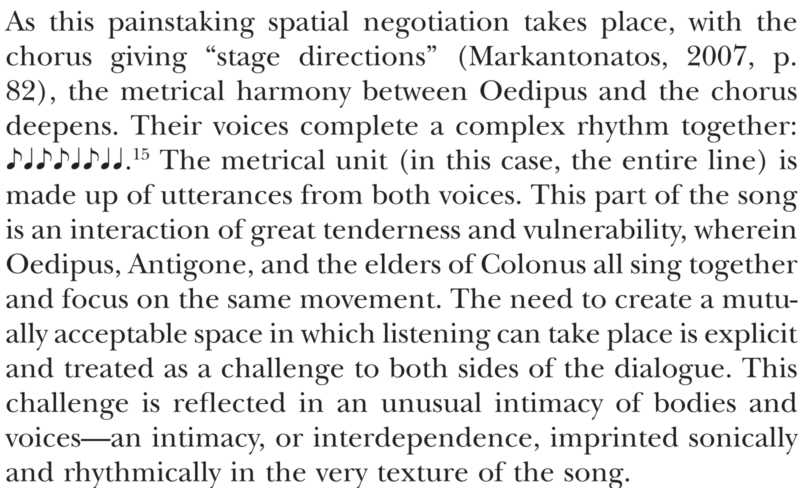
his voice and body destabilize the boundaries between sight and sound.[14] His body, the vessel of his traumatic past and a constant reminder of it, continues to traumatize, so to speak, and to interfere with communication. From the beginning, Oedipus's vocal presence is a problem, at once disturbing and magnetizing, an index of his boundary-breaking awesomeness. In light of the chorus's reaction, Oedipus asks them: "do not think of me as lawless, I beg you" (142). This is, of course, precisely how the chorus see him, and the more they hear from him, the more difficult it is for them to accept his presence.

Already at this stage of the shared song, the metrical plane holds potential for dialogic reciprocity. The song opens with varied rhythmic patterns, which fit the chorus's energetic search for the trespasser. In an unusual metrical combination, their song slows to anapests (Cole, 1988, pp. 184–185). The initial switch to anapests signals a change in the motion and comportment of the chorus. We could suppose that, in performance, the chorus's sung anapests were accompanied by a movement that gradually slows to a halt, making way for Oedipus to come forward even as his pained, difficult motion is highlighted by the marching rhythm of his chanted anapests. Once again, one could point to the separation between song and chant here as a measure of the discord between Oedipus and the chorus, yet I suggest that the opposite is at play. Beginning with his statement "I am that man," Oedipus chants in anapests, as if attempting to vocally bridge the gap between himself and the chorus. In echoing their anapests, he is not only influenced by the chorus but also influences them in turn, prompting their subsequent harmonizing response in chanted anapests and implicating them further in the dialogue with him (cf. Scott, 1996, pp. 225–226; Dhuga, 2005, p. 346). Oedipus's anapests are a sonic factor that creates continuity with the chorus's preceding words, an attempt to soothe rather than disturb. The sound of Oedipus is thus multivalent: in terms of what his voice exposes about the relationship between himself and his surroundings, it is frightening and subversive, yet the metrical form in which his voice is molded is conciliatory and promotes further conversation.

In the next strophe, the chorus express fascination with him—"Were you born like this, blinded? I can tell you have led

a miserable, long life" (151–152)—while continuing to admonish his transgression. They end by telling him he must move to "where it is allowed for all to speak" (168–169). This is again sung in anapests, and the following exchange between Oedipus and Antigone, in chanted anapests, can be heard once more as a harmonic continuation of the chorus's song. Antigone persuades her father to conform with the local customs, and he begins to move forward, physically supported by her. In the next two strophes, Oedipus slowly moves out of the grove according to the chorus's directions. It starts like this (178–180):

> *Oed.* Further then? *Ch.* Come further forward.
> *Oed.* Further? *Ch.* Lead him forward, Miss,
> since you can see.



As this painstaking spatial negotiation takes place, with the chorus giving "stage directions" (Markantonatos, 2007, p. 82), the metrical harmony between Oedipus and the chorus deepens. Their voices complete a complex rhythm together: ♪♩♪♪♩♪♩♩.[15] The metrical unit (in this case, the entire line) is made up of utterances from both voices. This part of the song is an interaction of great tenderness and vulnerability, wherein Oedipus, Antigone, and the elders of Colonus all sing together and focus on the same movement. The need to create a mutually acceptable space in which listening can take place is explicit and treated as a challenge to both sides of the dialogue. This challenge is reflected in an unusual intimacy of bodies and voices—an intimacy, or interdependence, imprinted sonically and rhythmically in the very texture of the song.

The concerted effort to move Oedipus's body, dramatically important as it is, distracts the chorus only temporarily from the goal of learning his identity. They finally address to him, in the second person, the same questions they repeatedly uttered in the third person since first coming onstage: "Who are you? What is your name? Where are you from?" (204–206). These questions end the system of metrically corresponding strophes; next comes an epode, a song that is metrically less regular. The epode dramatizes the devastating exposure of Oedipus and the immediately subsequent breakdown of communication with the chorus. This upheaval, it has been argued, is reflected in the

shift to a metrically unpredictable pattern (Scott, 1996, p. 226). Yet within this formally less harmonic structure, the voices of Oedipus and the chorus continue to complete metrical units together. For example, Oedipus begs the chorus not to ask him about his identity, but they insist he speak. It sounds like this (211–212):

> *Oed.* Don't . . . don't ask me anymore.
> *Ch.* What's this? – *Oed.* An awful birth. –*Ch.* Tell us!

Line 212 is made up of two ionic feet of four syllables each ♪♪♩♩. Here, both feet are sung by both voices in succession (as I have recreated in the translation), so that the metrical pattern is constituted by a sonic-vocal closeness between the singers. The expectation for mutuality (a dialogue "where we may both speak and listen"; 190) is, then, fulfilled in a frustrating way. While Oedipus's use of the second person reflects his "orientation towards the addressee," or the "conative" function of language (Jakobson, 1960, p. 355), the closeness between the speakers in fact has the opposite effect than the hoped for, unquestioning hospitality. The sonic intimacy between the singers happens precisely when communication between them begins to disintegrate, and they approach the limits of the secure space for listening for which they strove together earlier. Through the next few instances of such metrical harmony in the song, the dialogue between Oedipus and the chorus reaches its breaking point.

The chorus continue to press him, and Oedipus finally reveals his identity, making it immediately clear through the patronymic genitive "(son) of Laius": in Greek, *Laiou.* Even when stating his name, Oedipus chooses to frame his response in the second person, desperately holding on to the dialogic structure: "Do you know one, son of Laius, descendant of Labdacus?" he would have said, if not for the chorus's interruption (220–221; Mastronarde, 1979, pp. 61–62). But when Oedipus says his father's name, the chorus shout out in grief and revulsion (220). This moment sounds particularly striking in Greek:

> Oed. Laiou iste tin— *Ch.* Oh! iou, iou!

Through the interjection *iou*, the chorus's voice reverberates with part of Oedipus's name. In other words, in dialogue, Oedipus's patronymic transforms into a nonverbal exclamation. His identity is not only cause for lamentation: it *is* ineffable lamentation. The chorus's horrified exclamations cut through and at the same time constitute Oedipus's name and being.[16] Yet, precisely as words fail the chorus and as the possibility for a comprehensible dialogue seems lost, the interlocutors' voices become inextricably connected in a pattern of metrical harmony that spans not just this line, but several of the following lines as well.

What is happening here? The choral exclamation does not seem like a vocalization of empathy. Rather, resonance and intense vocal intimacy reflect profound aversion, a reaction diametrically opposed to how responsivity is theorized in philosophical and therapeutic discourses. Sophocles creates a dramatic situation in which harmony embodies the collapse of empathy, and its fragility is thereby illuminated. Reciprocity resonates on the surface alone, a surface that can barely contain the horror within. As the boundary blurs between the voices of Oedipus and the chorus, what we hear is nothing more than a literal echo, the vocal version of traumatic repetition. The chorus cannot but amplify Oedipus's suffering and intensify the tragic sense of reiteration, arguably the thing from which Oedipus seeks refuge and rest. The echo as an absence of listening is what Oedipus, the king of the earlier play, feared at his deepest moment of crisis: that his voice would carry aimlessly on the wind ("Where is my voice being swept away?"). If the younger Oedipus is answered by an empathic chorus that steered his voice back on track, in our present context the chorus's shock and temporary loss of words are signs of the communicative failure Oedipus's revelation engenders.

This, in turn, anticipates the chorus's imminent act of open hostility toward him. His request that they do not fear him cannot be fulfilled. Rather, the chorus respond with terror. Their refusal to reciprocate is vocalized with another repetitive echo in which emotional aversion is expressed within metrical harmony—again the two voices constitute the metrical pattern (223–224):

Oed. Do not fear all I say.
Ch. Io, oh, oh . . . *Oed.* I'm wretched. *Ch.* Oh oh . . .

Instead of responding to his request, the chorus act out the fear Oedipus mentions. Their exclamations pick up on the woeful sounds of his words, resonating with the *o*-s of *deos*, *hos audo*, and *dysmoros* (*fear*, *all I say*, and *wretched*). The choral echoing here deepens the chasm at the core of Oedipus's being by throwing back at him a horrified vocal version of his tragic self. Precisely as a repetitive echo, their reaction repeats the pain of realizing what it is to be Oedipus.

In this song, harmony does not reflect empathy but revulsion. Indeed, once the chorus recover from their shock and regain command of language, they demand that Oedipus leave: "Out! Get away from this land!" (226). The inescapable intimacy Oedipus engenders and its terrible outcomes are concretely vocalized and embodied in this sung dialogue. The song is exemplary for the problem of empathy that Oedipus's very presence creates, a problem that his identity—his birth-origin, his patronym, his voice—bespeaks. He is the very embodiment of destructive intimacy, of empathy gone wrong. Interestingly, it is Antigone, Oedipus's physical extension and a constant reminder of his contaminated relationships, who successfully pleads for compassion at the end of this epode, ultimately securing for Oedipus another opportunity to explain himself. While the end of the shared song between Oedipus and the chorus is a far cry from empathic and receptive dialogue, it sets the ground for an interaction of vocalized empathy that Oedipus demands and, to an extent, arouses. It resounds with all that is at stake in offering Oedipus empathic listening, and thus already suggests the restorative potential that empathy would have.

This potential is fulfilled in the next dialogue Oedipus sings with the chorus. It stages yet another iteration of the revelation of Oedipus's identity, and allows him one more chance to express his interpretation of the past, which is this time accepted by the community. In the intervening episode, Oedipus argues for his moral blamelessness, claiming that his actions were committed unknowingly; the chorus then instruct him on how to atone for his desecration of the grove. The

second sung dialogue between Oedipus and the chorus takes place after his second daughter, Ismene, goes to perform these cultic actions. On the surface, the song repeats much of the interaction of the previous scenes, specifically Oedipus's insistence that he is guiltless. Yet, the way listening works in this dialogue shows that the relationship between Oedipus and the chorus breaks new empathic ground. It seems hardly accidental that, while Ismene is in charge of definitively atoning for his transgression against the sacred space, Oedipus reaches a new level of vocal harmony with the chorus (Scott, 1996, p. 229). Both processes represent and complete the ethical shift that allows Oedipus to be accepted into the local community, but only one is embodied onstage for us to hear.

The song is marked by the chorus's "desire" to hear about Oedipus's "pain"; they acknowledge their request is "terrible," and that his suffering, "long laid to rest," is "immeasurable" and "devastating" (510–514). Despite Oedipus's objections, the chorus ask to set the record straight, to hear it from him firsthand (517–518). Yet the chorus's interrogation now has a completely different tone from the earlier dialogue.[17] It is framed as a reciprocal move, since for Oedipus to speak would be to return the favor that they showed him: "Heed to us, since we gave you what you need" (520). Oedipus expresses his pain at the prospect of speaking (515–516), his suffering ringing clear through the exclamations *omoi* and *feu*. These recall how exclamations in the earlier song functioned as vocal interruptions, attempts to stave off informative communication. But his participation in the dialogue this time comes about through persuasion; it is not, as in the previous song, something he is forced to do through repeated imperatives (212ff). It is the chorus that now take the place of suppliants: "I beg you" (519, echoing 142 and 241). This is a rhetorical stretch on their part, but it is significant emotionally, for they are performing a symmetrical inversion between themselves and Oedipus. The narration here goes on despite the suffering it causes—despite Oedipus's cries.

The remarkable harmony between the two voices comes through in the way the roles of Oedipus and the chorus are perfect counterparts, so that in the antistrophe each one sings the other's strophic lines. Where Oedipus shouted out in pain

in the strophe, the chorus in the antistrophe exclaim in shock, punctuating his words with cries (McDevitt, 1981, p. 20). Yet this exchange does not become a terror-stricken communicative failure. Oedipus says "it is death to hear these things" (529), and, because of the choral interruptions, it takes him three separate vocalizations to complete the sentence: "These two daughters of mine, double ruin, were born from the same womb as I." This perversely fertile recursion of eros to the mother could indeed be considered psychological death. But the chorus continue to ask Oedipus about his daughters. They choose to remain in dialogic contact with him even after his most horrible revelation, proving that they can withstand it. This choice to remain in conversation is radically empathic. The dialogue goes on (534–535):

> *Cho.* Here are your very daughters, these are—
> *Oed.* of my own mother sisters of mine.

Oedipus completes their sentence, and exactly echoes its metrical pattern (iambic dimeter with a variation ♩♩♪♪♪♩♩♪♩). In the translation offered here I have tried to reproduce this rhythm in both lines so that the effect of its striking repetition might come through. Oedipus's vocal gesture of syntactical harmonizing, the way he interrupts and completes their sentence, is extraordinary even in comparison to other intimate sung dialogues of Sophocles (Nooter, 2012, p. 163). The metrical echo reinforces the sense of a reciprocal effort to tell the story and listen to it. Importantly, it is Oedipus's story to tell: to point to the horrible equivalence between his sisters–daughters and to name them as such cannot be done through another's voice. Yet the opening sentence from the chorus's mouth can be heard as a prompt, a vocalization that facilitates Oedipus's song. As such, it is empathic not only in relation to what came before, but as a catalyst for reciprocity and further engagement.

This song can be compared to the kind of empathic dialogue we saw functioning in therapy, particularly in the practice of the "Empathy Cycle" method. The chorus's empathic engagement with Oedipus is instrumental to his renewed sense of agency over his narrative inasmuch as it is agency through mutual, shared vocalization. Both sides are invested in his sung

narration and take part in it. Further along in the song, the two voices again make up the metrical pattern together, this time in iambs:

> *Cho.* You have suffered— *Oed.* I have suffered unbearably.
> *Cho.* You have acted— *Oed.* I did not act [willfully]. *Ch.* What do you mean?
> *Oed.* I received a gift. I wish I had never taken it, how my heart suffers. (538–541)
> *Cho.* You have killed— *Oed.* I have killed. But I—
> *Cho.* What is it? *Oed.* —had just cause for it. *Cho.* What do you mean?
> *Oed.* I will explain. Gripped by disaster I hit, and slayed. But by law I am innocent. I came to it unknowing. (545–548)

The legal language, especially in translation, may obscure the poetic nature of this moment, its rhythmic and melodic virtuosity. Within the vocal intimacy of metrically shared singing, the sonic texture becomes even more intricate through repeated resolutions, a variation on the rhythm that increases its tension (much like, in Western music, regular eighths may be occasionally divided into sixteenths). Furthermore, the choral utterances in the second person are rhetorical invitations, appeals to Oedipus to tell his story through first-person statements. The repetition of this pattern—second person, first person—is like a musical sequence, which serves a dramatic purpose, cementing the emotional bond between the singers.[18] This part of the dialogue demonstrates how reinterpretation (of the past, of misery) happens through mutual listening and vocalization. Echoes here are transformative and generate new meaning. They are the medium through which listening *qua* empathy is embodied and intensified.

This second sung dialogue, then, presents a contrast to the earlier interaction with the chorus and completes the process it set in motion. Taken together, the two sung dialogues demonstrate the central importance that Oedipus's past continues to hold for the present, and the restorative power of retelling it accurately, especially in his voice. The two songs are part of the same movement in the sense that the second one finally

puts to rest the two haunting questions, who he is and what he did. Vocalized empathy, as the reading offered here has shown, is crucial for the process of reinterpreting the past and coming to terms with it, of being able to say out loud what is "death to hear," without the words creating fear, revulsion, and expulsion. The chorus finally offers Oedipus a space for his trauma to be heard, to be recognized and affirmed without blame. They thereby offer a corrective for the endlessly repeating pain of discovering and revealing his identity. The intricate sonic texture of this Sophoclean song illustrates how empathy, when it comes about through the voice, can heal.

Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles's most famous tragedy dramatizing Oedipus's journey of inquiry and self-recognition, has often been read as an embodiment of the psychoanalytic process in its themes and methods. In focusing on the sung dialogues of Sophocles, I have called attention to the intricacies of vocal interaction, or the complexities of dialogue that Greek tragedy in performance presents—and to how these intricacies resonate with the therapeutic process as conceptualized by its practitioners. If psychotherapy instinctively brings to mind a dialogic situation based on empathic listening, the scenes I examined here exemplify how nuanced the movement of empathy can be within dialogue. Listening, epitomized as a harmonically attuned, empathic dialogue, promotes a transformative recreation of meaning, and a clear attempt to listen is often quite powerful in triggering a reciprocal response. A dialogue that may lead to change—that is curative—does not hinge therefore on one side being supposedly impartial, but can grow out of a collectively traumatic experience.

Notes

1. Throughout, I refer to the chorus in the plural, to emphasize that it is a collective group, a plurality of individuals. In spoken dialogue, the choral parts are delivered by only one member of the group, the chorus-leader, who acts as their representative. They usually sing in unison, but can also sing in sequence or represent more than one point of view, as in Sophocles's *Ajax* (866–878), and most famously in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (1348–1371). See Kaimio (1970) on the difference between singularity and plurality in the chorus. In the scenes I treat here, I find it safe to consider the chorus an internally consistent group while disregarding the demand for realistic variety within its members (since, indeed, they speak-sing in one voice). I thus read these scenes like other Sophoclean situations, suffused "with the fullest understanding of what happens to people

and what they do and feel in real life" (Easterling, 1977, p. 124). On the issue of the Sophoclean chorus as character, see Gardiner (1987) and Budelmann (2000, ch. 5).

2. I have left the Greek exclamations transliterated throughout to give the reader something of the sonic flavor of the original. Quotes from or references to Sophocles's plays are given with line numbers in the Greek text, in the edition of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990); translations are my own. On the fraught exchange between Antigone and the chorus, see McDevitt (1982), Griffith (1999, pp. 268–269), Kitzinger (2008, pp. 48–54), and Kornarou (2010).
3. Scholars agree that the metrical complexity of tragic song (and Greek poetry in general) inscribed the rhythm of the melodic accompaniment (see Dale, 1968, pp. 204–205; West, 1992, p. 130; Anderson, 1994, pp. 95–96).
4. It is worth noting that ancient Greek music was not contrapuntal, or tonally harmonic, so that when I speak of singing together or harmonizing, there is a succession of voices, not a strict simultaneity. On the lack of ancient Greek polyphony, see West (1992, p. 41) and Anderson (1994, pp. 23, 39).
5. Moore (2017) suggests the limitation in our terms *sung* and *chanted* (or *recitative*) to describe anapests, since both are on a musical continuum.
6. See Budelmann (2006, p. 51) on repetitions of exclamations in our passage (cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1345; Sophocles, *Ajax*, 940; Euripides, *Alcestis*, 873).
7. Barrett-Lennard (1981) uses the less common term *resonation*. The term *resonance* is used also to refer to the neurological phenomena involving empathy (Watson & Greenberg, 2009). See Eisenberg and Eggum (2009, p. 77) on somatic resonance and affective resonance.
8. On the materiality of the voice and its function as a dual index of personhood, see more recently Dolar (2006, pp. 70–71).
9. "Si 'entendre,' c'est comprendre le sens . . . écouter, c'est être tendu [*being stretched*] vers un sens possible, et par conséquent non immédiatement accessible."
10. Cf. Bø-Rygg (2015) on the prevalent visualism of Western thought and on auditory alternatives to it.
11. Cf. Gurevitch (1995): "Speech, from the beginning, is uttered within the field of the voice that is occasioned by an ear" (p. 102).
12. Cf. Corradi Fiumara (1985, p. 150) on the importance of disinterested listening.
13. See Levinas (1982, pp. 82, 92–93); see also Nancy (2002, pp. 25–26, 30) and Dolar (2006, p. 95). On Levinas's ethics of dialogue and his eventual focus on the face (i.e., the visual rather than the auditory), see Lipari (2014, pp. 184–186, 188–191, 195).
14. On the experience of spectatorship in this scene, see Seale (1982, pp. 119–120) and Travis (1999, pp. 45–50).
15. This uncommon metrical pattern is called "enoplian" by Scott (1996, p. 221) and "choriambic-enoplian" by McDevitt (1981, p. 21).
16. This line has, unsurprisingly, been subject to editorial emendations since antiquity. Despite its problems, it seems safe to say that at least one "iou" is given to the chorus.
17. Knox (1964, p. 152) and Burian (1974, p. 414) have read this rather as a measure of prurience on the part of the chorus.
18. Cf. Slatkin (1986): "The essential dialogue takes place between Oedipus and the chorus. It is their conception of him that he must address and win over, and their collective entity that must make a place for him. By the time Theseus arrives, Oedipus and the chorus have achieved that end" (p. 219).

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