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DEFINING THE CIRCLE OF SOPHISTS:
PHILOSTRATUS AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

KENDRA ESHLEMAN

INTRODUCTION

ONCE, THE SOPHIST Hippodromus of Thessaly dropped in unannounced at the school of Megistias of Smyrna (Philostr. *VS* 618–19). Hippodromus looked so unkempt that at first Megistias mistook him for the father of a student, but once Hippodromus had traded clothes with Megistias and declaimed for him, Megistias recognized him as the great sophist he was. Each man walked away from the encounter with his status not only confirmed, but enhanced: Hippodromus had won a valuable endorsement from a respected colleague, and attendance at Megistias' school soared while Hippodromus was in residence.

The pages of Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* are full of episodes of this sort: complex dances of self-presentation and negotiation for status, whose implications go beyond the moment at hand to define what it means to be a sophist and who is worthy of that name. Recent scholarship on the Second Sophistic has come to mirror the preoccupations of Hippodromus and Megistias: in the past fifteen years, attention has largely shifted away from the question of the reality of the Second Sophistic to consider instead the self-fashioning of sophists themselves.¹ Thus far, however, that attention has not been turned back upon their biographer, Philostratus. Yet, for better or worse, our understanding of the Second Sophistic is inextricably bound up with the person of its chronicler. Indeed, I would argue that Philostratus' "creation" of the Second Sophistic as we know it can best be understood as a form of self-fashioning. In his *Lives*, Philostratus does not present himself as an active participant in the literary culture he describes: for the most part, he is not a character in his own work. Rather, he appears to be giving shape to a movement whose zenith he implicitly places before his own birth, in the Antonine period. Yet it is precisely with reference to and in terms of that movement that he is able to define his own position in the present.

If Philostratus is not an active participant in Antonine literary culture, neither is he a disinterested observer of it. As a sophist, he has a vested

1. A notable exception is Brunt 1994, which revives Wilamowitz's view that the Second Sophistic is an illusion created by Philostratus' woeful limitation of vision, but this article has not found many adherents.

interest in establishing the value of his own professional pedigree; as we will see, one effect of the famously peculiar limitations of Philostratus' survey of the sophistic movement is to spotlight his own academic ancestors and allies to the virtual exclusion of all others. As a biographer, meanwhile, he plainly intends his catalogue to constitute a sort of sophistic canon and to establish his own canonizing authority in turn. These two forms of authorization are closely intertwined. Both depend on an aspect of Philostratus' construction of the Second Sophistic that has been little explored: his vision of the circle of sophists as an almost incestuously self-contained, self-generating, self-regulating community. As he presents it, this community is constituted entirely from within, by the consensus of insiders whose insider status is confirmed in part by their assent to this same consensus, which is thus imagined as having an objective, self-evident reality independent of the negotiations by which it is created. The undeniable role of outsiders—emperors, cities, audiences—in this process is correspondingly downplayed; in the Philostratean conception, these may confirm, but not confer, status. Challenges to the consensus of insiders, in the form of the quarrels and debates over who should be considered “worthy of the circle of sophists” that fill the pages of the *Lives*,² paradoxically serve to bolster, not undermine, its self-evidentiality: dissenters from the (Philostratean) canon reveal themselves as outsiders, while true insiders walk away with their positions confirmed. Accordingly, Philostratus' implicit assertion that his *Lives* articulate the consensus of the circle of sophists about its own membership both depends on and confirms his claim to stand within that circle.

The question that I want to pursue here, therefore, is not so much *to whom*—that is, to what sort of orator—the name “sophist” was assigned, but *how* and *by whom* such assignments were made and enforced.³ The community-forming procedures employed by Philostratus' subjects are mirrored in turn in Philostratus' own work, and make his self-definition possible. What Philostratus has done in the *Lives* is to craft a selective version of the sophistic circle that is not exactly false, but highly partisan, designed to authorize his own position, both as sophist and as historian. In this, I will argue, he is entirely typical.

HOW TO BE A PHILOSTRATEAN SOPHIST

Philostratus makes no effort to provide a comprehensive overview of the Second Sophistic. In fact, he lists only about twelve prominent sophists

2. For the expression, see VS 614, 625. Henceforth all references not otherwise specified will be to the VS. All translations are mine.

3. For this approach, cf. Porter 2005, 38: “In the place of anatomies and definitions of concepts, what we perhaps need is an anatomy of the *procedures* by which the classical comes to be *generated*.” The question of how to distinguish sophists from philosophers, on the one hand, and other orators, on the other, will not occupy us here: see, e.g., Bowersock 1969, 13, and 2002, 161–67; Stanton 1973, 351–58; Jones 1974, 12–14; Anderson 1986, 8–10, and 1993, 16–17; Puech 2002, 11–14. Despite the obvious fluidity of the categories, the terms were not infinitely flexible: *sophistai* were expected to conform to a certain model of deportment (Hahn 1989, 46–53; Gleason 1991, 410–11) and professional activity, as teachers of oratory (Swain 1996, 97–99), epideictic orators (Bowie 1974, 169; Anderson 1990, 95–96), or both (Anderson 1989, 88; Brunt 1994, 26–33; Billaut 2000, 10–15). Still, for Philostratus, at least, this template does not give a final answer, but establishes the parameters within which the name “sophist” can be assigned.

active in each generation, an impossibly small number, as Graham Anderson has demonstrated: the Clepsydrion, Herodes Atticus' inner circle of star pupils, alone had ten members at any one time.⁴ Philostratus himself is aware of many more sophists than he includes as subjects of his *Lives*: apart from the famous chapter in which he dismisses six sophists as "playthings of the Hellenes rather than sophists worthy of mention" (605),⁵ he mentions by name seven other *sophistai*, four men he calls *rhetoires*, three sophistic teachers, and five others who appear in contexts that suggest that they were orators; of these twenty-five, slightly more than half are otherwise attested as *sophistai* or *rhetoires*.⁶ In addition, coins and inscriptions reveal about fifty *rhetoires* and nearly thirty *sophistai* not mentioned in the *Lives*; literary sources add dozens more.⁷ The difficulty of dating many of these inscriptions and/or securely identifying the figures they name makes a more exact count impossible, but as a fairly conservative estimate, we thus know the names of about 150 sophists and/or rhetors who do not receive biographies in the *Lives*. In most cases, we know very little about these men—the quality of their oratory, their reputations, their connections to other intellectuals, or why Philostratus might have excluded them. Nonetheless, we will see below that a fair case could probably have been made for including some of them, at least, in the circle of sophists. In any case, the forty-two sophists who make up Philostratus' canon represent only about a quarter of the Second Sophistic orators of whom we know, which again must be only a fraction of the working sophists and rhetors of the late first to early third centuries.

Moreover, with only a few exceptions, the sophists in the *Lives* fall into three rough groups:⁸ (1) six academic generations from Nicetes through Herodes Atticus to Philostratus, (2) Polemo and his associates, linked to the first group through the mutual admiration of Polemo and Herodes (536–39), and (3) Isaeus and his students, a small group with ties to Polemo. Herodes' network is by far the largest, and he stands firmly at its center, with his student Hadrian of Tyre as a secondary focal point. The three groups are even more intertwined than Anderson allows (see fig. 1): Herodes not only admired Polemo, but counted him as one of his teachers, at least in an honorary sense (539, 564); Polemo had also studied with Herodes' teacher Scopelian (536) and may have shared a pupil with Herodes;⁹ the networks of Herodes and Isaeus converge in the person of Alexander the Clay-Plato, who was a student of both Herodes' teacher Favorinus and Isaeus' student Dionysius

4. Anderson 1986, 82–84.

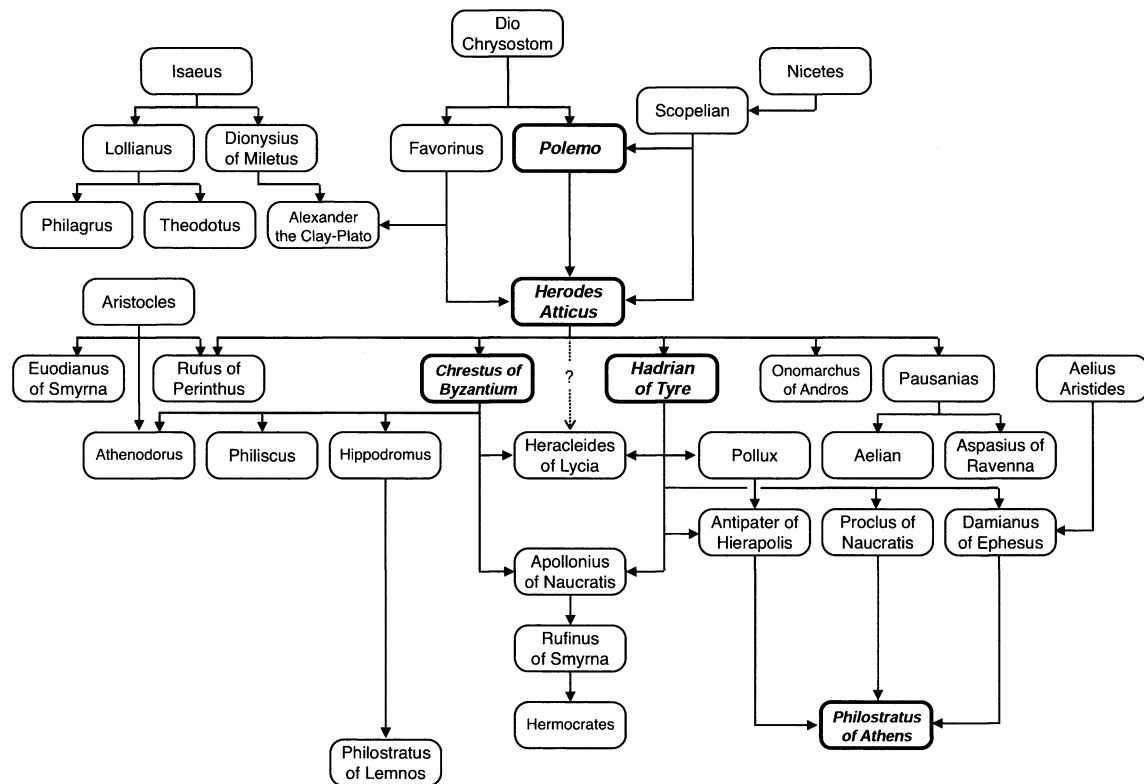
5. ἀθώματα γὰρ τῶν Ἑλλήνων μάλλον οὗτοι προσηθεῖεν ἢ σοφισταὶ λόγου ἄξιοι.

6. Sophists: *Soterus of Ephesus*, Sosos, Nicander, Phaedrus, Cyrus, and Phylax (605), Varus (540), *Rufinus of Smyrna* (599, 608), Megistias of Smyrna (618), *Cassianus*, *Aurelius*, and *Perieges of Lydia* (627), *Nicagoras of Athens* and *Apsines of Gadara* (628). Rhetors: *Ardys* (513), *Nicomedes of Pergamum*, *Aquila of Gadara*, and *Aristaenetos of Byzantium* (591). Teachers: *Dardanus of Assyria* (568), *Quadratus* (576), *Zeno of Athens* (606; possible attestation at Puech 2002, 473–74). Likely sophists/rhetors: *Aristaeus*, one of Philostratus' sources (524); *Demostratus* (559–60, 563, 566); *Marcianus of Doliche*, ἑταῖρος of Apollonius of Naucratis and opponent of Heracleides of Lycia (613); *Alexander of Cappadocia* and *Nicostratus of Macedon*, to whom Hippodromus and Aelian are respectively compared (618, 625). Names of orators known from other sources are italicized.

7. The epigraphic and numismatic evidence is now usefully collected by Puech (2002).

8. Anderson 1986, 82–84, 108–9.

9. Ptolemy of Naucratis was a student of Herodes, but was more influenced by Polemo (595).

FIG. 1. Sophists in Philostratus' *Lives*: Teachers and Students

of Miletus (576). Nor are all of Anderson's exceptions quite as exceptional as they seem at first glance. Aspasius of Ravenna was a pupil of Pausanias and Hippodromus, both of whom belonged to the line of Herodes (628, cf. 594, 591), while Euodius of Smyrna may have studied with Polemo as well as Aristocles (597),¹⁰ and Polemo's great-grandson Hermocrates was also the student of Rufinus of Smyrna, who was yet another academic descendant of Herodes, through his father and artistic model, Apollonius of Naucratis (608–9, 599–600). And Philiscus, like his relative Hippodromus, was taught by Herodes' student Chrestus of Byzantium (591). That leaves only four real exceptions: Hermogenes (577–78) and Heliodorus the Arab (625–27), who seem to have been included for novelty value, Varus of Laodicea (620), whom Philostratus brings up only to reject, and Varus of Perge, who is loosely associated with Favorinus (576).

Several conclusions emerge from this prosopographical blizzard. First, Philostratus' catalogue cannot be an exhaustive list of the leading sophists of the late first through early third centuries. Rather, it traces fragments of a single tangled web of teachers, students, rivals, and allies with Herodes Atticus at its center.¹¹ Second, prominent among the *pepaideumenoi* authorized by association with Herodes is Philostratus himself: all three of his teachers—Proclus of Naucratis, Antipater of Hierapolis, and Damianus of Ephesus—were students of Hadrian of Tyre (602–7, cf. 585). Philostratus' selective portrait of the Second Sophistic thus turns out to place him in an extremely privileged position, as a member three times over of the most central branch of its central academic family tree. Part of what makes the idealized cultural world of the *Lives* ideal, then, is that Philostratus can locate himself with reference to it, as its privileged successor and mediator. We may describe his identification of Herodes and Hadrian as the anchor points of the sophistic movement as an act of personal loyalty or of self-fashioning and self-promotion; it amounts to much the same thing either way.

This near-exclusive emphasis on the extended network of Herodes Atticus—that is, on Philostratus' academic genealogy—may explain some of the peculiarities of the selection of sophists in the *Lives*. Compare, for example, his treatment of the sophists Onomarchus of Andros and Megistias of Smyrna. If virtuosity and celebrity were the main criteria of inclusion in the *Lives*, why give a biography of Onomarchus, who was “neither admired nor blameworthy” (598), but not of Megistias of Smyrna, whom we have encountered as a prominent teacher (τις τῶν ἐπιφανῶν) in the *Life* of Hippodromus (618–19)?¹² Certainty is impossible, but we may note that

10. As for Aristocles himself, his teacher is unknown, but he shared students with Herodes (598), Chrestus of Byzantium (612), and maybe Hadrian of Tyre (594).

11. As Anderson (1986, 83) observes: “We are not dealing with a ‘Second Sophistic’ as such: but with little more than ‘Herodes and his circle.’ . . . We might almost redefine a Philostratean sophist as a ‘virtuoso rhetor with a demonstrable connection with Herodes.’”

12. I have seen no explanation of Philostratus' principles of inclusion that makes sense of this. Megistias was a physiognomist as well as a teacher of epideictic rhetoric, but why should that disqualify him as a “pure rhetorician” (so Reardon 1971, 15) if it did not do so for Polemo? Nor is he one of those “men of little repute resident in small towns” whom Philostratus allegedly systematically ignores (Brunt 1994, 26; cf. Bowersock 2002, 159).

Onomarchus was a student of Herodes (598), while Megistias' credentials are unknown; perhaps he did not belong to one of the interlocking networks outlined above.¹³

The same principle may be at work in reverse in the case of Aelius Aristides. His presence seems almost entirely unjustified: he eschewed *ex tempore* oratory, disparaged those who taught for money, and refused to call himself a sophist, a word he used exclusively as a term of abuse.¹⁴ Moreover, he joins the professional web only tangentially, through one of his students. In short, he meets virtually none of the professional or social criteria of the category "sophist," and his precise classification has given scholars much trouble.¹⁵ Philostratus, however, includes him without hesitation, and reports that he had paying students and secretly admired improvisation, despite his lack of aptitude for it (605, 583). To suppose that Philostratus has annexed Aristides and assimilated him to the sophistic template simply because "he is afraid to allow even one of his subjects to escape from his chosen taxonomy" seems inadequate.¹⁶ Rather, we may note that the student who connects Aristides to the charmed circle of sophists is Philostratus' teacher Damianus of Ephesus, who, on his own account, spent a great deal of money to learn rhetoric from Aristides (605). Damianus is, moreover, the source of all of Philostratus' information on Aristides. It seems to me very likely that either Damianus or Philostratus or both had a vested interest in viewing this touchstone of their own professional credentials as a prominent, "real" sophist. In other words, while connection to Philostratus' academic patrilineage is not the only factor shaping the cast of characters of the *Lives*, it does seem to be a decisive one.

Not only the composition of the *Lives*, but also their internal hierarchy seems to be based more on the relations of their subjects with each other than on a purely objective assessment of their talent. This is especially clear where Philostratus departs from what he tacitly admits is common opinion. Theodotus of Athens had a great enough reputation for Marcus Aurelius himself to award him the Athenian chair of rhetoric; clearly he must have had some stature in the eyes of his peers. Indeed, Philostratus himself hints that Theodotus was the author of the famous speech given by his nephew Demonstratus against Herodes—a speech that even Philostratus concedes was an "amazing" (ἐν θαυμασίοις) piece of work, full of noteworthy (λόγου

13. This cannot account for all Philostratus' omissions, of course: for example, it does not explain why Clepsydriion members Amphicles and Sceptus (573, 578, 585) do not receive their own biographies. It may be that these two did not go on to have careers as sophists (Puech 2002, 57; Anderson 1986, 84–85). But even if their absence can be explained away, we must acknowledge that Philostratus included only a small sample of his heroes' associates, and that the reasons for his choices cannot be fully known.

14. Behr 1968, 106–7; 1994, 1163–77.

15. Those who regard Aristides as a sophist are forced to devise a definition of "sophist" in which teaching is prominent but not requisite; cf. n. 3 above. By contrast, Swain (1996, 97–100, 255), who focuses on teaching as the core activity of sophists, asserts that, given Aristides' contempt for sophists, "we should avoid the term when speaking of him, despite the fact that he had some pupils." Flinterman (2002, 199) disagrees, arguing reasonably that if a man talks like a sophist and acts like a sophist we might as well call him a sophist, whatever he calls himself.

16. Swain 1996, 100.

ἄξια) forms of expression (563, 566).¹⁷ Nevertheless, he dismisses Theodotus as a man of vulgar character (τῶν ἀγοραίων εἰς οὗτος) and merely adequate style (ἀποχρῶν), quite likely because he supported Herodes' opponents (566–67). By contrast, Philostratus regards Chrestus of Byzantium as unjustly underrated. Tellingly, though, his stated reason for thinking that Chrestus deserved a better reputation than he attained has nothing to do with rhetorical excellence, but with the fact that “he was taught by Herodes, best among the Hellenes, and taught many outstanding men, too” (590–91).¹⁸

But we do not need to limit ourselves to cases in which Philostratus holds an avowedly minority view. In fact, we may doubt that there were any majority views so universally accepted as to seem purely objective; in the fiercely competitive, contentious world of sophistic rhetoric, no one's status was secure. Not everyone admired Herodes and Hadrian as much as Philostratus does: some people called Herodes “the Stuffed Orator” (565), while Lucian apparently considered Hadrian a loathsome human being and a worthless sophist.¹⁹ Even Antipater of Hierapolis, who had been a student of both Hadrian and Pollux of Naucratis, apparently did not share Philostratus' veneration of Hadrian, since he chose to imitate Pollux instead of Hadrian (606–7). In other words, every judgment that Philostratus offers in the *Lives*, even when it comes to his movement-defining superstars, represents a disputable critical choice, and his artistic assessment consistently lines up with his personal affiliations.

It is easy to be misled into expecting disinterested, “reliable” truth from Philostratus, however, because he goes out of his way to present his sophistic canon as a reflection of cold, hard fact—which is to say, of the consensus opinion of everyone who matters. The deft manipulations that permit this tacit claim are richly on display in the defensive panegyric that begins his *Life of Scopelian* (514–15):

I will speak now about the sophist Scopelian, touching first on those who try to badmouth him, for they consider him unworthy of the circle of sophists, calling him dithyrambic, intemperate, and thick-witted. But the people who say this about him are quibblers, dull men who are not at all inspired by improvised speech; for by nature humans are envious creatures. . . . Thus it's no surprise if some tongue-tied people who have set the ox of silence on their tongue and do not themselves have any great thoughts or agree with another great thinker should spit on and badmouth the readiest, boldest, and most elevated speaker among the Greeks of his day.²⁰

17. Puech 2002, 462. With Puech (2002, 513–15), I think it most likely that Theodotus' wife, Aelia Cephesidora, was Demonstratus' aunt, not his niece; for the stemma of this family, see Kapetanopoulos 1968.

18. ἄριστα μὲν Ἑλλήνων ὑπὸ Ἡρώδου ἐπαιδεύθη, πολλοὺς δὲ ἐπαίδευσε καὶ θαυμασίους ἄνδρας. A glance at Figure 1 will show that Chrestus rivals Hadrian of Tyre as a secondary focal point in the *Lives*. Nutton (1970, 727) suggests that Chrestus was Gordian I's link to Herodes, either directly or through his student (Sempronius) Aquila (591), and that this accounts for his prominence. That is plausible, but not necessary for my argument; Chrestus is part of Philostratus' academic patrilineage, whatever his relation to Gordian.

19. For identification of Lucian's Pseudologista as Hadrian of Tyre, see Jones 1986, 112–15.

20. ὕπερ Σκοπελιανοῦ τοῦ σοφιστοῦ διαλέξομαι, καθαρῶτα μὲν πρότερον τῶν κακίζειν αὐτὸν πεπειρωμένων, ἀπαξιοῦσι γὰρ δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦ τῶν σοφιστῶν κύκλου διθυραμβώδη καλοῦντες καὶ ἀκόλαστον καὶ πεπαχυσμένον. ταῦτι περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγουσιν οἱ λεπτολόγοι καὶ νοῦθοι καὶ μηδὲν ἀπ' αὐτοσχεδίου γλώττης ἀναπνέοντες; φύσει μὲν γὰρ ἐπιφθονον ἥρμα ἄνθρωπος. . . καὶ οὐ χρὴ θαυμάζειν, εἰ πεπληρωμένοι τὴν γλώττιαν τινες καὶ βοῦν ἀφωνίας ἐπ' αὐτὴν βεβλημένοι καὶ μήτ' ἂν αὐτοὶ τι ἐνθυμηθέντες μέγα, μήτ' ἂν ἐνθυμηθέντος

Two points emerge from this passage. First, the composition of the elite inner circle of sophists was the subject of considerable interest and debate. The standards by which sophists were evaluated and the evaluations of individuals alike were largely a matter of informal consensus, not of formal, institutional definition, a situation that was bound to produce fluidity and contestation. Second, while there was room for disagreement, both about the criteria for membership (was a dithyrambic, singsong style an asset or a defect in a sophist?) and the degree to which a given orator met those criteria (was Scopelian unusually adept or unusually sluggish at impromptu declamation?), there were also self-evidently right and wrong answers to those questions—at least, so Philostratus would have us believe. Failure to reach the right conclusions can only be the result of malice or incompetence, the work of dull quibblers who have the ox of silence on their tongue. The opinions of such people obviously count for nothing.

Nor is this case exceptional; the same procedure consistently governs Philostratus' handling of the sophistic infighting that bulks so large in his narrative. Far from simply collecting all the wisecracks and feuds he can find out of sheer love of the salacious anecdote, in fact Philostratus includes only a limited selection whose outcomes correspond closely to his own preferences. With a very few exceptions, encounters between sophists come in three varieties: (1) one good sophist expresses approval of another, (2) an inferior sophist attacks a better one, thereby revealing his own ineptitude, or (3) a superior sophist puts down an inferior one. Very rarely do we see sophists of equal stature going head to head, and Philostratus virtually never records a successful hit against one of his favorites.²¹ Producing this result requires a certain amount of finesse. Philostratus' reporting is clearly very selective: he relates and rebuts a great deal of anonymous criticism of sophists he likes.²² Some story—a hostile encounter, a memorable zinger—must stand behind each of those tersely reported complaints, and the fact that Philostratus feels obligated to answer them suggests that the sophist in question did not emerge victorious at the time.²³

Those are not the stories we hear, however. The range of what we do hear is on display in the *Life* of Hadrian of Tyre: Herodes' early recognition of his talent (585–86), Hadrian's extravagant compliment to Herodes (586), his popularity in Athens (586–87) and Rome (589), how he won the favor of both Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (589–90). Even when he is criticized, he comes out on top. The fan of Chrestus who heckles him is a nobody who

ἐτέρου ξυμφήσαντες διαπτύοιεν τε καὶ κακίζοιεν τὸν ἐτοιμώτατα δὴ καὶ θαρραλέωτα καὶ μεγαλειότατα τῶν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ Ἑλλήνων ἐρμηνεύσαντα.

21. Even Demostratus' excellent speech against Herodes becomes a compliment to Herodes: the speech is famous in part because of the eminence of the target; the episode demonstrates Herodes' patience in the face of abuse (563–64).

22. Anonymous criticism of the great: Dionysius of Miletus (523–24), Scopelian (514–15), Polemo (542–43), Herodes Atticus (565, 586), Aelius Aristides (583–84), Hadrian of Tyre (590).

23. As Anderson (1986, 50) remarks, apropos of a deflected insult of Alexander the Clay-Plato (573), "Philostratus is evidently protecting one of his favourites from the fact that his reputation in other quarters was very different."

becomes gratuitously abusive when ignored; he does not survive his tangle with Hadrian (587–88). The consul Severus tries to tarnish Hadrian's reputation in the eyes of Marcus Aurelius, but in the end Hadrian is vindicated and more lavishly rewarded than he would have been otherwise (588–89). As for his other critics, Philostratus does not see fit even to mention their names, and we never hear of Hadrian himself attacking anyone, apart from one sarcastic gesture toward a stingy student (590). Unlike Lucian's Pseudologista, Philostratus' Hadrian has few enemies. That does not mean that scholarly enmities are always to be avoided, though, just that they must be wisely chosen. The dangers of picking the wrong fight can be seen in a tense exchange between Herodes Atticus and his student Sceptus of Corinth. Asked for his opinion of a lecture by Alexander the Clay-Plato, Sceptus quips that he has seen the clay, but is still looking for the Plato. Herodes cuts him off, warning, "Don't say that to anyone else, because you will slander yourself as an ignorant judge" (573).²⁴

On the whole, then, praise and blame are dealt out with remarkable fairness in the *Lives*, at least in terms of Philostratus' taste: the worthy are praised, the unworthy denigrated, and the inept reveal themselves by transgressing this rule. Quarrels between two stars are accordingly highly embarrassing, and Philostratus does his best to ignore them. On the rare occasions when he cannot pass over such a feud without comment, he has a range of damage-control strategies to draw on: either the feud is only temporary, or it is really the fault of someone else or of nonprofessional concerns; failing that, he seeks to mitigate the intrasophistic character of the quarrel.²⁵ The care that he takes in doing this indicates that despite the prominence of quarrels in the *Lives*, and while Philostratus is indeed a "connoisseur of the crushing remark," it is not quite right to say that he revels in this "ethos of pedantic rivalry and reprisal" for its own sake.²⁶ Rather, his anecdotes are carefully selected so that, as far as possible, they confirm his prejudices. Whether this

24. Σκέπτου δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Κορίνθου τὸν μὲν πλὸν εὐρηκέναι φήσαντος, τὸν δὲ Πλάτωνα ζητεῖν, ἐπικόπτων αὐτὸν ὁ Ἡρόδης "τοῦτι," ἔφη, "πρὸς μὴδὲνα εἴπης ἕτερον, σεαυτὸν γάρ" ἔφη "διαβαλεῖς ὡς ἀμαθὺς κρίνοντα." Similarly, Antiochus of Cilicia goes too far in in skewering Alexander the Clay-Plato's penchant for elevated vocabulary: Philostratus coldly appends Antiochus' parody to a discussion of how noble and delightful that very feature of Alexander's oratory was (574). Like Sceptus, Antiochus has succeeded only in making himself look bad by taking on this favorite of Herodes'.

25. Temporary: the antagonism between Scopelian and the camp of Timocrates is finally resolved by Polemo's respectful gestures toward Scopelian (521, 536). Someone else's fault: the quarrel between Philostratus of Lemnos and Aspasius was exacerbated by the no-good sophists Cassianus and Aurelius (627–28). Nonprofessional issues: the hostility of Demosthenes and Aeschines is attributed to discordant temperaments, only secondarily to political opposition, and not at all to stylistic (i.e., sophistic) disagreements (507–8), a point that is emphasized by having Aeschines compliment the speech of Demosthenes that resulted in his exile (510). Not between sophists: the leading role in the conspiracy to unseat Heracleides of Lycia from the Athenian rhetorical chair is given not to Apollonius of Naucratis, but to his associate Marcianus of Doliche, who does not otherwise appear in the *Lives* (613); the feud between Favorinus and Polemo appears in the *Life* of Favorinus (490–91), whom Philostratus does not classify as a sophist; it is barely alluded to in the *Life* of Polemo (536, 541).

26. Anderson 1986, 43, 45. Nor can Philostratus' censure of inappropriate sophistic infighting be dismissed as mere hypocrisy, *pace* Anderson 1986, 79. Dissent on the part of an acknowledged authority must be genuinely distressing for Philostratus, since it threatens the consensus of right-thinking insiders to which his canon is supposed to correspond.

is a matter of intent (Philostratus deliberately skews his sample) or taste (Philostratus prefers stories in which his heroes win), the effect is the same: quarrel anecdotes participate in a naturalizing discourse that promotes Philostratus' idiosyncratic version of the sophistic canon as the inevitable opinion of everyone admirable, everyone trustworthy, everyone who counts.

So when Philostratus remarks that Alexander the Clay-Plato has not yet attained the respect he deserves (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐς πλήρως πω τῆς ἑαυτοῦ δόξης ἀφίεται παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν, 574), he is following the opinion of Herodes Atticus, not that of Sceptus of Corinth or Antiochus of Cilicia. The views of marginal or minor sophists carry little weight for him. In fact, Antiochus is lucky to be counted as a sophist at all; other dissident critics find themselves delegitimized altogether, as when Philostratus mentions Varus of Laodicea only to inform us that he is not worth mentioning—and neither is anyone who thinks he does deserve mention (οἱ τὸν Λαοδικέα Οὐάρων λόγου ἀξιοῦντες αὐτοὶ μὴ ἀξιούσθων λόγου, 620). There is no way of knowing who has been written out of the *Lives* on these grounds, but the message is clear. Philostratus is working with a tightly limited vision of the circle of sophists, one defined around and by a very small number of canonical figures. No one who fails to meet this definition and no one who challenges it by accepting an unacceptable outsider can belong to that privileged community.

Of course, sophists did not operate in a vacuum, interacting only with each other. Sophists were deeply invested in the public and political life of the empire in the second century, and Philostratus is indisputably very interested in his subjects' dealings with cities and emperors. When it comes to self-definition, however, that involvement is strictly a one-way street—or so Philostratus would have us believe. In the world of the *Lives*, the public is universally fascinated by sophists as entertainers, celebrities, benefactors, and political power brokers, but does not exert any influence over them in return. Patrons, especially the emperors, are reduced to mere fans: ardent admirers of the sophistic movement, but with no star-making ability or aspirations of their own. Popular acclaim, patronage, professional and political honors—to denizens of the circle of sophists, these things matter when they confirm established truth, that is, an orator's worth as encapsulated in his relations with his peers, but they cannot make anyone's reputation.²⁷ In Philostratus' view, being named *ab epistulis* (imperial secretary) or appointed to one of the chairs of rhetoric will not make someone a sophist if he is not one already. He is quick to point out that good declaimers do not always make good *ab epistulis* and vice versa (627, 524) and that "not all who mount the chair [of rhetoric] are worth mentioning" (οὐδὲ πάντες οἱ ἐπιβατεύοντες τοῦ θρόνου τούτου λόγου ἄξιοι, 566). In his view, emperors cannot make sophists, nor would a good emperor want to do so. You would not know from Philostratus that the emperor Hadrian, the most disposed of all past emperors to foster merit (530), allegedly "tried to destroy the sophists Favorinus of

27. Cf. Anderson 1986, 81; 1993, 31.

Gaul and Dionysius of Miletus in various ways and especially by elevating their rivals, some of them worth nothing, others very little.”²⁸ In the *Lives*, infringing upon the autonomy of the sophistic community is rather the act of a bad emperor like Caracalla, who not only elevated the obscure Arabian orator Heliodorus to equestrian rank and named him *advocatus fisci*, but also forced reluctant listeners to applaud his declamation (626).²⁹

It is in this light, I think, that we should understand Philostratus’ insistence on regarding the historian Aelian as a sophist, since “he was called a sophist by those who bestow such things” (προσρηθείς σοφιστῆς ὑπὸ τῶν χαριζομένων τὰ τοιαῦτα, 624). That could mean that Aelian received immunity from liturgies or some other privilege reserved for sophists; in other words, that he was a sophist because the emperor said he was.³⁰ In reality, emperors and cities plainly did have a great deal of power to make or break aspiring sophists. To acknowledge that power openly, however, would seem to cut against Dionysius of Miletus’ dictum that “Caesar can give you money and honor, but he can’t make you an orator.”³¹ The artistic autonomy of the circle of sophists seems absolutely central to Philostratus’ vision of his profession—a vision that he evidently shares with predecessors like Dionysius and Chrestus, who famously declared that οὐχ αἱ μύρια τὸν ἄνδρα (“The 10,000 drachmae [the salary for the Athenian rhetorical chair] don’t make the man,” 591).³² It thus would be very surprising to see him abandon that conception here, except perhaps ironically. If, as I have argued, Philostratus deliberately depicts the circle of sophists as entirely self-generating and self-regulated, to the exclusion of outsiders as well as dissident insiders, it is at least possible that “those who bestow such things” are other authoritative sophists. I would suggest that Aelian, like Aristides, was a sophist because other sophists considered him one.

28. τὸν Φαουωρίνον τὸν Γαλάτην, τὸν τε Διονύσιον τὸν Μιλήσιον τοὺς σοφιστὰς καταλύειν ἐπεχείρει, τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ μάλιστα τῷ τοὺς ἀνταγωνιστὰς σφῶν ἐξαίρειν, τοὺς μὲν μηδενός, τοὺς δὲ βραχυτάτου τινός ἄξιους ὄντας (Dio Cass. 69.3.4).

29. By contrast, Trajan was almost the perfect imperial fan; he did not know enough Greek to understand Dio Chrysostom, but he loved (and honored) him anyway (488). He could have had no pretensions as a critic of sophists.

30. So Brunt 1994, 32. Anderson (1986, 86) suggests that “Aelian was included in the *Lives* as the only Roman—a special compliment to the Hellenes that even someone confined to Italy should opt for Greek as his literary medium,” or that he is “merely included so that Philostratus of Lemnos can be ‘awarded’ a *bon mot* at his expense.” None of these suggestions is impossible, but I find them all unsatisfying.

31. Καίσαρ χρήματα μὲν σοι καὶ τιμὴν δοῦναι δύναται, ῥήτορα δὲ σε ποιῆσαι οὐ δύναται (Dio Cass. 69.3.5).
32. There is some truth to this. VS 566, 588, and 627 indicate that rhetorical chairs were awarded to men with established reputations as declaimers and teachers. For the imperial secretaries of the period between Trajan and Caracalla, too, being named *ab epistulis* was the product, not the source, of their literary prominence: Millar 1977, 88–93. On the sophistic monopoly of the post of *ab epistulis* in this period, see Bowersock 1969, 50–57. Bowie (1982, 39–44) disputes this, arguing that only four of the sixteen known *ab epistulis* from this period are “properly called sophists.” Yet three others (Avidius Heliodorus, Celer, and Julius Vestinus) also have a fair claim to be considered sophists, yielding at least seven sophistic secretaries. Bowersock’s assumption that those secretaries whose literary specialty is unknown were probably also sophists is thus more justified than Bowie allows. I would observe, though, that this question depends in part on an *a priori* decision about the very issue that we are considering here: does appointment as *ab epistulis* prove that a man is a sophist? Bowie, perhaps under the influence of Philostratus, thinks that official honors have no identity-defining power, and so declines to assume that those unknown specialists were sophists.

OTHER SOPHISTS, OTHER CIRCLES

Philostratus' agreement with Dionysius and Chrestus on the subject of who can make a sophist brings us finally to the question of how his account of the operation of the circle of sophists fits with the ideas of other practicing sophists. His notion of who makes up that circle is plainly quite selective, eccentric, and self-interested, and his tacit assumption that only already-authorized sophistic insiders, and not borderline sophists or outside consumers and patrons, may hold valid opinions on this subject is frankly impossible. Nonetheless, I would argue that his canon-forming methods are not at all eccentric and, in particular, that a vision of sophists as a self-contained, self-generating elite is deeply ingrained in the self-defining rhetoric of the Second Sophistic. This attitude is visible not only in the explicit comments of Chrestus and Dionysius quoted above, but in the careful control that sophists exercise over social and professional contact with each other at moments when professional identity and status are at stake.

One such moment occurs in a run-in between the hot-tempered Philagrus and Herodes' star pupil Amphicles and his entourage (578). On this occasion, both men, annoyed at not being recognized, decide that Athens—and the circle of sophists—is not big enough for both of them. Attempting to neutralize the threat posed by the other, each sophist challenges the other's credentials (ἀλλ' ἢ σὺ τίς;) and then tries to demolish them outright: Philagrus by banning Amphicles from his lectures, Amphicles (and friends) by sabotaging those same lectures. Philagrus' professional excommunication of Amphicles inverts a more common pattern in which an unlikely-looking sophist shows up at another's school and is mistaken for a nonparticipating outsider (a rustic, the father of a student) until he declaims for his host, whereupon he is enthusiastically embraced as a fellow sophist (529, 618–19). In both cases, the act of hearing and performing before another sophist is wielded as a mark of insider status: a real sophist is recognized by his ability to attend sophistic lectures as a full participant. Likewise, a real sophist is one whose performances other real sophists attend, which is why it is a red-letter event for the young Polemo when Dionysius of Miletus seeks him out (525–26) or for Alexander the Clay-Plato when Herodes and his students come to one of his lectures (571–73).³³ Nothing else carries the same weight: even the critic Dorion defers to Dionysius of Miletus' evaluation of Polemo, saying that Dionysius will be able to judge the budding orator's strengths and weaknesses much better than he can (525). Such episodes suggest that for Second Sophistic sophists, as for their chronicler, the decision about whether or not an orator was worthy of the circle of sophists rested strictly in the hands of other approved sophists, and, further, that acceptance or rejection were commonly expressed by extending or denying social and professional access.

33. Cf. Gleason 1998, 505, on visitation among desert fathers: "Receiving unsolicited visitors was indeed one of the signs that one had 'made it' as an abba."

Seen more broadly, manipulation of professional access was part of a whole repertoire of displays of approval and disapproval through which status negotiation and boundary maintenance were conducted within this tightly closed group. Public compliments and insults provided a crucial medium for self-fashioning—for crafting a public personality, for forming and advertising alliances, for enforcing what one took to be the community's standards or promoting new standards—and hence for shaping the community as well.³⁴ To be sure, conscious professional maneuvering was not the only motivation for such conflicts. Competitions among sophists over status and imperial favor could mirror inter- and intracity rivalries, with very real consequences.³⁵ And to a certain extent, professional friction is simply an inevitable feature of an intellectually rarified profession that attracted high-strung people.³⁶ Yet the political and personal ramifications of sophistic feuds and friendships should not distract us from their role in the internal regulation of the circle of sophists.

We may see this process at work in the quarrel between Scopelian and the philosopher Timocrates, which polarized the wealthy, intellectual young men of Smyrna into opposing camps (536). Polemo, who had been a student of both, sided with Timocrates, with decisive consequences for his career. The point at issue was Scopelian's habit of depilation, but taking a stand on preferred gender presentation was part of a larger declaration of artistic allegiance: according to Philostratus, Polemo was motivated by love of Timocrates' fluent, forceful, and ready manner of speech, and we may infer that he learned his own quick-witted, hot-blooded style from him (537, 542).³⁷ This alliance lasted throughout Polemo's life (536), perhaps even into the next scholarly generation, since we find one of his students attacking Scopelian for his overly emotional delivery (520). Inappropriate dithyrambic style and lack of fluent, ready speech, we may recall, are exactly the charges Philostratus attributes to those who considered Scopelian unworthy of the circle of sophists (514–15). Thus we may see the adherents of Timocrates forming a self-conscious sophistic orthodoxy, a socially bound coalition that defines itself collectively over against an exemplary opponent, whose dissident artistic standards exclude him from membership in the community—in other words, a miniature local version of precisely the kind of canon Philostratus builds in the *Lives*.

34. Gleason 1995, 28: "For a rhetorician who aspired to prominence, professional quarrels were not a luxury but a necessary medium for self-advertisement. Feuding sophists found indignation an unflinching stimulus to wit and a useful catalyst in the construction of a public personality. If they had had no rivals, they would have created them to define themselves." Cf. Hahn 1989, 109–15, on the function of quarrels among philosophers as a medium for the construction of individual and corporate professional profiles, and Dominik 1997, 50–59, on Quintilian's use of criticism of Seneca to criticize the postclassical style in general and to advance his own contrary canon of style.

35. Bowersock 1969, 89–100.

36. Anderson 1993, 35–39. Winter (1997, 128–30) sees these conflicts as a by-product of status-hungry sophists' accumulation of intensely loyal pupils, while Gleason (1995, 73) examines the role that these quarrels played in elite male socialization.

37. Polemo's later feud with the effeminate Favorinus may also be no coincidence. Cf. Gleason (1995, 73), who emphasizes Polemo's physiognomic, rather than rhetorical, motives for supporting Timocrates.

Negotiations over status and standards are conducted not only in the actual momentary encounters in which feuds and alliances were played out, though, but even more in the stories preserved and circulated about them afterward. Such gossip was clearly of absorbing interest to other sophists besides Philostratus, since his information comes chiefly from the reminiscences of his predecessors: from his teachers (585), especially Damianus (582–83, 605–6), from οἱ πρεσβύτεροι (579), including Aristaeus, who was “the oldest of the Hellenes in my time and knew the most about the sophists” (524), and Ctesidemus of Athens, who knew Herodes Atticus (552), and from the letters of Herodes himself (537–39, 552–54). Each of these men must have had his own store of favorite stories, culled from personal experience and hearsay. In repeated telling, these collections of anecdotes promoted the storyteller’s vision of the way things really happened. As Maud Gleason observes, “gossip generates shared meanings . . . it transforms events into stories, and stories shape a community’s memories of itself.”³⁸ Gossip about the warm reception or acerbic putdown of one sophist by another reinforces the message that such interactions are of overriding importance; of such things is a man’s reputation made.³⁹ And the stories told and retold about such interactions come to constitute each orator’s reputation in the collective memory of the community; these cumulatively sketch the profile of the community itself. If Philostratus’ informants were as selective and partisan in the gossip they passed on as he is—that is, if they, too, preferred to dwell on the professional triumphs of their favorites and the failures of those they despised—then each one’s recollections will have painted a picture of the sophistic landscape in his day that was no less idiosyncratic and idealized than the picture we get in the *Lives*. If so, then it is possible to imagine that there were as many variations on this picture as there were interested observers, all of them partial, all of them partisan, all of them composed in essentially the same way.

What, then, might some of those other canons have looked like? Unfortunately, the nature of our evidence makes it difficult to offer a very satisfactory answer to this question. The roughly 150 *sophistai* and *rhetoires* whom we know from coins, inscriptions, and reading between the lines of Philostratus and other second-century intellectuals remain for us shadowy figures. Aiming to define a sophistic canon, the *Lives* have succeeded in largely effacing those whom they exclude.⁴⁰ Any attempt to reconstruct a network of sophists that can stand against Philostratus must accordingly remain highly speculative and, ultimately, largely dependent on Philostratus himself.

Occasionally, however, inscriptions do provide information that stands in sharp and intriguing contrast to what Philostratus tells us, and may enable us to glimpse a genuinely divergent map of the Second Sophistic. One famous case is that of the Ephesian sophist Soterus. Philostratus included him among the “playthings of the Hellenes” (605), yet an inscription reveals

38. Gleason 1998, 502–3.

39. Cf. Hahn 1989, 115–18, on the popularity of stories about encounters among leading philosophers.

40. On the destructive effects of canonization, see Worthington 1994, 247–48.

that the Ephesians regarded him as a first-rate sophist (σοφιστὴν πρῶτον), well worth the 10,000-drachma salary with which they lured him away from Athens in view of his virtuous life and rhetorical skill (ἀντ' ἀρετῆς τε βίου σοφίης τε λόγῳ[ιο]).⁴¹ This discrepancy may reflect Philostratus' reliance on the biased opinion of Damianus of Ephesus, likely a rival of Soterus'.⁴²

The same may also be true of Flavius Phylax, another "plaything," who is also known to us from a statue he erected at Olympia, presumably after his appearance in a Panhellenic competition, and from another that he and his brother Phoenix dedicated at Delphi in honor of their "father and teacher," Flavius Alexander.⁴³ Alexander, too, was a *sophistes*, at least in the eyes of his sons, as was Phoenix, who received a statue at Delphi from his students; this honor puts him and his father in the company of luminaries like Herodes Atticus and Apollonius of Athens.⁴⁴ Philostratus, however, has nothing to say about Alexander. Phoenix does find a place in the *Lives*, but he receives a decidedly lukewarm review: "neither worthy of admiration, nor entirely to be slandered" (οὐδὲ θαυμάσαι ἄξιός, οὐδὲ αὖ διαβαλεῖν πάντα, 604). The uniformity of Philostratus' disdain for this family is striking. It may well be that Alexander and his sons were simply mediocre sophists, but it seems at least possible that we are dealing here with a small network whose members have all been marginalized because one of them ran afoul of one of Philostratus' favorites.

Another network clusters around Claudius Demonstratus and his uncle Theodotus, leaders of the opponents of Herodes Atticus at Athens. Philostratus has little good to say about either man: Demonstratus appears in the *Lives* only as an antagonist of Herodes (559–60, 563, 566), while, as we have seen, Philostratus' assessment of Theodotus seems strikingly out of step with his stature and talents. Connected to these two by marriage is another Philostratan villain, Cassianus Antiochus, one of the sophists whom Philostratus blames for exacerbating the quarrel between Philostratus of Lemnos and Aspasius (627). Cassianus has a further strike against him: in the early third century the Cassiani were jockeying with the Philostrati for recognition as the leading family of Steira; as Bernadette Puech drily observes, this political rivalry was perhaps not unrelated to the professional antagonism between Cassianus and the Philostrati.⁴⁵ Small wonder, then, that although Cassianus was "director of the Museion" (τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ Μουσίου[υ]) at Athens and, most likely, holder of the Athenian rhetorical chair, Philostratus blasts

41. Keil 1953, 15–18; cf. Puech 2002, 455–58. Similarly, Philostratus passes over Polemo's son Attalus with the remark that the only descendant of Polemo worth noting was his great-grandson, Hermocrates (609). Yet Attalus was well enough regarded to be named on a Smyrnaean coin as Ἀτταλὸς σοφιστής: Jones 1980, 374–75.

42. Swain 1991, 158.

43. *Inscr. Olympia* 464 = Puech no. 205; *FD III* 4.474 = Puech no. 3; cf. Puech 2002, 385–86.

44. *BCH* 1925, 82 = Puech no. 204. In all, eleven *sophistai* and *rhetoires* received statues at Delphi in the first three centuries C.E.: see Bouvier 1985, 130–35; cf. Puech 2002, 44–45, 385.

45. See Puech 2002, 87, and 509–12, for the stemma of the Cassiani of Steira. They are connected to the Claudii of Melite through Cassianus Apollonius, perhaps the brother of the sophist, who married a granddaughter of Demonstratus.

him as opportunistic and unworthy, and writes him out of the *Lives*.⁴⁶ Finally, also connected by marriage to Demostratus *et alii* may be Plutarch's friend, the Corinthian orator Antonius Sospis, and his grandson Aelius Sospis, also a *rhetor*.⁴⁷ Neither of these men appears in the *Lives*.

Our evidence is too scanty to draw firm conclusions about how these men might have fit into anyone's view of the circle of sophists, or how they themselves would have constructed that circle. Still, Philostratus' consistent disregard or denigration of orators associated with this family is suggestive. Moreover, this group can be loosely connected to the other: Theodotus was a student of Lollianus of Ephesus, as was Phoenix's teacher Philagrus, whose feud with Herodes Atticus we described above (567, 604). Both, in other words, belong to the school of Isaeus. Some of Isaeus' academic descendants rate quite highly in the *Lives*, but that network as a whole is very tenuously connected to Philostratus' own, and, as we have just seen, its members come into conflict with Philostratus' favorites at a remarkable number of points: Soterus and Phylax with his teacher Damianus; Demostratus, Theodotus, and Philagrus with his hero, Herodes; Cassianus with Philostratus' own family, especially his son-in-law.⁴⁸ For these men Philostratus has little respect. Might their repeated political and professional clashes with his allies suggest that the feeling was mutual?

If so, then in the network centered on the school of Isaeus, and joined together by lines of kinship and academic filiation, we might be able to locate an alternate center of gravity for the Second Sophistic, and perhaps a view of it that could stand in opposition to the one we get from Philostratus. Imagine what would happen to the map sketched out in Figure 1 if we moved Isaeus from the periphery to the center, added Soterus, Phylax, Cassianus, and Demostratus, and awarded a larger place to Philagrus, Phoenix, and Theodotus than Philostratus gives them. The Philostratean favorites who stood in opposition to this group—Damianus, Philostratus of Lemnos, Herodes Atticus himself—would be displaced to the margins, or removed altogether. After all, without Philostratus we would never know that Damianus had a rhetorical career at all.⁴⁹ Suppose further that we dropped two of Philostratus' most controversial choices, Chrestus of Byzantium and Hadrian of Tyre, from the circle of sophists, and with them many of their students. Without changing the basic principles underlying its construction, the landscape of the Second Sophistic with which we would be left would be virtually unrecognizable.

46. *IG* II² 3712 = Puech no. 13. On the otherwise unattested Museion at Athens, and the likely relation between that institution and the chair of rhetoric, see Puech 2002, 81–86.

47. Antonius Sospis: *Plut. Mor.* 723–24, 739E–740F, 741C–743C. Aelius Sospis: *Corinth* VIII.3.226 = Puech no. 241. For the likelihood that a daughter of Antonius Sospis married a Claudius of Melite, see Puech 2002, 453. This daughter would have been Theodotus' mother-in-law and Demostratus' grandmother.

48. To be sure, this network does intersect with Philostratus' own at a few points: Demostratus' nephew, the philosopher Ti. Claudius Sospis, studied with Chrestus of Byzantium (591; cf. Clinton 1974, 85); a granddaughter of this Sospis married Philostratus' friend Valerius Apsines (628; *IG* II² 4007 = Puech no. 30). It would be unrealistic to imagine such a small, tightly intertwined professional and social elite falling into neat, entirely self-contained intellectual factions.

49. Puech 2002, 2, 194.

CONCLUSION: SOPHISTS AND THE DISCOURSE OF CANONICITY

The procedure by which Philostratus and his colleagues arrived at their personal sophistic canons could be described, to borrow a term from early Christian scholarship, as a sort of orthocratic method:⁵⁰ within the pool of eligible orators, those connected by academic patrilineage or alliance with canonical insiders are privileged, while those who cast their lot with outsiders (i.e., failed would-be insiders) are marginalized by association. Ideally, participation in the process of canon formation is limited to legitimate insiders, so that each canon carries its own self-perpetuating power. This strength becomes fragility, however, the moment one of those canonical anchor points is challenged. Differences of opinion about the merits of leading sophists are not merely quibbles over taste: change the gold standard of rhetorical artistry, and the entire map of the sophistic circle changes. The center has moved, and with it the periphery; the web of social and professional relationships must be entirely redrawn. Those who thought that Soterus was a first-rate sophist, that Theodotus and Cassianus deserved their rhetorical chairs, or that Hadrian of Tyre did not deserve his would no doubt have told a very different story of the Second Sophistic. The case of Soterus may also highlight the limitations of a view of the sophistic canon that discounts public opinion and patronage as irrelevant to professional prestige; the discordance between Philostratus' assessment of him and his reception by the people of Ephesus speaks to the vulnerability of the orthocratic method of boundary construction.

Rhetorically, however, that vulnerability does not exist for Philostratus or his colleagues. Even when they diverge in their evaluation of the status of their peers, they share the assumption that there is no room for legitimate disagreement: as a matter of simple, self-evident fact, orators are λόγου ἄξιοι or they are not, they deserve to be counted as sophists or they do not. In theory, there can be only one canon, which commands automatic universal assent, a result achieved by excluding from participation nearly everyone who dissents. This tension between the rhetoric of timeless, clear-cut unanimity and the reality of plurality exposes the hollowness of the notion of the self-evident, which rests on obscuring the very debates by which it is produced. From our vantage, however, that plurality can be elusive, since alternate orthodoxies exist for us only as already-discarded possibilities. The great authorizing power of retrospective intellectual history lies in its ability to freeze the kaleidoscope of views of its subject on one particular image.

The version of the glory days of sophistic oratory that we find in the *Lives of the Sophists* is thus only one possible, partial view. We may look past Philostratus to reconstruct other views, but we should also appreciate his construction of the Second Sophistic for what it is: a masterful attempt by Philostratus to define and legitimate his own position by defining a world

50. Wisse (1986, 185) coins the term "orthocracy" to describe the situation in which, in the absence of a fixed orthodoxy, "the truth claim of a teaching depended on the accepted authority of the person who taught it."

into which he fits, and to convince others to accept this construction as unquestionably self-evident. In employing this method of self-definition, Philostratus was not essentially different from his peers and models, only more successful.

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