

§ 16. The name of an actor, once famous in the chief part of ^{The actor Polus.} this play, is of interest also on more general grounds. Polus, a native of Aegina, is said to have been the pupil of another tragic actor, Archias of Thurii,—the man who in 322 B.C. was sent to arrest Demosthenes and the other orators whose surrender was demanded of Athens by Antipater¹. It would seem, then, that Polus flourished in the middle or latter part of the 4th century B.C.—only some 50 or 60 years after the death of Sophocles. Physically well-gifted, and of versatile grace, he was equally successful as Oedipus the King, and in the very different but not less difficult part of Oedipus at Colonus². Like the poet whose masterpieces he interpreted, he enjoyed a vigorous old age; and it is recorded that, at seventy, he acted ‘eight tragedies in four days’³. It will be remembered that, in the *Electra* of Sophocles, an urn, supposed to contain the ashes of Orestes, is placed in the hands of his sister, who makes a lament over it. Polus once acted *Electra* not long after the death of his son. An urn, containing the youth’s ashes, was brought from the tomb; the actor, in the mourning garb of *Electra*, received it, and, on the scene, suffered a natural grief to have vehement course⁴.

¹ Plut. *Dem.* 28 τοῦτον δὲ [Archias] Θούριον ὄντα τῷ γένει λόγος ἔχει τραγωδίας ὑποκρίνεσθαι ποτε, καὶ τὸν Αἰγινήτην Πῶλον, τὸν ὑπερβαλόντα τῇ τέχνῃ πάντας, ἐκείνου γενέσθαι μαθητὴν ἱστοροῦσιν.

² Stobaeus *Floril.* p. 522 (XCVII. 28), in an extract from the προτρεπτικαὶ ὁμιλῖαι of Arrian: ἢ οὐχ ὀρᾶς ὅτι οὐκ εὐφρονότερον οὐδὲ ἥδιον ὁ Πῶλος τὸν τύραννον Οἰδίποδα ὑπεκρίνετο ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ ἀλήτην καὶ πτωχόν; (οὐδὲ ἥδιον is Gaisford’s emendation of οὐδὲν δι’ ὧν.)

³ Plut. *Mor.* 785 C Πῶλον δὲ τὸν τραγωδῶν Ἐρατοσθένης καὶ Φιλόχορος ἱστοροῦσιν ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη γεγενημένον ὀκτῶ τραγωδίας ἐν τέτταρσιν ἡμέραις διαγωνίσασθαι μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν τῆς τελευτῆς.

⁴ Aulus Gellius 7. 5 Histrio in terra Graecia fuit fama celebri qui gestus et vocis claritudine ceteris antestabat....Polus lugubri habitu Electrae indutus ossa atque urnam a sepulcro tulit filii, et quasi Orestis amplexus opplevit omnia non simulacris neque imitamentis sed luctu atque lamentis veris et spirantibus.

Lucian *Iurr. Tragœd.* § 3 οὐχ ὀρῶ...ἐφ’ ὅτῳ Πῶλος ἢ Ἀριστόδημος ἀντὶ Διὸς ἡμῖν ἀναπέφηνας. Id. *Menippus* § 16 (on the contrast between the life of actors on and off the stage) ἤδη δὲ πέρασ ἔχοντος τοῦ δράματος, ἀποδυσάμενος ἕκαστος αὐτῶν τὴν χρυσόπαστον ἐκείνην ἐσθῆτα καὶ τὸ προσωπεῖον ἀποθέμενος καὶ καταβὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμβατῶν πένης καὶ ταπεινὸς περιέρχεται, οὐκέτ’ Ἀγαμέμνων ὁ Ἄτρεως οὐδὲ Κρέων ὁ Μενοικέως, ἀλλὰ Πῶλος Χαρικλέους Σουνιεύς ὀνομαζόμενος ἢ Σάτυρος Θεογείτονος Μαραθῶνιος. [‘Polus, son of Charicles, of Sunium,’ is not inconsistent with τὸν Αἰγινήτην in Plut. *Dem.* 28, for the great actor may have been a native of Aegina who was afterwards enrolled in the Attic deme of Sunium.]