RECURRING MOTIFS IN THE GREEK BIOGRAPHIES OF LITERARY MEN

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis presents an attempt to classify the various types of fictional material commonly found in ancient Greek biographies, and to suggest to what extent the recognition of the recurrence of certain types of anecdote may provide a useful guideline for determining the historicity of biographical statements. After a discussion of the sources available to the biographers and the dangers inherent in the careless use of them, several types of recurring biographical motifs are isolated and particular instances of them are treated in detail. Among the factors seen to cause recurrence are: folk motifs underlying the material derived from popular tradition, topoi of invective present in the biographer's comic and rhetorical sources, the transference of general-purpose witty anecdotes, and recurring patterns of thought in the biographers' own minds due to their popularizing aims, preconceptions about history, and philosophical outlook.

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Janet Fairweather

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: Some resources of Greek Biography

"Plenus est sordium liber qui iam prodit", writes Westermann in the preface to his collection, Biographi Graeci Minores.[1] The existence in ancient biography of the considerable fictional element to which he is alluding, is obvious to any critical reader. Amazing and improbable tales and reliance on unsatisfactory sources are by no means restricted to the lives of men of the remote past, the period which Plutarch admits to be "full of marvels and unreality, a land of poets and fabulists, of doubt and obscurity".[2] Even in biographies of people of the Hellenistic and Roman periods clearly apocryphal anecdotes are plentiful and yet there may be doubt over such basic matters as a man's origins, parentage and dates.[3]

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[1] A. Westermann. Biographi Graeci Minores. Braunschweig, 1845. Reprinted Amsterdam, 1964, p. iii.

[2] Plutarch. Theseus 1. Trans. Perrin. Loeb, 1915.

[3] E.g. Westermann, p. 69.1 ff: uncertainty over the floruit and origins of Dionysius Periegetes:

γέγονε δ' ἐπὶ τῶν Ρωμαικῶν χρόνων μετ' Αὔγουστον Καίσαρα ἢ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ. οἱ δὲ κατὰ Νέρωνα τὸν Ῥωμαίων βασιλέα φασὶ γενέσθαι. ἄδηλον δὲ πόθεν γέγονε καὶ τίνων γονέων.

The question we must ask is: where did the sordes come from? In the case of the Lives of literary men and philosophers, and this discussion will be primarily concerned with these, it is clear that the biographers drew extensively on the works of the man whose Life they were writing. Now, the technique of deriving information about a man from his writings is perfectly acceptable, up to a point. The trouble is that ancient writers vary tremendously in the extent to which they let their lives stand open to view as if on a votive tablet. On the one hand we have the orators delivering detailed, if one-sided, accounts of their lives in self-justification, and on the other, classical poets for whom it would have been unthinkable to obtrude their own personality too clearly into their works. It may be said that the majority of the Greek biographers of literary men failed to draw any distinction between the various degrees of self-revelation. Indeed, they could not afford to. They were writing for a public averse to the kind of bare-bones history which would have resulted if they had restricted themselves to obviously solid facts. There is evidence that the invention of biographical anecdotes flimsily based on inferences from poetry was something which had appealed to the Greek imagination for a very long time. Some of the main legends about Homer, for example, can be seen to have crystalized very early.[4] Semonides

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[4]Cf. O. Crusius: Zur Kritik der antiken Ansichten über die Echtheit homerischer Dichtung. Philologus 54. 1895. p. 710 ff.

is found identifying the poet of the Iliad with the man of Chios who appears in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo;[5] Pindar seems to have known a legend in which Homer gave away the Cypria as his daughter's dowry, an anecdote of a type obviously contrived to explain an alternative attribution of a poem.[6] By Plato's time the picture of Homer as a blind wandering rhapsode[7] appears fully developed, and the philosopher is found adding to the traditions by a whimsical suggestion that Homer's blindness was a punishment for his criticisms of Helen, an explanation suggested by a similar story about Stesichorus.[8] So, it emerges that biographical

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[4] W. Schadewaldt. Legende von Homer dem fahrenden Sänger. Artemis. Zürich and Stuttgart, 1959.

[5] Semonides. frag. 29.1.1 f. Diehl = Simonides. frag. 85 B.

ἐν δὲ τὸ κάλλιστον χῖος ἔειπεν ἀνήρ

οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν

quoting Iliad Z 146.

Cf. Homeric Hymn to Apollo 172:

τυφλὸς ἀνήρ οἰκεῖ δὲ χίῳ ἔνι παιπαλοέσσῃ.

[6] Pindar. frag. 265. Snell = Aelian. Varia Historia 9.15.

ἀπορῶν ἐκδόῦναι τὴν θυγατέρα ἔδωκεν αὐτῇ προῖκα ἔχειν

τὰ ἔπη τὰ κυπρία.

[7] Plato. Republic: 600d-e; Phaedrus 243a.

[8] Plato. Phaedrus 243a; cf. A. Momigliano, The Development of Greek Biography, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 23 ff. for the evidence for biography and collections of biographical ancedotes in the fifth century: he sees Ionia as the area where biographical interest first arose.

fantasy was not the momopoly of the Peripatetic writers who brought about the first great flowering of Greek biography. It was these writers, however, who were responsible for the regrettable fact that incautions deduction from the subject's works, and even less reliable techniques continued to form the basis of the biographies of the famous men of the fifth and fourth centuries and that these are consequently of little value as historical documents. The trouble was that Hellenistic biographers had a taste for fullness and artistic finish in historical writing which militated against the ideal of the pursuit of the truth in which they also, theoretically, believed.[9]

There could hardly be a more extreme example of the art of constructing biography out of nothing than the lives

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[9]Cf. F. Leo. Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form. Leipzig, 1901, p. 318: "Die sogenannte Peripatetiker richtete den gesammelten gelehrten Stoff in schöner Sprache für das grosse Publikum zu, nahm das scheinbar Ueberlieferte und die Neubildung nach Analogie vorhandner Geschichten leichtgläubig hin und handhabte selbst mit Virtuosität die Methoden schnell fertiger Erfindung." Momigliano and others, reacting from Leo's emphasis on the part played by the peripatetics in the development of biography as a literary form, are at pains to point out that we cannot prove that any of the early peripatetics, apart from Aristoxenus wrote true biographies, if one defines biography as Momigliano op. cit., p. 11 does, as "an account of the life of a man from birth to death". But the question of the precise form of the works of the various peripatetics does not concern us now. The same sort of research methods must have been used in all types of such literary study.

of Homer. Owing to their antiquity some of the legends raise very complicated problems which it would be out of place to consider in a general discussion of biographical method. For one thing one is dealing with the probability that there was an early poetical version of the Homer legends and it is clear that many of the stories arose in a period when almost anything in hexameters and more besides, was liable to be ascribed to either to Homer or Hesiod.[10] The deductive method can be seen in operation though, clearly enough, in some of the stories of Homer's childhood and youthful travels in the pseudo-Herodotean Life.[11] After giving birth to the future poet by the river Meles -- the poet bears the name Meleigenes in the legends up to the time he goes blind, and Homeros is supposed to be a dialect word meaning 'blind man'[12] -- his mother, Kretheis, brings him to Smyrna, where

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[10]Cf. Crusius. Philologus 54, p. 710 ff.

[11]Westermann, p. 2.34 ff. n.b. Schadewaldt's description of this biography, in Legende von Homer, p. 42, as an anonymous work, not earlier than the first century A.D., written in the Ionic dialectand in an archaic manner The version of Homer's birth it gives was also related by Ephorus, (Westermann, p. 21.7 ff), and something very like it may have been told by Hellanicus, Damastes (but cf. Westermann, p. 30.1) Pherecydes, (Westermann, p. 25.17 ff.), and the sophist Hippias (Westermann, p. 31.3.)

[12]Westermann, p. 6.55; cf. p. 21.19 ff; p. 27.5 f.

she earns her living by making woollen clothing for a bachelor schoolmaster called Phemius, and is later persuaded to live with him. Melesigenes is educated by Phemius in part payment for Kretheis' wool-work and then is adopted by him. This is an ingenious way of explaining how the son of a unattached woman like Kretheis in the legend could be so well educated. The name Phemius was obviously derived from the Odyssey. In fact, in a passage later in the Life[13] the biographer expresses a belief that certain characters in the Iliad and Odyssey represent benefactors whom Homer was repaying. Of Phemius he says:

ἀπέδωκε δὲ καὶ Φημίῳ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ διδασκάλῳ
τροφεῖα καὶ διδασκαλεῖα ἐν τῇ 'Οδυσσείᾳ
μάλιστ' ἐν τοῖσδε τοῖς ἔπεσι'

κῆρυξ δ' ἐν χερσὶν κίθαριν περικαλλέ, ἔθηκε
Φημίῳ, ὃς δὴ πολλὸν ἐκαίνυτο πάντας ἀείδων
καὶ πάλιν.

αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀείδειν.

After the death of Phemius, Melesigenes takes over his school and wins some local fame.[14] He impresses a certain ship's captain, named Mentes, an educated man for his time, who comes to trade at Smyrna. Mentes invites the young man to come with him on his travels, stressing the advantages of

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[13] Ibid, p. 13.339 ff.

[14] Ibid, p. 3.47 ff.

seeing the world while he is young. Melesigenes accepts the offer. It goes without saying that the figure of Mentes, the ship's captain, was suggested by the Odyssey: in his invaluable list of 'benefactors repaid' the biographer writes:

μέμνηται δὲ καὶ τοῦ ναυκλήρου, μεθ' οὗ
ἐκπεριέπλευσε καὶ εἶδε πόλιάς τε πολλὰς
καὶ χώρας, ᾧ ὄνομα ἦν Μέντης, ἐν τοῖς
ἔπεσι τοῖσδε·

Μέντης Ἀγχιάλοιο δαΐφρονος εὔχομαι εἶναι
υἱός, ἀτὰρ Ταφίοισι φιληρέτμοισιν ἀνάσσω.[15]

The future poet takes advantage of his travels by sightseeing every time the ship comes to land and finding out about the local legends.[16] Returning from a journey to Etruria and Spain they put in at Ithaca, where Melesigenes first suffers from a disease of the eyes. Mentes leaves him in the care of his old friend Mentor, son of Alkimus, the Ithacan. It was then that he came to hear the story of Odysseus. Of course, the biographer does not fail to point out later that Mentor, too, was honoured in the Odyssey.[17] Mentor only partially succeeds in curing Melesigenes.[18] By the time he

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[15] Ibid, p. 13.346 ff.

[16] Ibid, p. 3.67 ff.

[17] Ibid, p. 13.331 ff.

[18] Ibid, p. 4.75 ff.

gets to Kolophon he is totally blind. A visit to Kolophon owed its place in the Homer legends to some lines from the Margites, perhaps prefatory to the poem:

'Ηλθέ τις εἰς Κολοφῶνα γέρων καὶ θεῖος ἀοιδὸς
Μουσάων θεράπων καὶ ἑκηβόλου 'Απόλλωνος
φίλην ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν εὔφθογγον λύρην.[19]

It will be noticed that Homer is not a γέρων at this stage in the pseudo-Herodotean biography. It seems that an alternative tradition had grown up which placed the visit early in the poet's life, the reason probably being that the Margites was a light-hearted iambic poem and that to the imagination of biographers and inventors of local traditions it suggested itself that any light-hearted poem was probably written for children and hence that the poet must have been having to earn his living as a schoolmaster at the time of its composition, presumably not yet being established as a poet. Indeed, in the Contest between Homer and Hesiod in Westermann's collection,[20] we read that the Kolophonians point out a place where Homer worked as a teacher and composed his first poem, the Margites. The tradition of an early visit to Kolophon was evidently well established before the pseudo-Herodotean Life was written and could be detached from

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[19] Margites frag. 1. Allen.

[20] Westermann, p. 34.15 ff.

any schoolmaster story. Instead, later in this biography we find a similar story explaining other light poems ascribed to Homer: the Kerkopes, Batrachomuomachia, Psaromachia, Heptapaktike, and Epikichlides and other paegnia are supposed to have been written when Homer had charge of some children in Chios.[21]

It should be clear by now with what freedom anecdotes could be invented on the basis of deductions from poetry. That is not to say that the validity of using this sort of approach indiscriminately was never questioned in antiquity. It will have been noticed that the underlying assumption of Pseudo-Herodotus' narrative of Homer's youth was that the poet could not always have been blind, despite the ancient and authoritative tradition that he was, and that he must have travelled extensively. The reasoning is that the Odyssey contains descriptions of remote parts of the world of such vividness that it can only be that the poet had actually seen them. This is in itself not too bad a piece of deduction, though it fails to take into account the factor of poetic tradition. Basically the same reasoning was used by Proclus[22] a rationalizing critic of the Homer legends, but instead of adorning his account with fantastic circumstantial detail like Pseudo-Herodotus he presents the

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[21] Ibid, p. 12.314 ff.

[22] Ibid, p. 24.1 ff.

theory in a fashion probably intended to remind the reader of Thucydides' archeologia. After casting aspersions on people who believed that Homer was blind:

> τυφλὸν δ' ὅσοι τοῦτον ἀπεφήναντο, αὐτοί μοι δοκοῦσι τὴν διάνοιαν πεπηρῶσθαι· τοσαῦτα γὰρ κατεῖδεν ἄνθρωπος ὅσ' οὐδεὶς πώποτε . . .[23]

he proceeds to make these general observations:

> φαίνεται δὲ γηραιὸς ἐκλελοιπὼς τὸν βίον· ἡ γὰρ ἄνυπέρβλητος ἀκρίβεια τῶν πραγμάτων προβεβηκυῖαν ἡλικίαν παρίστησιν· πολλὰ δ' ἐπελήλυθὼς μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐκ τῆς πολυπειρίας τῶν τόπων εὑρίσκεται· τούτῳ δὲ προσυπονοητέον καὶ πλούτου πολλὴν περιουσίαν γενέσθαι· αἱ γὰρ μακραὶ ἀποδημίαι πολλῶν ἀναλωμάτων δέονται, καὶ ταῦτα κατ' ἐκείνους τοὺς χρόνους οὔτε πάντων πλεομένων ἀκινδύνως οὔτε μισγομένων ἀλλήλοις πω τῶν ἀνθρώπων ῥᾳδίως.[24]

Proclus also has some scathing things to say about people who believed that Homer and Hesiod were cousins[25] and in general reports the legends with the air of not believing a word of them, pointing out that Homer never talked about himself in his poetry and that there was no agreement among

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[23] Ibid, p. 26.43 ff.

[24] Ibid, p. 26.58 ff.

[25] Ibid, p. 26.45 ff. Cf. chapter on: Family relationships of the Great.

the ancient authorities on his life.[26]

Homer was, of course, an unusually difficult subject for a biographer to undertake, and it might seen natural that if the same inferential method were applied to the works of writers who had more to say about themselves more accurate findings would result. This is, in fact, only true to a limited extent. For instance, orators when speaking about themselves naturally put the best possible construction on their own actions. They are of course no less biassed than when delivering invectives against their enemies. When we have two conflicting accounts of a man's life by rival orators it is impossible for a biographer, ancient or modern, to know the whole truth. The best that can be done is to set the alternative accounts side by side, and to let the reader make up his own mind, or else to attempt some sort of synthesis of the (apparently) more likely elements from both. These two approaches can be seen in the Lives of Aeschines, where the biographers tackled the problem of what to make of the conflicting versions of this orator's early years provided

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[26] Westermann, p. 24.3 ff: Ὅμηρος μὲν οὖν τίνων γονέων ἢ ποίας ἐγένετο πατρίδος οὐ ῥᾴδιον ἀποφήνασθαι· οὔτε γαρ αὐτός τι λελάληκεν. ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ μηδὲν ρητῶς ἐμφαίνειν περὶ τούτων τὴν ποίησιν αὐτοῦ μετὰ πολλῆς ἀδείας ἕκαστος οἷς ἐβούλετο ἐχαρίσατο.

by Aeschines himself and Demosthenes. The former method is used in Apollonius' Life,[27] though here the material from Demosthenes seems to have been derived from an intermediate source and does not include all his insinuations. Apollonius does not, in fact, name Demosthenes as his source here, but when he turns to the favourable account he states that it was Aeschines' own. An example of an attempt at a synthesis of elements from the conflicting accounts occurs in Pseudo-Plutarch's Life of the same orator.[28] He disregards both Demosthenes' allegations that Aeschines was of servile origin and Aeschines' own heavy emphasis on his family's extreme respectability and taking his stand in the middle of the road, asserts that the orator was ὀὔτε κατὰ γένος τῶν ἐμφανῶν οὔτε κατὰ περιουσίαν χρημάτων, a view comparable to the statement about this matter in the Oxford Classical Dictionary: "Of Aeschines' early life we know little beyond what is recorded by the malice of Demosthenes, from which the only truth which emerges is that he was brought up in comparatively humble circumstances and had to earn his living at an early age."[29] The fact is that, given two orators

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[27] Ibid, p. 265.1 ff. (Demosthenes' version); p. 267.36 ff. (Aeschines' version.) Cf. chapter on Men of humble origins who became famous, p. 78, 84 f.

[28] Ibid, p. 262.1 ff.

[29] Oxford Classical Dictionary, Aeschines.

in conflict, both assuming the right "verisimile sequi etiamsi minus sit verum",[30] we cannot be sure if there is a grain of truth underlying either account, or determine the precise extent of such truth as there may be. Still, this is a problem which faces the modern historian as well, so we have no right to be over-critical of the Greek biographers if they could not solve it. It must be said that not all the autobiographical details in the orators' speeches were of such a suspect character as the story of Aeschines' life, and indeed there is much more reliable material in the Lives of the Attic orators than is usual elsewhere in ancient biography.

It cannot be stated as a general rule, however, that the biographies of prose writers, or people whose works provide much personal revelation are necessarily relatively free from sordes. The Lives of Plato, for instance, are full of fantastic associations of the philosopher with the god, Apollo.[31] We may also take from one of these Lives an example of a deduction which at first sight seems reasonable, but which seems less so when viewed against the background of a biographical tradition. Olympiodorus supports the story that Plato visited Egypt by referring to an

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[30] Cicero. De Officiis, 2.14.

[31] Cf. chapter on Divine parentage, p. 52 ff.

expression he uses in the Gorgias:

ἰστέον δ' ὅτι καὶ εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἀπῆλθε
πρὸς τοὺς ἐκεῖ ἱερατικοὺς ἀνθρώπους
καὶ ἔμαθε παρ' αὐτῶν τὴν ἱερατικὴν
διὸ καὶ ἐν τῷ Γοργίᾳ φησίν 'οὐ μὰ τὸν
κύνα, τὸν παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις θεόν . . .[32]

It is, of course, possible that Plato visited Egypt, but similar journeys are mentioned in an extraordinarily large number of the Lives of philosophers and it looks suspiciously as if it was standard practice for biographers to send philosophers off to study religions and magic in foreign parts.[33]

As well as constructing fanciful stories on the basis of a man's writings, the Hellenistic biographers and literary critics would draw general conclusions about his

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[32]Westermann, p. 386.139. Cf. Plato. Gorgias 482b.

[33]Cf. G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven. The Presocratic Philosophers (Cambridge, 1957, p. 77; M.L. West. Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient (Oxford, 1971), p. 3. E.g. Diogenes Laertius 1.27, (Thales visits Egyptian priests), Ibid, 1.89 (Cleobulus is acquainted with Egyptian philosophy), Ibid, 3.6 (Plato goes with Euripides (!) to Egypt παρὰ τοὺς προφήτας); Ibid., 8.3. (Pythagoras visits Egypt, associates with Chaldaeans and Magi). Ibid, 8.87. (Eudoxus visits Egypt); Ibid, 9.34. (Democritus visits Egypt, Chaldaeans, Persia, perhaps India and Ethiopia), Ibid, 9.61 (Pyrrho visits Indian gymnosophists and Magi.)

character and habits. So it is that in the Lives of Pindar and Sophocles the biographers consider the piety which these poet's works were reckoned to display.[34] Again, we have here a technique which has nothing inherently wrong with it but was not used with sufficient discretion by the Greek biographers. For one thing they tend to illustrate the qualities they detect in an author with all manner of unlikely stories (as we see in the Pindar and Sophocles Lives) and for another they tend to disregard the distinction between the traditional and the personal in literature. A reductio ad absurdum of the technique is to be found in Athenaeus' Deipnosophists where one of the guests, (probably drawing on a learned source, but not naming it), argues against an interpretation by Chamaeleon of Pontus which made Alcaeus a moderate drinker:

> "For this poet, we discover, drinks at all times and in all circumstances; in winter, for instance, as these lines show: 'Zeus sends rain, and from the sky comes a mighty storm, and the streams of waters are frozen . . . Beat down the winter, piling high the fire, and mixing the white sweet wine unsparingly, placing round your brow the soft flock of wool'. And in summer: 'Moisten your lungs with wine, for the Dog Star riseth; the weather is severe, and all things are athirst with the heat.' In springtime: 'I have felt the flowery spring approaching.' Then he proceeds: 'Mix ye with all speed a bowl of the honey-sweet.' Again in the midst of disasters: 'It is not meet to give over the spirit to misfortune. For we shall profit nothing through grieving, Bycchis; the best cure is to have wine brought and get drunk.' Or in happy times; 'Now 'tis meet to get drunk, ay, one should drink e'en against his will, since Myrsilus is dead.' And in general he gives this advice:

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[34] Westermann, p. 91.43 ff; p. 97.15 ff; p. 99.12 ff (Lives of Pindar); p. 129.44 ff. (Life of Sophocles.)

'Plant no other tree than the vine.' How then is it likely that he who was so fond of drinking should be given to sobriety, and drink only one or two cups at a time?"[35]

The assumptions which led ancient writers on the poets to come to such conclusions are discussed by D.R. Stuart in his paper, Authors' lives as revealed in their works. He makes this generalization:

"Fundamental in the ancient doctrine was the assumption that the writings of an author were in no way transcendental but in a literal sense expressive of his individuality and his personal experience. A certain character was bound to produce a certain type of work and would be incapable of producing any but this type."[36]

This certainly seems to have been the view of the biographers though Stuart is surely wrong in assuming that the poets themselves shared it.[37] It was a principle to which Aristotle

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[35]Athenaeus. Deipnosophists, 430a-c. Trans. C.B. Gulick. Loeb, 1927.

[36]D.R. Stuart. Authors' lives as revealed in their works, Classical Studies in honor of John C. Rolfe (New York, 1931), p. 301.

[37]Stuart. Authors' Lives, p. 301 writes: "We may smile at the Roman elegist when he insists that in order to write elegy one must actually be in love and that vice versa, the lover can write only elegy, since the graver forms, epic and tragedy, are for the pens of those whose austerity has never been mitigated by the soft emotion. However it is a mistake to dismiss such utterances as merely dictated by playful posing. Behind them, it must not be forgotten, was the long standing belief that a man's writings were his alter ego, as it were". Most people today would surely disagree with Stuart, and be happy to regard such statements as "playful posing". If any proof is needed that ancient poets did not necessarily think that their character was revealed in their choice of genre, we may consider the topos "just because my poetry is risque that does not mean I am an immoral character", cf. Catullus 17, 5 f; Ovid, Tristia 2. 354; Martial 1.4.8.

had lent his authority when he wrote in the Poetics:

" . . . poetry diverged in two directions according to the individual character of the writers. The graver spirits imitated noble actions and the actions of good men. The more trivial sort imitated the actions of meaner persons, at first composing satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men."[38]

The belief was probably current to some extent in the popular thought of all periods. Stuart points to the way it is appealed to in Old Comedy, for example in his speech of Agathon in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusae:

"A poet, sir, must needs adapt his ways
To the high thoughts which animate his soul
And when he sings of women, he assumes
A woman's garb and dons a woman's habits . . .
Anacreon, Alcaeus, Ibycus . . .
When they filtered and diluted song,
Wore soft Ionian manners and attire."[39]

There is clearly an affinity between this humorous picture and the findings on Alcaeus proposed by the deipnosophist.

Comedy itself, as well as the subject's own works, was a source much used by the biographers of literary men. Sometimes a more critical biographer would point out the comic origin of some of the allegations he was recording and would warn the reader not to take too much notice of them. For instance, in one of the Lives of Isocrates[40] the biographer

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[38]Aristotle. Poetics 1448b trans. Butcher. (London, 1894) reprinted in S.H. Butcher. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (New York, 1951).

[39]Stuart. Authors' Lives, p. 302, quoting Aristophanes: Thesmophoriazusae, 149 ff.

[40]Westermann, p. 255.44 ff.

refers to the insinuations made by comic poets about the orator's relations with the prostitute Lagiske, and remarks:

> ἔπειτα λέγομεν ὅτι τοῦτ' αὐτὸν πολῦ πλέον
> προσαπολύει τῆς διαβολῆς, ὅτι ψευδος τὸ παρὰ
> τῶν κωμικῶν σκώπτεσθαι. εἰώθασι γὰρ οἱ
> κωμικοὶ τὰ μεγάλα πρόσωπα σκώπτειν διὰ
> γέλωτα ὡς Σωκράτην εἰσά
> νέων.

The biographers of Euripides found a good deal of material for their subject in comedy. They derived from a comedy of Telecleides a story that Euripides had collaborated with Mnesilochus (his father-in-law, as we learn later)[41] and Socrates, in writing some of his tragedies.[42] From Aristophanes they took the insinuations that Kephisiphon was the lover of Euripides' wife and also helped to write the tragedies. The plot of the Thesmophoriazusae is taken as historical fact:

> λέγουσι δὲ καὶ ὅτι γυναῖκες διὰ τοὺς
> φόγους, οὓς ἐποίει εἰς αὐτὰς διὰ τῶν
> ποιημάτων, τοῖς θεσμοφορίοις ἐπέστησαν
> αὐτῷ βουλόμεναι ἀνελεῖν, ἐφείσαντο
> δ' αὐτοῦ πρῶτον μὲν δι' αὐτὰς τὰς

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[41] Ibid, p. 133.10 ff. cf. p. 137.86 ff.

[42] Ibid, p. 133.10 ff.

Μούσας, ἔπειτα δὲ βεβαιωσαμένου
μηκέτι αὐτὰς κακῶς ἐρεῖν.[43]

Consequently, the view of Euripides as a misogynist enters the biographical tradition. Other deductions about his character are based on some words of Aristophanes:
στρυφνὸς ἔμοιγε προσειπεῖν Εὐριπίδης.[44]

The Life of Agathon, as far as can be seen from the brief entry in Suidas,[45] seems to have been similarly dependent on Aristophanes. The story of Sophocles brought before the courts on a charge of senile incompetence seems to have originated ἐν δράματι.[46] Some of the stories about Sappho, too, owe their existence to the fact that she was a popular subject for comedies.[47]

The use made by the biographers of comedy is one of the topics discussed by Karl Lehrs in his pioneering work on the biographical imagination, Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung in der griechischen Litteraturgeschichte. Not all the

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[43] Ibid, p. 136.68 ff. Cf. Satyrus. Life of Euripides Ox Pap., 1176 frag. 39.

[44] Westermann, p. 137.84 ff.

[45] Ibid, 144.1 ff = Hesychius Milesius.

[46] Ibid, p. 129.55 ff.

[47] Cf. K. Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung in der griechischen Litteraturgeschichte. Populäre Aufsätze. Leipzig 2nd ed. 1875, p. 398 f.

examples Lehrs gives are perhaps as certain as he imagined, but he has some very valuable things to say. He suggests, for example, that comedy may be the source of many of the amazing death stories in the biographies. He proves that they could have originated in this way by referring us to a passage of dialogue in Aristophanes' Peace:

ΕΡ. τί διά; Κρατῖνος ὁ σοφὸς ἔστιν;
ΤΡ; ἀπέθανεν
ὅθ' οἱ Λάκωνες, ἐνέβαλον.
ΕΡ. τί παθών;
ΤΡ. ὅ τι;
ὡρακιάσας οὐ γὰρ ἐξηνέσχετο
ἰδὼν πίθον καταγνύμενον οἴνου πλέων.[48]

Lehrs proceeds to suggest that the stories of the death of Aeschylus, (whose bald head was struck when a bird mistook it for a stone and dropped a tortoise on it), and of Euripides (who was torn to pieces by dogs) originated in this way: "Manchmal sind es reine Spässe, ganz gutmütige oder weniger: eine recht derbe Glatze ziemte dem Grossvater der Tragödie wohl und dem Euripides solch ein infamer Tod."[49] In fact, the study of fictional motifs in biography, which Lehrs

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[48]Aristophanes. Peace 699 ff; cf. Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 396.

[49]Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 396.

himself was hoping to promote, has shown that there is an alternative explanation for the 'tearing to piece by dogs'.[50] Comedy still seems a likely source for the 'bird and tortoise' story.

The orators, as we have already seen, were not the most impartial of autobiographers. When delivering invectives against their enemies they were even more inventive. The allegations they made on these occasions were, however, of a detailed and salacious kind which was bound to appeal to the biographers, though admittedly some of them show an admirable scrupulousness in weighing up the evidence. The period of a man's life which provided the widest scope for invective was his early youth. All sorts of insinuations about a person's parentage and tales of immoral behaviour could be included, and few people would be able to disprove them completely. To turn again to the example of Demosthenes' attack on Aeschines, it should be noted that Aeschines said at one point in the speech, On the Embassy, that his father was 94 years old.[51] There could have been few people left who knew whether his past was murky or not. Demosthenes,[52] at any rate, felt free to suggest that

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[50] Cf. D.R. Stuart. Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography. Sather Classical Lectures vol. 4 (Berkeley, California, 1928), p. 147.

[51] Aeschines. On the Embassy, 147.

[52] Demosthenes. De Corona, 129 ff.

Aeschines' father, far from always having been Atrometus, a respectable Athenian citizen, had once been Tromes, a slave, kept in fetters, who taught γράμματα, and that his mother had been a notorious hetaira. He claimed to be able to name the exact places where they plied their trades. He jeered at Aeschines for being the brother of a man who decorated drums and alabaster boxes for his living, and for having started out as an assistant in his father's school, and later to have worked as a clerk and as a tragic actor. How much of all this is the truth we have no way of knowing. The way the biographers approach the matter is interesting. Apollonius presents most of the insinuations, but disclaims responsibility for them, introducing them with a vague φάσι, and, as we have seen already, giving Aeschines' own account later in the Life.[53] He does not include quite everything, either. He omits Demosthenes' claim that Aeschines' mother was nicknamed Empousa, ἐκ τοῦ πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν ὅηλον ὅτι ταύτης τῆς ἐπωνυμίας τυχοῦσαν.[54] This may be an oversight or it may have dropped out earlier in the passing down of the tradition, for it is clear that this biographer is not drawing his information directly from Demosthenes. Certain other Lives indicate, though, a tendency to modify deliberately

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[53] Westermann, p. 265.1 ff; p. 267.36 ff.

[54] Demosthenes. De Corona, 130.

the orator's statements, either to rationalize them or for less intelligible reasons. It is hard to imagine why one anonymous biographer felt called upon to improve on Demosthenes' explanation of the nickname Empousa, and to say of Aeschines' unfortunate mother: ταύτην δὲ σκοτεινῶν ἐκ τόπων ὁρμωμένην καὶ ἐκφοβοῦσαν παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκας Ἔμπουσαν ὀνομασθῆναι, ἐπεὶ νυκτερινὸν φάντασμα ἡ Ἔμπουσα . . .[55]

The conventions of rhetorical invective may lie behind other instances in the biographies where a person is said to be of lowly origins. Of course, though, we do not have to assume that all the great writers came from aristocratic backgrounds, and comedy as well as oratory played its part in denigrating the origins of the great. Comedy was the source of statements that Euripides' parents were Μνήσαρχος κάπηλος καὶ Κλειτὼ λαχανόπωλις.[56] Orators

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[55] Westermann, p. 268.4 ff.

[56] Ibid, 133.1 f; p. 139.1 f; p. 141.1 ff. Cf. Aristophanes. Thesmophoriazusae 387, 456; Acharnians 479; Knights 19. Philochorus, arguing against the story, proposed that Euripides' mother was well born, but this type of argument seems to have been itself a biographical cliché. We find denials of allegations that Sophocles, (Westermann, p. 126.3 ff), Isocrates, (Ibid, p. 245.3 ff; p. 247.2 ff; p. 253.1 ff), and Demosthenes, (Ibid, p. 293.14 ff) were the sons of men engaged in menial trades. One argument used in these denials, that it was standard practice in invective to attribute to a slave-owner the occupation of his slaves, rings very true, but another argument used: that it was unlikely that a man would rise to a position of honour from an undistinguished family background, (e.g. Westermann, p. 126.3 ff. on Sophocles.) is perhaps not such a weighty one.

also shared with the comic poets the task of casting aspersions on people's morality. The result of all this is that we can place no reliance on statements in the biographies about a man's background and morals.

The part played by philosophical writers in providing information for the biographer ought to be considered too, especially in view of the fact that it emerges from several passages in Athenaeus that 'the untruthfulness of philosophers' was some sort of stock topic in antiquity.[57] The examples given in these harangues are sometimes rather silly, for instance, a complaint that Socrates' claims to ignorance are refuted by the famous oracle on his wisdom,[58] and not always accurate, as for example when Plato is wrongly credited with having said that Xanthippe threw slops over Socrates;[59] they are also written from an aristocratic point of view and one of a society which had ceased to understand

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[57] E.g. Athenaeus 5.215c ff; 11.504e ff; cf. Momigliano, Development of Greek Biography 46 for a discussion of the Socratic quasi biographical writings and their "ambiguous position between fact and imagination".

[58] Ibid, 5.218e.

[59] Ibid, 5.219b. The context makes it clear that Plato the philosopher is meant and not Plato Comicus, but it is possible that the allegation was originally made by Plato Comicus and that the misattribution was due to a confusion between the two Platos.

fifth-century Athens. Still, we would do well to look at some of the arguments. The thesis they propose is that:

"most philosophers have a natural tendency to be more abusive than the comic poets . . . For in the eyes of this gentry no statesman is honest, no general is wise, no sophist is worth considering, only Socrates is -- he who consorts with Aspasia's flute girls at the workshops, or converses with Piston the cuirass-maker, or instructs the courtesan Theodote how to lure her lovers, as Xenophon represents him in the second book of the Memorabilia."60

Though many of the criticisms of Socratic literature (which is the main target of the abuse) are inept, depending as they do on the assumption that a dialogue ought to be an exact record of an actual conversation, it is true that Plato, for example, could be very scathing about the acknowledged great men of philosophy, literature and politics. The critics in Athenaeus have another point when they object that philosophical writers perpetrate anachronisms:

Παρμενίδῃ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἐλθεῖν εἰς λόγους
τὸν τοῦ Πλάτωνος Σωκράτην μόλις ἡ
ἡλικία συγχωρεῖ, οὐχ ὡς καὶ τοιούτους
εἰπεῖν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι λόγους.[61]

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[60] Ibid., 5.220e. Trans. Gulick.

[61] Ibid., 11.505f.

and preserve gossip:

τὸ δὲ πάντων σχετλιώτατον καὶ τὸ
εἰπεῖν οὐδεμιᾶς κατεπειγούσης χρείας
ὅτι παιδικὰ γεγόναι τοῦ Παρμενίδου
Ζήνων ὁ Πολίτης αὐτοῦ.[62]

Here we are coming very near to the realm of the biographical imagination. To say that a younger writer was seen or known by an older famous representative of the same genre was one of the means by which biographers indicated chronological relationships: thus Demosthenes is said to have been known by Lysias,[63] though according to the chronology now accepted, he cannot have been more than four years old when Lysias died. There are also in the biographies some very forced cases of alleged master/pupil relationships.[64] The second example of Plato's 'unnecessary perversion of the truth' is of a type which occurs very frequently in the biographies of the philosophers. Philosophers were, indeed, particularly liable to be gossipped about, given the fact that they were for ever surrounded by articulate pupils, some more respectful towards a particular master's ideas

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Westermann, p. 242.37f; p. 290.237f.

[64] Ibid., p. 266.33f. (Apollonius' Life of Aeschines).
φασὶ μέντοι τινὲς αὐτὸν ἀκουστὴν γενέσθαι Πλάτωνος τε καὶ
Σωκράτους, ψευδόμενοι.

than others, some downright hostile and for ever on the look-out for eccentricities and hypocrisy.[65]

Biography did not, of course, develop in isolation from the main stream of historical writing, nor from the mass of research of diverse kinds, scholarly and unscholarly, that was being carried on in the Greek world from the time of the early sophists. Local histories of the various cities, guide-books describing temples and Monuments and the legends connected with them, researches on cults and festivals, studies of inscriptions, monographs on particular virtues and vices, laden with exempla, lists of miraculous occurrences and of the innovations of famous men, historical miscellanies: writings of all these types were being turned out in astonishing numbers at the same time as the biographies.[66] It may be assumed that the relationship between these various works including biographies was extremely complicated, each type deriving source material from the other, and contributing material in its turn. The 'underground' arts of oracle-mongering and inscription-forging must also stand in a relationship of mutual aid with historical scholarship, biography included.

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[65] Cf. Lehrs: Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 401.

[66] Cf. W. Kroll. Studien zum Verständnis der romischen Literatur, Stuttgart, 1924. Reprinted Darmstadt, 1964. Chapters 12 and 13; and Momigliano, Development of Greek Biography, p. 72.

So, presumably, did rhetorical exercises on historical themes, and spurious letters.[67]

It is not to be supposed that Greek scholars necessarily specialized in any one facet of research. A glance at some of the entries in Suidas makes it clear that this was rarely the case. We find, for example, that a man like Ephorus, besides writing a history of Greece from the sack of Troy to his own times in thirty volumes, produced: Περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν βιβλία Κδ', παραδόξων τῶν ἑκασταχοῦ βιβλία ιε', εὑρημάτων ὧν ἕκαστος εὗρε βιβλία Β' καὶ λοιπά.[68] Compilations giving examples of good men and bad, of strange happenings, of discoveries, were just the sorts of works that biographers could draw on, though, of course, the opposite process could take place too, and the compilers could be indebted to earlier biographers. We do know for sure, though, that some biographers derived information from one of Ephorus' unspecified other works, a history of his home town, Kyme, in which he follows the legend which made Homer, like Hesiod, a native of Kyme.[69] The biographers too, tended to branch out into other areas of research. Aristoxenus, the notable Peripatetic biographer, was perhaps

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[67] Cf. Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 401.

[68] Westermann, p. 213.118 ff.

[69] Ibid., p. 21.7 ff. This legend was not, as one might imagine, wholly an invention of Ephorus. cf. p. 5 note 11, in this chapter, and p. 47 note 9.

most famous for the numerous technical treatises he wrote on various aspects of music. He also compiled a collection of Pythagorean maxims, 'comparisons' (συγκρίσεις), (that is, probably, comparisons between famous men, such as we find in Plutarch); works entitled Νόμοι παιδευτικοί and Νόμοι Πολιτικοί, and sundry historical miscellanies. Duris of Samos and Neanthes of Cyzicus, two important contributors to the biographical traditions, slightly later than Aristoxenus, also wrote on Greek history in general, and local histories of their home cities. Chamaeleon of Pontus, whose monograph On Drunkenness was criticized in the Deipnosophists also wrote studies, perhaps biographies of early poets.[70]

The complexity of the relationships between the various fields of Hellenistic scholarship should be evident now. Because of it we can never be quite sure where a biographer's findings are based on independent research and where he is drawing on an earlier learned work. This has to be remembered when we find using such sources as inscriptions, pictorial representations of the person he is describing, and traditions, originally emanating from the patter of local guides, associating famous men with particular buildings.

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[70]For lists of these writers' works see Oxford Classical Dictionary.

The use of epigraphical evidence was another thoroughly good technique the effectiveness of which was generally marred by a lack of critical acumen among the biographers and their sources.[71] There were exceptions, however. Marcellinus, in his life of Thucydides, cites one Didymus who proved, by pointing to the evidence of Thucydides' grave stele, that his father's name was Olorus and not Orolus.[72] The biographers must often have derived their knowledge of a man's father's name and deme from inscriptions. Unfortunately there was the complications that not all inscriptions, especially not all those concerned with famous men, were genuine, and they could provide misleading information.[73] The epitaphs of Homer and Hesiod have to be taken with the same pinch of salt as the inscription on the offering which Hesiod is supposed to have made after his victory in a poetic contest with Homer.[74] A clear case of the use in biography of an inscription giving highly suspect information comes in Pseudo-Plutarch's biography of the orator Lycurgus. The inscription gave a genealogy of

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[71] Cf. Kroll. Studien, p. 281; 308 ff.

[72] Westermann, p. 189.74 ff.

[73] Cf. Kroll. Studien, p. 308 ff; Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 406-7.

[74] Homer's epitaph: Westermann, p. 19.497 f; Hesiod's epitaph: Ibid., p. 49.107 ff. Hesiod's victory offering: Ibid., p. 41.212.

the priests of Poseidon in which Lycurgus was included. It provided him with such illustrious ancestors as Erechtheus, Ge, and Hephaistus:

> κατῆγον (κατῆγε Coraes.) δὲ τὸ γένος
> ἀπωτάτω μὲν ἀπ' Ερεχθέως τοῦ Γῆς
> καὶ Ἡφάιστου, τὰ δ' ἐγγυτάτου ἀπὸ
> Λυκομήδους καὶ Λυκούργου, οὓς ὁ δῆμος
> ταφαῖς ἐτίμησε δημοσίᾳ· καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη
> ἡ καταγωγὴ τοῦ γένους τῶν ἱερασαμένων
> τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος ἐν πίνακι τελείῳ, ὃς
> ἀνάκειται ἐν Ἐρεχθείῳ γεγραμμένος ὑπ'
> Ἰσμηνίου τοῦ χαλκιδέως . . .[75]

Pseudo-Plutarch also made extensive use of honorary decrees as sources for his Lives of the orators, actually appending a full transcription of them so that we can see the extent of his dependence.[76] Epitaphs, though, are the type of inscription most usually to be found in the biographies, placed naturally enough, just after the accounts of the subject's death. It is impossible to know just how many of these inscriptions were authentic. This is sometimes a hindrance when one wishes to conjecture how a particular biographical legend originated. For instance, one biographer tells us that the Athenians buried Plato with full honours and inscribed on his tomb the following lines:

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[75] Westermann, p. 277.145 ff.

[76] Westermann, p. 278.165 ff; p. 290.844 ff. (Pseudo-Plutarch's Lives of Lycurgus and Demosthenes.)

τοὺς δύ' Ἀπόλλωνι φῦσ', Ἀσκληπιὸν ἠδὲ Πλάτωνα
τὸν μὲν ἵνα ψυχήν, τὸν δ' ἵνα σῶμα σάοι.[77]

If this epigram really was composed immediately after Plato's death it would have been a very important factor in the promoting of the legend that Plato was literally the son of Apollo.[78] However, it may well be a much later composition based on the biographies.

We should consider now the other fields of investigation, apart from epigraphy, where the biographers' interests overlapped with these of the writers of travellers' guide-books and local histories. There are many references in the Lives to places and works of art which are 'pointed out' as being associated with some famous man of the past. Often, considerable demands are made on the reader's credulity. The Kolophonians, as was mentioned earlier, point out the place where Homer worked as a school master and wrote the Margites;[79] the Prytaneion at Thebes is made out to have been originallly the house of Pindar;[80] draped statues of

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[77] Westermann, p. 387.174 ff.

[78] Cf. Chapter on Divine Parentage, p. 52 ff.

[79] Westermann, p. 34.15 ff.

[80] Ibid., p. 93.91 ff; p. 97.24 ff.

the Charites on the Athenian acropolis are claimed to be the work of Socrates in his early capacity as sculptor;[81] pictures are attributed to Euripides, who was supposed to have painted in his early days.[82] In most, if not all, of these cases the identifications may have been made on the basis of previously existing biographical traditions. At other times, however, the reverse process may have taken place and anecdotes may have arisen from the associations between places and objects and great men, originally invented by naïve traveller's guides and local spinners of yarns.

There are also occasions when biographers' statements on a man's appearance, dress and character are based directly on representations of him in art. Much speculation arose from the fact that Hippocrates was portrayed with his head covered:

ἐν δὲ ταῖς πολλαῖς εἰκόσιν αὐτοῦ
ἐσκεπασμένος τὴν κεφαλὴν γράφεται,
ὡς μέν τινες λέγουσι πίλῳ παράσημον
εὐγενείας, καθάπερ Ὀδυσσεύς, ἄλλοι δὲ τῷ
ἱματίῳ, καὶ τούτων, οἱ μὲν δι' εὐπ έπειαν

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[81] Ibid., p. 440.852. Cf. K. Jex-Blake, E. Sellers. The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art, 1st American ed., 1968, p. xlix ff.

[82] Ibid., p. 134.15 f; p. 139.22 f.

ἐπεὶ φαλακρὸς ἦν, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὸ ἀσθενὲς
τῆς κεφαλῆς. οἱ δὲ δι' ἔμφασιν τοῦ δεῖν
τὸ τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ χωρίον φρουρεῖν, οἱ
δὲ τοῦ φιλαποδήμου τεκμήριον, οἱ δὲ
τῆς ἐν τοῖς συγγράμμασιν ἀσαφείας, οἱ
δὲ πρὸς παράστασιν τοῦ δεῖν κἀν τῷ
ὑγιαίνειν φυλάσσεσθαι τα βλάπτοντα,
τινὲς δ' ὅτι χειρίζων πρὸς τὸ τῶν χειρῶν
ἀπαραπόδιστον συμπεριλαμβάνων τὸ
τοῦ ἱματίου περικεχυμένον ἐπετίθει τῇ
κεφαλῇ.[83]

This is an extreme example of the use of this technique. We find another biographer, discussing the philosopher Lachares, supporting the reconstruction of his character he had made on the basis of his writings by a consideration of a portrait of him:

εἶδον δὲ καὶ εἰκόνα τοῦ ἀνδρός, ἄντικρυς
ἀπαγγέλλουσαν οἷος ἦν Λαχάρης τὴν φύσιν,
ὅτι βραδύτερος μὲν πρὸς τοὺς λόγους, καλὸς
δὲ καὶ ἀγαθὸς τὴν ὄψιν πρὸς ἀρετήν
φιλόσοφος ἄξιος καλεῖσθαι μᾶλλον
ἢ σοφιστής.[84]

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[83] Ibid., p. 451.59 ff.

[84] Ibid., p. 355.657 ff.

It may be noticed that the biographer of Hippocrates was clearly getting his information at second hand, for he does not know whether it was a hat that Hippocrates used to cover his head, or a cloak. The remarks about Lachares sound more like the outcome of personal observation.

It was suggested earlier that biography may also stand in a relation of inter-dependence with rhetorical exercises and spurious letters. Lehrs comments on the fact that when a rhetorical exercise is mistaken by a historian for a genuine speech, as happened when Hermippus took the show-speech Against Socrates by Polycrates to be the original prosecution speech, distortions of history are sure to arise.[85] Also, some of the declamation themes set in schools on subjects from Greek history, (known to us only from the Roman period, but probably with their origins well back in the Hellenistic world),[86] are reminiscent, in their melodramatic tone and tasteless ingenuity, of the worst elements in the biographers' art. We find Euripides on trial for impiety, having represented Herakles going mad on stage,[87] Pheidias accused by the Eleans of stealing

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[85] Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 404.

[86] For one thing, the remoteness of the "laws" used in conjunction with controversia themes, from the Roman legal system, makes it inconceivable that the themes sprang up out of nowhere in Augustan Rome. Cf. Philostratus. Lives of the Sophists 481 for an account of exercises supposed to have been used in Aeschines' school which reminds one of the Augustan declaimers' repertoire.

[87] Ox. Pap. 2400. (3rd. century A.D.)

gold and punished by having his hands cut off.[88] Such themes, even where there is no extant parallel for the anecdotes in formal history or biography, are probably best regarded as direct off-shoots of the historical tradition,[89] though the stories they are based on may have been modified slightly in order to provide a difficult case to argue, full of poignant irony. If the themes ever contributed in their turn to the distorted version of history presented by the formal historians and biographers, it is something we cannot prove, owing to the fragmentary nature of the evidence. In the case of spurious letters, however, it can be seen from Diogenes Laertius' Lives of the philosophers that compositions in letter form, probably originally written, to judge from their unsophisticated expression, as school exercises, were sometimes mistaken

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[88] Seneca the Elder: Contr. 8.2. Cf. Plutarch. Pericles 31.

[89] E.g., Euripides was evidently tried for impiety in a part of Satyrus' Life now lost, cf. Ox. Pap. 1176. frag. 39.15 ff.

For the relationship between history and declamation themes cf. Philostratus. Lives of the Sophists 481 τὰς ἐς ὄνομα ὑποθέσεις ἐφ' ἃς ἡ ἱστορία ἄγει; Suetonius, De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus 25: "veteres controversiae aut ex historiis trahebantur sicut sane nonnullae usque adhuc . . .", and for a particular case; Seneca the Elder: Suas. 6.14.

S. Trenkner. The Greek Novella (Cambridge, 1958), p. 182 ff. argues against the hypothesis that the novel, (a type of writing not unrelated to biography), was derived from school rhetorical exercises.

for the genuine article and found their way into biographies.[90]

Having considered the main resources available to the biographer, we now have to ask a further question: how firmly were the various pieces of biographical fiction tied to the individual for whose Life they were originally contrived? Are there any occasions when we must think in terms of biographical topoi, of motifs which are freely transferable from one person's Life to another's?

In the case of the Lives of literary men, it appears that most of the biographical material clustered round the particular individual is pretty firmly bound to him. This is to be expected, when one considers that the biographies were largely composed by processes of deduction from the writer's own works and allusions to him by contemporaries. It should be remembered, though, that there will be certain standard patterns of thought implicit in the way an orator goes about his invective, the way a comic poet thinks up his satire, the pre-suppositions with which a biographer approaches an author's works.[91]

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[90] E.g., Diogenes Laertius: 1.43 (Thales to Pherecydes), 1.44 (Thales to Solon), 1.53 (Pisistratus to Solon.)

[91] Cf. Stuart. Epochs, p. 145: "The machinery of human inventiveness is set in motion by common impetuses and tends to run in fixed grooves . . ." Stuart discusses (p. 147 ff.) allegations of immorality as a theme in biography.

We also have to consider the place of folk motifs in the biographical tradition. Sometimes we find anecdotes about writers reminiscent of the legends of the heroic past. Hesiod, for example, receives an oracle predicting that he will meet his death in Νεμείου κάλλιμον ἄλσος; he flees from the Peloponnese, thinking that the Nemea there is meant, but he can no more escape his destiny than Oedipus, and is murdered at Locrian Oenoe, a place bearing the name Διὸς Νεμείου ἱερόν.[92] Lehrs' paper on truth and poetry in Greek biography provides a classic demonstration of the way that a folk motif can account for several apparently separate incidents in the biographies.[93] He

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[92] Westermann, p. 48.88 ff. This story is reported in an aside by Thucydides, of all people, (3.96), so it must be an old tradition.

Cf. A. Aarne/S. Thompson. The types of the Folktale (FF Communications no. 184, Helsinki, 1964, p. 328 no. 931 for the motifs in the Oedipus legend; p. 329, no. 934A for the motif where: "The boy . . . dies at the time and in the manner . . . which was predestined at birth by Fate."

Cf. Trenkner. The Greek Novella, p. 34, for the theme of the wandering hero in Euripidean tragedy and Greek romance.

[93] Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 385 ff. Cf. Aarne/Thompson. The Types of the Folktale, 188 ff. for "Animals as Helpers" as a motif in Folklore; K. Hess. Der Agon Zwischen Homer und Hesiod, Diss. Winterhur, 1960, p. 47. Cf. Stuart, Epochs, p. 145 f. on portents surrounding a great man's birth, divine parentage, bees on the lips of infant poets and canine vengeance.

takes three stories about early poets, the anecdotes about Arion saved by a dolphin, the cranes who ensured that vengeance was taken on the murderers of Ibycus, and the miraculous escape of Simonides from a collapsing building, and he demonstrates that they should not each be taken in isolation but that they should all be regarded as illustrations of a popular belief that poets were under the special protection of the gods. It appears that the same kind of story-telling motifs which has been recognized as underlying Hellenistic fiction[94] provided material for the biographies of historical figures.

There are, in addition, certain occasions when it appears that an anecdote has been simply copied and transplanted from one person's biography to another. This seems, though possibly the extant evidence is misleading, to have occurred more in the Lives of philosophers than of other literary men. This would doubtless be because the milieu of the philosophical schools was particularly conducive to the bandying around of funny stories about the

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[94]Cf. Trenkner. The Greek Novella, passim. E. Rohde. Der Griechische Roman 4th ed. (Olms Hildesheim, 1960) p. 578 ff. for the occurrence of Novella themes in Greek literature e.g. in the αἶνος of Archilochus, Herodotus' stories, Euripides and Hellenistic elegy.

various masters.[95] At any rate Diogenes Laertius' Lives of the eminent philosophers are full of candid admissions that this sort of thing happened. Diogenes is well aware, for instance, that a dictum about a man's three greatest blessings: "first, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian", was ascribed to Socrates as well as to Thales. When recording it in his Life of Thales he writes: Ἕρμιππος δ' ἐν βίοις εἰς τοῦτον ἀναφέρει το λεγόμενον ὑπο τινων περὶ Σωκράτους.[96] We also find in Diogenes Laertius' Lives much use of the technique of grouping together incidents as examples of particular points of character, a practice which encouraged repetitions of similar anecdotes.

We find, then, that there are several types of possible recurrence in Greek biography. The phenomenon provides a handy weapon for the destructive critic, though one with serious limitations. Lehrs, in his analysis of

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[95] Cf. Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 401.

Transferable anecdotes were also common in the Lives of painters and sculptors. Cf. Jex-Blake/Sellers. The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the history of Art, introduction, especially p. xlvi ff. on Duris of Samos. It is not surprising that stock anecdotes were used in these Lives seeing that the biographers would not usually have had any writings by their subjects from which to draw inferences.

[96] Diogenes Laertius 1.33.

the 'protection of poets' folk motif, was aiming to combat the method of rationalizing myths which was current in his day, and was as scathing as anyone could be about the processes behind Greek biography. Yet even he will not deny that there may be some factual basis behind a legend. What he does point out is that it is a waste of time to try to define the extent of this basis once the fact that a folk motif is in operation has been recognised: "allein welches eben dies Factum sei, wie weit es reiche, kann nie gewusst werden; ja notwendig ist es überhaupt nicht".[97] Similarly outside the realm of the mirabilia of folk-lore, once patterns have been detected in the hostile criticism of orators, comic poets, and the biographers themselves, we are left with no way of knowing how far the libels were justified. All we can do is to point to recurrence and to use it as a warning against accepting an incident as necessarily true. There are other factors to be considered too. In view of the obviously unscientific way in which most biographers went about their writing, no reader will often feel disposed to appeal to the fact that history can repeat itself. On the other hand we do have to consider seriously the matter of imitation. It is not impossible that a later individual will sometimes have deliberately imitated a great predecessor's

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[97] Lehrs. Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung, p. 393.

actions or words, as reported in the biographies. For example, did Oppian's patron really reward him with a coin for every line of his poetry, remembering a similar reward said to have been given to Choerilus, or is this story about Oppian a fiction formed by analogy with the earlier story?[98] Both explanations seem about equally possible. This example should serve as a warning to us that the fact that an anecdote recurs need not mean that it is necessarily always fictional, for the recurrence may be due to a variety of causes.

It would obviously be impossible, except in a work of very considerable scope, to take into account all the extant works and fragments of the Greek biographers and to consider all the recurring features we find in them. The ground to be covered in this thesis has therefore had to be limited in a somewhat arbitrary fashion. The pieces of evidence listed and discussed will be, with a few exceptions, taken only from the biographies in Westermann's collection: Biographi Graeci Minores, from Athenaeus' Deipnosophists, and from The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers

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[98] Westermann; p. 64.18, p. 66.22 f (Oppian); p. 88.69 f (Choerilus.) Cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.70 for a clear case where a biographer regarded a man's eccentricity as deliberate imitation of a predeccessor: "Diodorus of Ephesus, when writing of Anaximander, declares that Empedocles emulated him, displaying theatrical arrogance and wearing stately robes." (Diogenes Laertius, trans. R.D. Hicks, Loeb, 1925.)

of Diogenes Laertius. In view of the impossibility of tackling all the recurring motifs in Greek biography, it has seemed the best plan to try at least to include examples of each of the main types of recurrence. First, in the chapter on Divine Parentage, we will be considering the incidence of a highly important folk-motif; in the following chapter, on various other family relationships mentioned in the biographies, we shall find several devices designed to express in popular terms the chronological relationship between writers and their literary affinities; then there will be a list giving some examples of simple transference of ancedotes; finally there will be a discussion of two common features of Greek biography: the "rags to riches" story and the amazing death anecdote, the recurrence of which is due to a combination of factors. In the case of the stories of the poor boy who makes good we have to consider, on the one hand, the topos of invective, comic and rhetorical, or alleging that a man was of disreputable origins, and, on the other, the fondness of the Greeks, particularly in the Hellenistic period, for sentimental meditation on the nobility of the poor and the vicissitudes of fortune. In the case of the death stories we have to take into account once more this interest in the unexpected twist of fortune and, in particular, the ancient saying that one should call no man happy until he is dead.

CHAPTER II

Divine Parentage

The idea that a great man might be the son of a god is a motif found in the folk lore and heroic literature of many peoples, not least in that of the ancient Greeks. Jan de Vries, outlining the standard pattern of the heroic life, writes of the birth of the hero:

> "His birth is not like that of an ordinary mortal, there is often difficulty in having it legitimized. Gods frequently play a notable part in it . . . The mother is a virgin, who is in some cases overpowered by a god, or has extra-marital relations with the hero's father."[1]

This highly important motif appears in antiquity not only in legends about warriors of mythical pre-history but in stories about a select group of great writers, philosophers and statesmen of more recent times. The survival of this idea into Hellenistic times, when one might have expected rationalism to prevail, is a remarkable phenomenon. The stories are sometimes presented in rationalized versions

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[1] J. de Vries. Heroic Song and Heroic Legend, Trans. Timmer, Oxford, 1963, p. 210 ff. De Vries gives as examples of the typical hero's mother in Greek legend: Danae, Alcmene, Tyro and Phylone, and compares Kunti, the mother of Karna in Indian legend, Rhea Silvia in Roman legend, Hiltburg, mother of Wolfdietrich in Germanic tradition, Dechtire, mother of Cuchulainn (Irish) and the Hungarian legend of Hunyadi.

reflecting the attitude, which one finds in Euripidean tragedy and afterwards, according to which: "Divine fatherhood is no longer believed in and it is thought to be simply an excuse by the seduced woman,"[2] but by no means always. It seems that such rationalism was far from being a universally accepted attitude even in intellectual circles, and the spinners of popular biographical yarns continued, long after Euripides' time, to reflect more ancient beliefs.[3]

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[2]Trenkner. The Greek Novella, p. 38. Miss Trenkner cites Euripides: Ion 1523 ff.

μὴ σφαλεῖσ' ἀ παρθένοις
ἐγγίγνεται νοσήματ' ες κρυπτοὺς γάμους,
ἔπειτα τῷ θεῷ προστίθης τὴν αἰτίαν,
καὶ τοὐμὸν αἰσχρὸν ἀποφυγεῖν πειρωμένη,
Φοίβῳ τεκεῖν με φῄς, τεκοῦσ' οὐκ ἐκ θεοῦ;

[3]Cf. Trenkner, op. cit., p. 37 f. Note 3: "The traditional motif concerning intercourse with a god remained a commonplace in ancient love literature: in the Samian Women of Menander, 244 ff., an old man consoles a neighbour for his daughter's illegitimate child by persuading him that his grandson is of divine birth. In Achilles Tatius 2.25, Leucippe lies to her mother that someone unknown had visited her at night: εἴτε δαίμων εἴτε ἥρως, εἴτε λῃστῆς; cf. Apul. Met. 9.22: ut dei cuiusdam adventus sic expectatur adulteri."

Three legends recorded in the biographies of Homer give the poet divine parents. According to one he was the son of Apollo and Kalliope, the Muse;[4] another story made him the son of the river Meles, (which flows past Smyrna) and Kritheis, a nymph,[5] another declared that he was the son τινος δάιμονος τῶν συγχορευτῶν Μούσαις and Kritheis, who is, in this case, a mortal girl.[6]

The reasoning behind the first legend, the one making Homer the son of a Muse is understandable enough, Apollo, patron of music, was a not unnatural choice for his father. It is worth noting that some accounts made Orpheus, too, the son of Apollo and Kalliope.[7]

The second of the legends has left its mark on almost all the extant Lives of Homer, though it sometimes comes

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[4]Westermann, p. 31.2 f. (Suidas.)

[5]Ibid., p. 27.2 f; cf. p. 31.1 f. (Suidas.)

[6]Ibid., p. 21.23 ff.

[7]See Otto Kern. Orphicorum Fragmenta, Berlin, 1922, p. 8. Section 22, on Apollo as Orpheus' father, (as an alternative to Oeagrus); p. 9. Section 24, for Kalliope as his mother, (Sections 25.6 for other Muses as alternatives.)

N.B. in one biography Homer is merely stated to have been descended from Kalliope, (i.e. not necessarily her son,): ἄλλοι δ' αὐτοῦ τὸ γένος εἰς καλλιόπην τὴν Μοῦσαν ἀναφέρουσιν Westermann, p. 27.3 f. There was also a genealogy of Homer which made him a descendant of Orpheus. Westermann, p. 35.43 ff.

in a more or less rationalized form. We do find a version in which it is stated uncompromisingly that Homer was the son Μέλητος τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ Κριθηίδος νύμφης,[8] but in other biographies we find that Kritheis has been demythologized and turned into an unmarried mother who just happens to give birth to Homer on the banks of the river Meles.[9] In this way the persistent tradition that Homer was originally called Melesigenes is accounted for, while the supernatural element in the legend is excluded. The precise reason why the legend of Meles and Kritheis arose in the first place is a mystery, but one thing is clear: the story supported Smyrna's claim to have been the poet's birthplace.

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[8] Westermann, p. 31.1 f. (Suidas) cf. p. 34.8 ff.

[9] Ibid., p. 1.1 ff; p. 21.7 ff. This was the version given by Ephorus (cf. Westermann, p. 21.7 ff.) How much of it was his own invention is uncertain. Parts of it were already current in the fifth century, perhaps the whole of it.

Cf. Westermann, p. 25.17 ff. (Proclus' Life of Homer) for the versions given by Hellanicus, Damastes, and Pherecydes (presumably the Athenian historian of that name): Homer and Hesiod are cousins, the sons of Maion and Dios respectively, (Kymaean brothers, seeing that Hesiod himself (Works and Days, 636.) tells us he came from Kyme?)

Homer's mother in this version is not named by Proclus, nor does he state where Homer was born. Cf. Westermann, p. 31.3: Hippias said that Homer was Kymaean.

Westermann, p. 21.7 ff. Ephorus' account summarized by Pseudo-Plutarch. Homer and Hesiod are cousins, sons of Maion and Dios, Kymaean brothers. Homer's mother is Kritheis, daughter of Maion's brother Apelles. Homer is born in Smyrna, and is adopted by Phemius.

The third legend,[10] recounted in a third book περὶ ποιητικῆς ascribed to Aristotle, is a variant on the Smyrnan legend in which Homer's mother is made suitably respectable and a romantic episode has been inserted. This time Kritheis is said to come from Ios. (This is an allusion to the important epigram beginning: ἔστιν Ἴος νῆσος μητρὸς πατρίς,[11] which also contains a prophesy of Homer's death.) The father of her child is not her wicked uncle and guardian, but an immortal companion of the Muses. She runs away in shame, as does her counterpart in the other account, but then the two stories part company again. In this story, she is captured by pirates and taken to Symrna, where she finds favour with the King of Lydia, who marries her for her beauty. The king's name is Maion. This is significant, for it is also the name of the wicked uncle in the other story. This version of the legend ends in the same way as the other, with the girl giving birth to Homer by the river Meles.

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[10] Westermann, p. 21.23 ff. Cf. Trenkner. The Greek Novella, p. 30 for a discussion of this story in relation to the themes of popular romance. Miss Trenkner regards Ephorus' version as a rationalization of this legend: "Ephorus gives a Cumaean version of the story which is completely rationalized and democratized: a guardian uncle is substituted for the gods and a school master for the king." But the relationship between the two legends is probably more remote than this explanation suggests.

[11] Westermann, p. 22.44.

ἔστιν Ἴος νῆσος μητρὸς πατρίς, ἣ σε θανόντα
δέξεται· ἀλλὰ νέων ἀνδρῶν αἴνιγμα φύλαξαι.

Pythagoras was sometimes thought of as a god come to earth to help mortal men:

οἱ μὲν τὸν Πύθιον, οἱ δὲ τὸν ἐξ
Ὑπερβορέων Ἀπόλλωνα, οἱ δὲ τὸν Παιᾶνα
οἱ δὲ τῶν τὴν σελήνην κατοικούντων
δαιμόνων ἕνα, ἄλλοι δὲ ἄλλον τῶν
Ὀλυμπίων θεῶν ἐφήμιζον, εἰς ὠφέλειαν
καὶ ἐπανόρθωσιν τοῦ θνητοῦ βίου
λέγοντες ἐν ἀνθρωπίνῃ μορφῇ φανῆναι
τοῖς τότε ἵνα τὸ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας
τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας σωτήριον ἔναυσμα
χαρίσηται τῇ θνητῇ φύσει, οὗ μεῖζον
ἀγαθὸν οὔτε ἦλθεν οὔτε ἥξει ποτὲ
δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεῶν . . .[12]

Other authorities maintained that, rather than being himself one of the immortals, he was the son of a god. According to Heracleides of Pontus, Pythagoras used to say of himself that:

he had once been Aethalides and was accounted to be Hermes' son, and Hermes told him he might choose any gift he liked except immortality; so he asked to retain through life and through death a memory of his experiences. Hence in life he could recall everything, and when he died he still kept the same memories."[13]

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[12] Iamblichus. Life of Pythagoras, 6.30. (ed. A. Nauck, St. Petersburg, 1884. Reprinted Amsterdam, 1965.

[13] Diogenes Laertius, 8.4.

Heracleides proceeds to describe the various transmigrations of Pythagoras' soul. Another tradition was that he was the son of Apollo, a god with whom he was, as we have seen, frequently identified. Iamblichus, in his Life of Pythagoras, tells us about several aspects of this tradition. He informs us that Epimenides, Eudoxus, and Xenocrates asserted that Pythagoras was the son of Apollo and a mortal woman called Parthenis.[14] This he refuses to believe, but he records a rationalized version of the story[15] according to which, before Pythagoras' birth, his father Mnesarchus, while on a trading visit to Delphi, consulted the oracle about a journey he was planning to Syria and got the response that he was to be greatly honoured and that his wife was to bear a child outstanding in beauty and wisdom; as a result he regarded the child as god-given in a special sense, and changed his wife's name from Parthenis to Pytheis and named his son Pythagoras, in honour of Pythian Apollo. Iamblichus quotes an epigram:

Πυθαγόραν θ' ὃν τίκτε Διὶ φίλῳ Ἀπόλλωνι
Πυθαΐς, ἣ κάλλος πλεῖστον ἔχεν Σαμίων.[16]

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[14] Iamblichus. Life of Pythagoras, 2.7.

[15] Ibid., 2.5.

[16] Ibid.

and surmises that this was the source of the legends associating Pythagoras with Apollo. This is possible, though one never knows with this sort of epigram, which came first, the legend or the poem. Iamblichus' further suggestion about how these lines came to be written:[17] (that the poet was jumping to conclusions after hearing talk about Pythagoras' high birth and his relationship with the leader of the Samian colonists, who was said to be descended from Zeus,) is completely unconvincing. Iamblichus appears to believe the rationalized legend and is willing to speak in abstract terms of Pythagoras as the servant of Apollo sent to mankind:

τὸ μέντοι τὴν Πυθαγόρου ψυχὴν ἀπὸ
τῆς Ἀπόλλωνος ἡγεμονίας οὖσαν εἴτε
συνοπαδὸν εἴτε καὶ ἄλλως οἰκειότερον
ἔτι πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τοῦτον συντεταγμένην
καταπεπέμφθαι εἰς ἀνθρώπους,
οὐδεὶς ἂν ἀμφισβητήσειε
τεκμαιρόμενος αὐτῇ τε τῇ γενέσει
ταύτῃ καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ
τῇ παντοδαπῇ . . .[18]

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[17] Ibid., 2.3 ff.

[18] Ibid., 2.8.

With that he concludes his account of Pythagoras' birth.

It is not perhaps particularly surprising to find the Greeks giving divine parents to such remote figures as Homer and Pythagoras. What is extraordinary is that we find the same kind of story cropping up in the biographies of Plato, of all people, who lived in the full light of the classical period, and about whom there was plenty of reliable biographical information available. Here is a typical account of the legend, from Olympidorus' Life of Plato:

φασὶν οὖν ὅτι φάσμα Ἀπολλωνιακὸν
συνεγένετο τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ τῇ
Περικτιόνῃ καὶ ἐν νυκτὶ φανεν τῷ
Ἀρίστωνι ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῷ μὴ
μιγνύναι τῇ Περικτιόνῃ μέχρι τοῦ
χρόνου τῆς ἀποτέξεως. ὁ δ' ὕυτω
πεποίηκεν.[19]

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[19] Ibid., p. 382.9 ff; p. 396.6 ff. cf. Diogenes Laertius 3.2, and the epitaph quoted in Olympiodorus' Life:

τοὺς δυ' Ἀπόλλων φῦσ' Ἀσκληπιὸν ἠδὲ Πλάτωνα
τὸν μὲν ἵνα ψυχὴν τὸν δ' ἵνα σῶμα σάοι.

We cannot know if this was the original inscription on Plato's tomb, whether it contributed to the formation of the biographical legend or was dependent on it. Cf. the oracles quoted in Westermann, p. 375.19 ff.

It appears that this legend goes back to a period very soon after, if not even during, Plato's lifetime. According to Diogenes Laertius, at any rate, Speusippus, among others, said that the story was current among the Athenians in his time.[20] It may indeed have been a story which arose spontaneously among the Athenian people before it was taken over by Plato's eulogists. The biographers however provide it with a pseudo-scientific basis by claiming that Plato associated himself with Apollo in his writings. Olympiodorus, at one stage in his Life, says of Plato:

καλεῖ δ' αὐτὸν πάντοθεν καὶ τοῖς
κύκνοις ὁμόδουλον ὡς ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος
προελθών. Ἀπολλωνιακὸν γὰρ τὸ
ὄρνεον.[21]

The allusion is to a passage in the Phaedo where Plato represents Socrates speaking of his confidence that there is life after death, and comparing himself to the swans singing their

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[20]Diogenes Laertius 3.2.

Σπεύσιππος δ' ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Πλάτωνος περιδείπνῳ καὶ Κλέαρχος ἐν τῷ Πλάτωνος ἐγκωμίῳ καὶ Ἀναξιλαΐδης ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ Περὶ φιλοσόφων φασίν, ὡς Ἀθήνησιν ἦν λόγος, ὡραίαν οὖσαν τὴν Περικτιόνην βιάζεσθαι τὸν Ἀρίστωνα καὶ μὴ τυγχάνειν· παυόμενόν τε τῆς βίας ἰδεῖν τὴν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ὄψιν· ὅθεν καθαὸν γάμου φυλάξαι ἕως τῆς ἀποκυήσεως.

[21]Westermann, p. 383, 20 f. Cf. the various dreams recorded in the Lives in which Plato is symbolized by a swan, e.g. Westermann, p. 389.26 ff., p. 390.66 ff., p. 396.19 ff.

sweetest just before they die. He explains:

"I believe that the swans, belonging as they do to Apollo, have prophetic powers and sing because they know the good things that await them in the unseen world; and they are happier on that day than they have ever been before. Now I consider that I am in the same service as the swans, (ὁμόδουλος . . . τῶν κύκνων), and dedicated to the same god, (ἱερὸς τοῦ αὐτοῦ θεοῦ); and that I am no worse endowed with propnetic powers than they are, and no more disconsolate at leaving this life."[22]

Notice that it is Socrates who is meant to be speaking and not Plato, but that this does not seem to have mattered to the biographers. Various other proofs that Plato was Apollonian are given in another Life of Plato, all pretty ludicrous. For example:

οὐ μόνον δὲ τὰ ὀνείρατα ταῦτα
δηλοῦσιν αὐτὸν Ἀπολλωνιακὸν ὄντα
ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ
καθαρτικὸν ὄν· τοιοῦτος γὰρ καὶ
ὁ θεός, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄνομα
δηλοῖ. Ἀπόλλων γὰρ δηλοῖ ὁ
κεχωρισμένος τῶν πολλῶν· τὸ γὰρ
α στερητικόν ἐστι μόριον. ἔτι δὲ
καὶ ἐκ τοῦ καιροῦ τῆς γενέσεως
αὐτοῦ τεκμαιρόμεθα αὐτὸ
Ἀπολλωνιακὸν ὄντα· ἐγεννήθη γὰρ

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[22]Plato. Phaedo, 85a-b. Trans. H. Tredennick in Plato. The Last Days of Socrates, Penguin, 1954.

ἐν τῇ ζ' τοῦ θαργηλιῶνος μηνός,
ἐν ᾗ ἑορτὴν ἐπιτελοῦσιν οἱ Δήλιοι
τοῦ 'Απόλλωνος. κ.τ.λ.[23]

Even the fact that Plato lived to the age of eighty-one is found to be significant: $9^2=81$, nine is the number of the Muses, ὅτι δ' αἱ Μοῦσαι ὑπερητίδες εἰσὶν 'Απόλλωνος οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ.[24]

Several famous public figures of historical times were given divine fathers in biographical legends: Alexander, and then, among the Romans,[25] Scipio Africanus and Augustus. In Plutarch's Life of Alexander several stories are told suggesting that the great man was miraculously conceived:

"Now we are told that Philip, after being initiated into the mysteries of Samothrace at the same time with Olympias, he himself being still a youth and she an orphan child, fell

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[23]Westermann, p. 389.44 ff.

[24]Ibid., p. 395.210 ff.

[25]N.B. Romulus and Remus were reputed to have been the sons of Mars and the Vestal virgin, Rhea Silvia, e.g. Livy 1.4: "vi compressa Vestalis, cum geminum partum edidisset, seu ita rata, seu quia deus auctor honestior erat, Martem incertae stirpae patrem nuncupat." Note that the demythologisers have been at work on this legend too. They also rationalized the famous she-wolf, making out that the wife of the man who found the twins was nicknamed Lupa. This type of rationalizing appears already in Herodotus' account of the infancy of Cyrus (Hdt. 1.122). There were two stories (1) that the wife of the herdsman who brought him up was called Cyno=Bitch and (2) that he had been suckled by a bitch, a story put about by Cyrus' true parents, according to Herodotus.

in love with her and betrothed himself to her at once with the consent of her brother Arymbas. Well, then, the night before that on which the marriage was consummated, the bride dreamed that there was a peal of thunder and that a thunderbolt fell upon her womb and that thereby much fire was kindled, which broke into flames that travelled all about and then was extinguished."[26]

A dream of Philip's is next described and then we read of later strange happenings after their marriage:

" . . . a serpent was once seen lying stretched out by the side of Olympias as she slept, and we are told that this, more than anything else, dulled the ardour of Philip's attentions to his wife, so that he no longer came often to sleep by her side, either because he feared that some spells and enchantements might be practised upon him by her, or because he shrank from her embraces in the conviction that she was the partner of a superior being."[27]

Plutarch mentions a rationalizing explanation of this story: that Olympias was an enthusiastic participant in certain Orphic rites and orgies of Dionysus, in which snakes would twine round the wands and garlands of the devotees, but he goes on to say:

" . . . Philip sent Chaeron of Megalopolis to Delphi, by whom an oracle was brought him by Apollo, who bade him sacrifice to Ammon, and hold that god in greatest reverence, but told him he was to lose that one of his eyes which he had applied to the chink in the door when he espied the god in the form of a serpent, sharing the couch of his wife. Moreover as Eratosthenes says, when she sent Alexander forth upon his great expedition, she told him, and him alone, the secret of his begetting, and bade him have purpoes worthy of his birth. Others, on the contrary, say that she repudiated the idea, and said: "Alexander must cease slandering me to Hera."[28]

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[26]Plutarch. Alexander, 2.1 f.

[27]Ibid., 2.4.

[28]Ibid., 3.1.

The stories of Africanus and Augustus are derived from the story of Olympias and the snake. Gellius noticed this dependence, in the case of Scipio Africanus:

"quod de Olympiade, Philippi regis uxore, Alexandri matre in historia Graeca scriptum est, id de P. quoque Scipionis matre, qui prior Africanus appellatus est memoriae datum est."[29]

In this story it is again Jupiter who takes on the guise of a serpent. The main difference is that, whereas Olympias is a mere girl at the time of Alexander's conception, and it is the night before her marriage with Philip is consummated that she has her dream about the thunderbolt which falls upon her womb,[30] the mother of Scipio Africanus has been long married and thought to be barren:

"matrem eius diu sterilem existimatam tradunt, P. quoque Scipionem, cum quo nupta erat, liberos desperavisse."[31]

The Augustus legend follows the same general lines as the other two, though in this case it is said to be Apollo who appears as a serpent. Suetonius writes:

"I have read the following story in the books of Asclepius of Mendes entitled Theologumena. When Atia had come in the middle of the night to the solemn service of Apollo, she had her litter set down in the temple and fell asleep, while the rest of the matrons also slept. On a sudden a serpent glided up to her and shortly went away. When she awoke, she purified herself, as if after the embraces of her husband, and at once there appeared on her body a mark in colours

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[29]Gellius. Noctes Atticae, 6.1.

[30]Plutarch. Alexander, 2.2.

[31]Gellius. Noctes Atticae, 6.2. following C. Oppius and Julius Hyginus.

like a serpent, and she could never get rid of it; so that presently she ceased ever to go to the public baths. In the tenth month after that Augustus was born and was therefore regarded as the son of Apollo."[32]

We find, then, that the possibility of miraculous conception was an idea which presented itself to the minds of the Greeks and Romans when they considered the lives of certain men of genius, usually men with a streak of mysticism in their characters.

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[32]Suetonius. Augustus, 94. Cf. Cassius Dio 45.1.2.

CHAPTER III

Family relationships of the great

The Greek biographers had various means of supplying a great writer of the past with suitable family connections. To start with, they could pick out some character favourably depicted in his works and state that the author was related to him. To the biographers' credit, it must be stated, they do not seem to have used this technique very often, but we find a clear case of it in the Lives of Homer. One of the many versions of the parentage of Homer asserted that he was the son of Telemachus and the daughter of Nestor, Polycaste.[1] Perhaps in the Lives of Pindar and Bacchylides we may detect a similar, but more subtle technique in use. Surely it is somewhat suspicious that both the great writers of epinicia are said to have been related to athletes. Yet this is what we find. In the hexameter poem quoted in Eustathius' Life of Pindar we hear that the poet had a twin brother:

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[1] Westermann, p. 32.4; p. 34.22 ff., p. 35.37 f.

. . . Ἐρίτιμον εἰδότα θήρης
εἰδότα πυγμαχίης τε παλαισμοσύνης τ' ἀλεγεινῆς.[2]

Bacchylides is said to have had a grandfather, also called Bacchylides, who was an athlete.[3] Of course, there is nothing inherently unlikely about this statement, but one must imagine the sort of uncritical glee with which an ancient biographer, looking at some old lists of victorious athletes, would have greeted the appearance of the name Bacchylides.

The most common type of significant relationship invented by the biographers is kinship between exponents of the same literary genre. The epic poets who were supposed to have preceded Homer were linked togehter in this way. Eumolpus was said to have been the son of Musaeus, and we hear of a didactic poem addressed to him by his father.[4] It was often suggested that Homer and Hesiod were related. Proclus tells us that Hellanicus (4F5), Damastes (5F11b) and Pherecydes (3F167) all said that the two poets were cousins.[5] Other versions were that Hesiod was the second

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[2] Ibid., p. 94.18 ff.

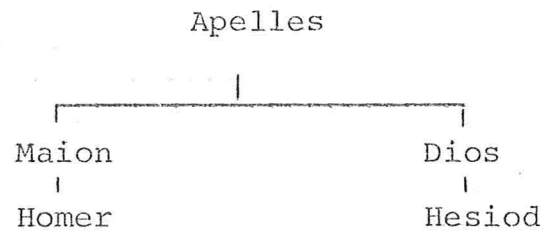
[3] Ibid., p. 105.38 ff.

[4] Ibid., p. 72.52; 77.141 f.

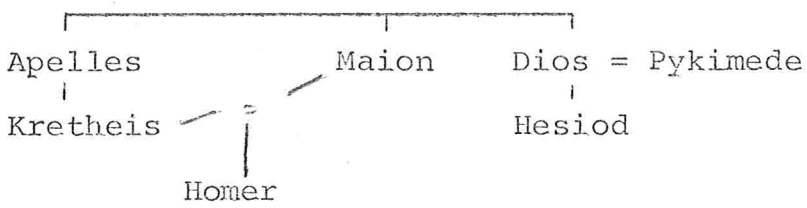
[5] Ibid., p. 25.17 ff. Cf. Strabo 1.3.1 on the unreliability of Damastes.

cousin[6] or even the great-great uncle,[7] of Homer.

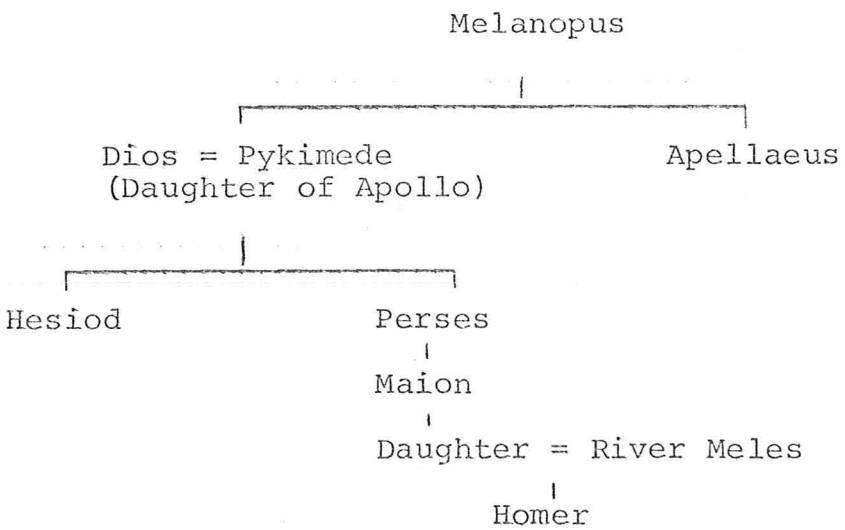
(1) Version of Hellanicus, Damastes, Pherecydes



(2) Version of Ephorus



(3) Version in the Agon



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[6] Ibid., p. 21.7 ff. (Actually, both first and second cousin owing to the incest of Homer's parents.) This was Ephorus' version.

[7] Ibid., p. 35.47 ff. (The version recorded in the Agon.) There was no agreement, however, among the biographers, as to whether Homer was a contemporary of, or lived earlier or later than, Hesiod. The pre-supposition of the Agon is that the

Proclus made a necessary plea for sanity in his remarks on Homer:

> εἰσὶ δ' οἵτινες ἀνεψιὸν αὐτὸν Ἡσιόδου παρέδοσαν, ἀτριβεῖς ὄντες ποιήσεως. τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἀπέχουσι τοῦ γένει προσήκειν, ὅσον ἡ πόιησις διέστηκεν αὐτῶν.[8]

The biographers, then, gave Homer and Hesiod a common ancestry. It was traced back far beyond Apelles/Apellaeus and Melanopus. Hellanicus, Damastes and Pherecydes[9] presented a genealogy to show that Homer and Hesiod were tenth generation descendants of Orpheus: Maion and Dios, their fathers, were the sons of Apelles, the son of Melanopus, the son of Epiphrades, the son of Chariphemus, the son of Philoterpas, the son of Idmonides, the son of Euklees, the son of Dorion, the son of Orpheus. Doubtless these ancestors, with their significant names, were supposed to have been poets. The lineage

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[8] Westermann, p. 26.45 ff.

[9] Ibid., p. 25.17 ff.

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two poets were contemporaries. This was also the view of Herodotus. (2.53) Crusius. Philologus 54, p. 729 suggests that Herodotus was basing his conclusion on any early account of a contest between the two poets. On the question of priority cf. Westermann, p. 35.41:

> ἔνιοι μὲν οὖν αὐτὸν προγενέστερον Ἡσιόδου φασὶν εἶναι, τινὲς δὲ νεώτερον καὶ συγγενῆ.

recorded in the Agon, similar, but with some variations amongst the names, goes even further back.[10] Orpheus is the son of Oeagrus and Kalliope, the Muse; Oeagrus is the son of Pierus and Methone, a nymph; Pierus is the son of Linus, the son of Apollo and Thoose, daughter of Poseidon.[11] There was also an alternative genealogy which made Homer a descendent of Musaeus. This version was given by Gorgias of Leontini.[12] In this way Homer and Hesiod were linked with the poets of the legendary past. Nor were they the last in the line of this remarkable family of bards. Some accounts made Kreophylus the son-in-law of Homer and related that Homer presented him with a poem, The Capture of Oichalia as a gift.[13] There was also a story that Stesichorus was the son of Hesiod, which Proclus quotes with his customary

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[10] Ibid., p. 35.43 ff.

[11] Genealogies going back to the gods and heroes will be discussed later in this chapter.

[12] Westermann, p. 25.22. Another biographer (Ibid., p. 30.2 f), says that Damastes made Homer a tenth generation descendant of Musaeus. This contradicts Proclus.

[13] Westermann, p. 75.115 ff. Cf. Pindar frag. 265 = Aelian: V.H. 9.15 where it is the Cypria that Homer gives away as his daughter's dowry.

sarcasm:

> 'Αριστοτέλης γὰρ ὁ φιλόσοφος, μᾶλλον
> δ' οἶμαι ὁ τοὺς πέπλους συντάξας ἐν τῇ
> 'Ορχομενίων πολιτείᾳ Στησίχορον τον
> μελοποιὸν εἶναί φησιν υἱὸν 'Ησιόδου, ἐκ
> τῆς Κτιμένης αὐτῷ γεννηθέντα τῆς
> 'Αντιφάνους καὶ Γανύκτορος ἀδελφῆς,
> θυγατρὸς δὲ Φηγέως.[14]

In the legend of Hesiod's death Antiphanes and Ganyctor murder Hesiod for seducing their sister.[15]

History according to a view widespread in antiquity, is a genre closely related to poetry: 'proxima poetis, et quodam modo carmen solutum',[16] as Quintilian puts it. We must bear this in mind when considering references in the biographies to family relationships between poets and historians. We may note the case of Herodotus and Panyasis. Both came from Halicarnassus and according to one account they were cousins, the sons of two brothers, Polyarchus and Luxus; another version was that Panyasis was Herodotus' uncle, the brother of his mother, Rhoio.[17] Despite this

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[14] Westermann, 48.80 ff. The alleged relationship between Bacchylides and Simonides, (Westermann, p. 105.41, Strabo 486) is another case which should have been considered.

[15] Ibid., p. 49.97 ff.

[16] Quintilian, 10.131.

[17] Westermann, p. 81.215 ff.

discrepancy in the sources the relationship is generally accepted as fact, the assumption being that it was recorded by reliable Halicarnassian local historians.[18] However, one might perhaps expect agreement on the precise relationship, if this were the case, and, in view of what we have seen in the case of Homer's supposed family tree, it is surely possible that some uncritical biographer has noticed that the two eminent Halicarnassians lived around the same time and has quite arbitrarily made them cousins or uncle and nephew. Then there is the somewhat puzzling case of Ibycus. There was a difference of opinion as to the name of this poet's father. One of the three alternative views was that Ibycus was the son of a Messenian historiographos:

> Ἴβυκος Φυτίου, οἱ δὲ Πολυζήλου τοῦ Μεσσηνίου ἱστοριογράφου, οἱ δε Κέρδαντος· γένει Ῥηγίνος.[19]

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[18] E.g., RE. xviii 3., p. 873 on Panyassis, "die Tatsache der Verwandtschaft kann als erwiesen gelten, trotz dem Widerspruch in der Art: sie ging offenbar aus urkundlichem Material hervor, das halikarnassischer Lokalforschung zu Gebote stand "

[19] Westermann, p. 106.59 f. One might speculate that, at some stage in the transmission of the biographical data on Ibycus, there was a confusion whereby an authority on his parentage became by mistake a candidate for the poet's father i.e., Ἴβυκος . . . ὥς φησι Πολυζήλος → Ἴβυκος Πολυζήλου. There are two men called Polyzelus who may well have referred to Ibycus: an Athenian comic poet who wrote a Μουσῶν γονάι, and a Rhodian historian who certainly mentioned Hesiod (F.H.G. 521 F9). But as neither of them is a Messenian historian we cannot say that the problem would be solved by the hypothesis suggested above.

N.B. Phytius was a Rhegian law giver. (Iambliclus. Life of Pythagoras, 172), therefore, another artificial connection with Ibycus.

Who this individual, Polyzelus, may have been and why he was associated with Ibycus is completely unclear. The early sixth century is hardly a period one associates with historiography. One observation we may make, though, is that the biographer who called him a Messenian historian may have meant that he came from Messana in Sicily, which was just across the strait from Ibycus' home town, Rhegium.

Whatever conclusion we may come to about the last two examples, the case of Homer, Hesiod and Stesichorus, if no other, shows that the biographers were not above inventing family relationships where none are likely to have existed. Clearly what motivated them was a desire to describe synchronisms and literary kinship in terms understandable to the general public.[20]

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[20]Another way of expressing chronological and literary relationships was to make out that a man was the pupil and/or loved one of the leading exponent of his chosen genre in the previous generation. For example, people argued about the pupils of Orpheus: some people, though not everyone, thought Eumolpus was a pupil of Orpheus; Westermann, p. 72.53; there was also a theory that Musaeus was his pupil, but some people disagreed; saying he was older: μαθητὴς Ὀρφέως, μᾶλλον δὲ πρεσβύτερος. Westermann, p. 77.13ϑ. The desire, evident from this example, to link great men together as masters and pupils, is discernible in the Lives of later men too. The most famous case, of course, is that of the successions of philosophers, summarized conveniently by Diogenes Laertius 1.13 ff. It appears that biographers and writers of compilations on "Who loved Whom" were very prone to jumping to the conclusion that a famous pupil was probably the beloved of a famous master; for a typical example see Westermann, p. 417.310 ff. on Empedocles:

ἠκρόασατο δὲ πρώτου Παρμενίδου, οὗτινος, ὥς φησι Πορφύριος ἐν φιλοσόφῳ ἱστορίᾳ ἐγένετο παιδικά.

Of course, one ought not to press this kind of argument too far. Everyone knows the phenomenon of the literary family, and it existed in antiquity: the example of the two Senecas and Lucan springs to mind. It is interesting to see how the biographers treated a case where there appears really to have been kinship between two great men of somewhat similar gifts, the case of Plato and Solon. Plato himself evidently believed in the hereditary nature of artistic gifts. In the Charmides he presents a discussion of the good qualities of the young Charmides, in which Critias says: "I may say he is in fact a philosopher, and also -- as others besides himself consider -- quite a poet", and Socrates remarks, "That, my dear Critias, is a gift which you family has had a long while back, through your kinship with Solon."[21] Now it appears that Plato himself was related to the family of Charmides and Critias, through his mother, the sister of Charmides, and consequently to Solon also.[22] It may be that he liked to think of his own gifts as hereditary. He can hardly have written that description of Charmides: . . . ἐπεί τοι καὶ ἔστι φιλόσοφός τε καὶ, ὡς δοκεῖ ἄλλοις τε καὶ ἑαυτῷ πάνυ ποιητικός[23]

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[21]Plato, Charmides, 155a. trans. W.R. Lamb, (Loeb).

[22]Cf. RE. xx, 2, p. 2347 for the sources of our knowledge of Plato's family.

[23]Plato, Charmides, 155a.

without reflecting that these words would be very applicable to himself. As one might expect, the biographers stressed the relationship between Plato and Solon. For one thing they made it out to be a more direct relationship than it really was. Its indirectness is shown by a passage in the Timaeus where Critias says: "Now Solon -- as indeed he often says in his poems -- was a relative and very dear friend of our grandfather Dropides.[24] Diogenes Laertius, with what justification we do not know, made Dropides Solon's brother.[25] Other biographers went a stage further and made Plato a direct descendant of Solon on his mother's side,[26] or even on his father's.[27] Olympiodorus draws the parallel between the two men's interests in these rather unsubtle terms:

λέγεται γὰρ ὁ Πλάτων υἱὸς γενέσθαι πατρὸς μὲν Ἀρίστωνος τοῦ Ἀριστοκλέους ἀφ' οὗ τὸ γένος εἰς Σόλωνα τὸν νομοθέτην ἀνέφερεν. διὸ καὶ κατὰ ζῆλον προγονικὸν Νόμους ἔγραφεν ἐν ιβ' βιβλίοις καὶ πολιτείας σύστασιν εὐ. ιά.[28]

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[24]Plato, Timaeus, 20e.

[25]Diogenes Laertius, 3.1.

[26]Westermann, p. 388.15 f; p. 396.1 ff.

[27]Ibid., p. 382.4 ff.

[28]Ibid.,

One further type of genealogy we find in the biographies of literary men is the lengthy pedigree going back to the gods and heroes. This is, of course, not a motif peculiar to Greek biography, but it is to be found in the formal history of antiquity too, and not only among the Greeks.[29] Indeed, it is a survival of what must be one of the most primitive ways of looking at the past. The tracing of the ancestors of the great, once the province of poets, interested the earliest of the prose historians. Hecataeus wrote a work called Γενεαλογίαι, 'a collection of family traditions and pedigrees, including his own.'[30] Herodotus too recorded genealogies reaching back into heroic times.[31]

Such genealogies are to be found in the Lives of three classes of people: members of noble families, holders of hereditary priesthoods, and people who followed a profession which was regarded as in some sense hereditary, having been handed down to the generations of men by a divine patron.

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[29] One thinks, for instance, of the biblical parallels for this technique. The Egyptians also had genealogical records going back an incredibly long way, but they do not seem to have agreed with the Greek view that men could be descended from the gods. Herodotus 2.143.

[30] Oxford Classical Dictionary on Hecataeus. cf. Herodotus 2.143.

[31] E.g., Herodotus 7.204 for a genealogy of Leonidas, going back to Herakles.

Thucydides was related to Miltiades, and this seemed to Marcellinus sufficient reason for including in his life of the historian the genealogy of Miltiades' family, the Philaidae, which went back to Aeacus, son of Zeus.[32] The orator Andocides was also said to be of a noble family. Pseudo-Plutarch records that Hellanicus, (presumably referring to the orator's grandfather who had been an important man), stated that his family was descended from Hermes.[33] Solon, and hence Plato too, were descendants of Neleus. Plato could also claim descent from Codrus, King of Athens, on his father's side.[34] Cleobulus the sage was said to be descended from Herakles.[35]

The orator Lycurgus held a hereditary priesthood of Poseidon. An inscription in the Erechtheum, which had already been quoted, set out a family tree showing that he was descended from Erectheus, son of Ge and Hephaestus.[36]

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[32] Westermann, p. 186.11 ff. At one point Marcellinus or the manuscript tradition makes a mistake and speaks of Aias instead of Aeacus.

[33] Ibid., p. 237.1 ff. Apparently Odysseus was also among his ancestors, Plutarch, Life of Alcibiades 21 cf. RE xii, 1.436 for a genealogy mentioned by Eustathius 197.22 making Laertes a descendant of Hermes.

[34] Ibid., p. 396.1 ff.

[35] Diogenes Laertius, 1.89.

[36] Westermann, p. 277.145 ff. cf. p. 31.

It seems that all physicians were regarded as belonging to the family of Asclepius. Hence Hippocrates, as well as being supposed to be descended, like Cleobulus, from Herakles, was said to trace his ancestry back to Asclepius.[37] Aristotle as the son of a physician was also reckoned a member of the Asclepiadae.[38] The genealogy connecting Homer and Hesiod with Orpheus and Apollo may count as another example of the concept that the exponents of an art were in some way descendants of their divine patron.

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[37] Ibid., p. 449.2 ff.

[38] Ibid., p. 397.1 f; 398.1 ff; 401.1 ff.

CHAPTER IV

Some cases of simple transference

Some anecdotes were thought too good to be only used once, and are found virtually unchanged in several biographies.[1] A few examples will suffice to illustrate the phenomenon.

(1) The independent vegetable-washer

Diogenes Laertius 2.68.

"Diogenes, washing the dirt from his vegetables, saw him (Aristippus) passing and jeered at him in these terms, 'If you had learnt to make those your diet, you would not have paid court to king', to which his rejoinder was, 'And if you knew how to associate with men, you would not be washing vegetables."

Diogenes Laertius 2.102. (This is also from the chapter on Aristippus!)

"He (Theodorus) is said on one occasion to have walked abroad with a numerous train of pupils, and Metrocles the Cynic, who was washing chervil, remarked, 'You, sophist that you are, would not have wanted all these pupils if you had washed vegetables." Thereupon Theodorus retorted, And you, if you had known how to associate with men, would have no use for these vegetables! A similar anecdote is told of Diogenes and Aristippus, as mentioned above."

Diogenes Laertius 6.58.

" . . . Plato saw him (Diogenes the Cynic) washing lettuces, came up to him and quietly said to him, 'Had you paid court

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[1] Gnomologicum Vaticanum, ed. L. Sternbach 2nd ed., Berlin, 1963. For further examples of Apothegms repeated under different names, e.g., no. 338 (Theocritus) = 523 (Stratonicus).

to Dionysius, you wouldn't now be washing lettuces', and that he with equal calmness made answer, "If you had washed lettuces, you wouldn't have paid court to Dionysius.'"

(2) The teacher with few pupils

Athenaeus 8. 348d.

"Being a teacher of harp players, he (Stratonicus) had in his studio nine statues of the Muses, one of Apollo, and just two pupils; and when somebody asked him how many pupils he had, he replied, 'with the assistance of the gods, (σὺν τοῖς θεοῖς) a round dozen.'

Diogenes Laertius 6.69.

"On entering a boys' school, he (Diogenes the Cynic) found there many statues of the Muses, but few pupils. 'By the help of the gods (σὺν θεοῖς)', said he, 'school master, you have plenty of pupils."

(3) An insult formula

Athenaeus 8.349d. quoting some verses by Machon.

"Again Stratonicus the harp-singer once found himself, a stranger, in Corinth. There an old hag kep looking at him and would not desist, no matter where he went. And he: 'In the gods' name, granny, tell me what you want, and why you keep gazing at me?' 'I wondered,' she said, 'that your mother could carry you for ten months and hold you within her womb, when our city smarts with the pain of keeping you a single day.'"

Athenaeus 8.350 f. quoting Callisthenes.

"He (Stratonicus) said he was particularly surprised at the mother of the sophist Satyrus because she had carried for ten months one whom no city could bear for ten days."

(4) A geometrical discovery

Diogenes Laertius 1.24.

"Pamphila states that, having learnt geometry from the Egyptians, he (Thales) was the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle in a circle whereupon he sacrificed an ox. Others tell this tale of Pythagoras, amongst them Apollodorus the arithmetician."

(5) The three blessings

Diogenes Laertius 1.33.

"Hermippus in his Lives refers to Thales the story which is told by some of Socrates, namely, that there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: "first, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian."

(6) A pun

Diogenes Laertius 2.118. (On Stilpo.)

πάλιν δὲ ἰδὼν τὸν Κράτητα χειμῶνος συγκεκαυμένον·

'ὦ Κράτητι' εἶπε, 'δοκεῖς μοι χρέιαν ἔχειν ἱματίου

καινοῦ'. [ὅπερ ἦν νοῦ καὶ ἱματίου].

Diogenes Laertius 6.3. (On Antisthenes.)

πρὸς τε τὸ Ποντικὸν μειράκιον μέλλον φοιτᾶν

αὐτῷ καὶ πυθόμενον τίνων αὐτῷ δεῖ, φησί,

'βιβλιαρίου καινοῦ καὶ γραφείου καινοῦ καὶ

πινακιδίου καινοῦ, τον νοῦν παρεμφάινων.

We are now coming to a class of anecdotes where we have to take into account the possibility of imitation, that is the possibility that a man may have been consciously modelling his words or actions on those ascribed to a predecessor. It is just possible that the καινοῦ joke comes into this category. In the next example we find that Horace seems to have imitated a saying ascribed to Isocrates.

(7) A defence of specialization

Westermann, p. 95.155 ff. (Eustathius on Pindar).

τῷ δὲ πυθομένῳ, διὰ τί μέλη γράφων ᾄδειν

οὐκ ἐπίσταται, 'καὶ γὰρ οἱ ναυπηγοὶ' ἔφη

πηδάλια ποιοῦντες κυβερνᾶν οὐκ οἴδασιν'.
τοῦτο δέ πῶς παρέοικε πρὸς τὸ ἐρωτηθῆναι
μέν τινα σοφιστήν, διὰ τί δημηγορεῖν
ἄλλους πρὸς ὄχλον διδάσκων αὐτὸς
Οὐ δύναται οὕτω ποιεῖν, ἐκεῖνον δ' εὐστόχως
εἰπεῖν ὡς 'καὶ ἡ ἀκόνη ὀξύνουσα εἰς τομὴν
τὰ σιδήρια ὅμως αὐτὴ τέμνειν οὐ δύναται.'[2]

Westermann, p. 251.115 ff. (Pseudo-Plutarch on Isocrates.)

καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐρόμενον, διὰ τί οὐκ ὢν
αὐτος ἱκανὸς ἄλλους ποιεῖ, εἶπεν ὅτι και
αἱ ἀκόναι αὐταὶ μὲν τέμνειν οὐ δύνανται,
τὸν δὲ σίδηρον τμητικὸν ποιοῦσιν.

Horace: Ars Poetica 304 ff.

"ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum
reddere quae ferrum valet exsors ipsa secandi;
munus et officium nil scribens ipse docebo,
unde parentur opes, quid alat formatque poetam;
quid deceat, quid non; quo virtus, quo ferat error."

(8) The bridle and the spur

Diogenes Laerius 4.6.

"Xenocrates, the son of Agathenor, was a native of Chalchedon. He was a pupil of Plato from his earliest youth; moreover he accompanied him on his journey to Sicily. He was naturally slow and clumsy. Hence Plato, comparing him to Aristotle, said, "The one needed a spur, the other a bridle'. And again, 'See what an ass I am training and what a horse he has to run against.'"

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[2]Perhaps the idea came originally from Olympian 6.82 f.

δόξαν ἔχω τιν' ἐπὶ γλώσσᾳ λιγυρᾶς ακόνας
ἃ μ' ἐθέλοντα προσέρπει καλλιρόαισι πνοαῖς.

Westermann, p. 257.98 ff. (From a Life of Isocrates.)

ὡς ἑώρα τὸν Θεόπομπον μικρὰν ὑπόθεσίν
τινα λαμβάνοντα καὶ ἐπεκτείνοντα ταύτην
καὶ διὰ πολλῶν λέγοντα, ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ
Φιλιππικῇ αὐτοῦ ἱστορίᾳ ἐποίησε, τὸν
δ' Ἔφορον μεγάλην μὲν ὑπόθεσιν λαμβάνοντα
καὶ πολλῶν δεομένην εἶτα δι' ὀλίγων
αὐτὴν λέγοντα καὶ ἐλλειπῶς, ἔφησεν ὡς
ὅτι 'ἔχω τινὰς δύο μαθητάς ὧν ὁ μὲν
δεῖται μάστιγος, ὁ δὲ χαλινοῦ, 'μάστιγος
μὲν λέγων περὶ τοῦ Ἐφόρου διὰ τὸ
νωθὲς καὶ βραδὺ τῆς φύσεως, χαλινοῦ δὲ διὰ τὸ
Θεοπόμπου πολύ τε καὶ ἀκρατὲς τῆς
γλώττης

Seneca the Elder: Contr. 4. Praef. 7. (On the rhetorician Haterius.)

"tanta erat illi velocitas orationis, ut vitium
fieret. itaque divus Augustus optime dixit:
'Haterius noster sufflaminandus est.'"

(9) Poet rewarded with coin for every line of poetry

Westermann p. 88.368 ff. (On Choerilus.)

ἔγραψε δὲ ταῦτα· τὴν Ἀθηναίων νίκην
κατα Ξέρξου· ἐφ' οὗ ποιήματος κατὰ
στίχον στατῆρα χρυσοῦν ἔλαβε καὶ
οὐν τοῖς Ὁμήρου ἀναγινώσκεσθαι
ἐψηφίσθη . . .

Westermann, p. 66.21 ff.

(Oppian has impressed the new Roman emperor and secured the return of his father from exile.)

οὐ μόνον δὲ τον πατέρα ἔλαβεν, ἀλλὰ
καὶ τοσαῦτα νομίσματα, ὅσους εὑρέθη
ἔχοντα στίχους τα ποιήματα. παρὰ τοῦ
βασιλέως οὖν τιμηθεὶς καὶ ἐν τοῖς
ἀρίστοις τῶν ποιητῶν καταταχθείς.
λαβο ν παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τὰ
δωρηθέντα αὐτῷ χρυσοῖς γράμμασι
τὰ ποιήματα ἔγραφεν.

CHAPTER V

People of humble origin who became famous

It would not be natural to assume that all the great writers and thinkers of Greece came from the same sort of social background, and in all societies one finds the poor boy who makes good. We have to be very cautious, though, when considering statements by the Greek biographers that any great man was of humble origin. Such information may sometimes be true, but it may equally be based on the most unreliable sorts of data. We should be warned by the cases of the *Lives* of Euripides and Aeschines. We have seen that it was the comedies of Aristophanes that were the source of the allegation that Euripides' parents were poor hucksters,[1] and it was Demosthenes who was responsible for spreading the tale that his opponent, Aeschines, was the son of a prostitute and an ex-slave.[2] Allegation that a man came of disreputable parents was, then, a *topos* of invective, comic and rhetorical, and indeed of malicious gossip of all kinds.

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[1] Aristophanes. *Thesm.* 387, 456; *Acharnians* 479; *Knights* 19. cf. p. 18 f. for comic allegations in the *Lives* of Euripides.

[2] Demosthenes, *De Corona* 129 ff. Cf. p. 11 ff.

There are other factors to be taken into consideration. Would the biographers themselves ever invent stories of humble beginnings for the men whom they were writing about? It seems they may have done, and, unlike the orators and comic poets, not necessarily with malicious intent. The Peripatetics seem to have been fascinated with capriciousness of fortune in all its aspects,[3] with the unexpected rise from adversity to happiness and, conversely, with the fall from good fortune to a sad end, those reversals which Aristotle had considered in his discussion of the tragic plot in the Poetics.[4] The Cyncis too were very concerned with the changeability of fortune.[5] But, of course, besides considering the preoccupations of particular philosophical schools,

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[3]Cf. K. Jex Blake, E. Sellers. The Elder Pliny's chapters on the History of Art, 1896, 1st American ed., 1968. Introd. p. xlvi ff. on Duris of Samos, especially p. xlix: "Such anecdotes seem in measure prompted by the desire to illustrate the changes of Fortune, of that τύχη whose caprices were so favourite a theme of the Peripatetics." Cf. A.F. Roesiger. Die Bedeutung der Tyche bei den späteren Griechischen Historikern, Konstanz, 1880. F. Süsemihl. Geschichte der Literatur in der Alexandriner Zeit, Leipzig, 1891, i., p. 519 ff. F. Wehrli. Demetrius von Phaleron, Basle, 1949, on Demetrius: περι τύχης, pp. 79-81.

[4]Aristotle, Poetics, 1452b ff.

[5]Cf. R. Helm. Lucian und Menipp, Teubner, Leipzig and Berlin, 1906. Reprinted Olms. Hildesheim, 1967, p. 50 ff.

we have to remember the frequency with which the motif of "rags to riches" crops up in the folk lore of all peoples and all kinds of romantic narrative. It will be seen that the biographers often invented sad ends for the great men they wrote about. It seems that they also invented, in some cases, wretched beginnings out of which their subjects rose to eminence.[6]

It is interesting to find that the "poor boy makes good" theme, as well as being, throughout antiquity, a cliché of invective, and being harped on sentimentally by the biographers, is also found taken up by orators as a topos for use when discussing unexpected twists of fortune and especially in speeches defending people of undistinguished or disreputable origins. True nobility, one might argue, is not dependent on high birth.[7] The biographies provided

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[6]Cf. Jex Blake and Sellers, loc. cit., for some examples from Greek art history.

[7]E.g., Seneca. Contr., 1.6.4. (where Julius Bassus is supporting the claims of a pirate chief's daughter to be potentially a better wife for the defendant that a rich orphan.) "quis fuit Marius, si illum suis inspexerimus maioribus? in multis consulatibus nihil habet clarius quam se auctorem. Pompeium si hereditariae extulissent imagines, nemo Magnum dixisset. Servium regem tulit Roma, in cuius virtutibus humilitate nominis nihil est clarius, quid tibi videntur illi ab aratro, qui paupertate sua beatam fecere rem publicam? quemcumque volueris revolve nobilem: ad humilitatem pervenies."

Declamation themes including a stock "poor man" provided golden opportunities to enlarge on this theme.

But of course, the idea of the nobility to be found among the poor is an old one, found for example in Euripides. Electra, 367 ff. Cf. in general Wil Meyer. Laudes Inopiae, Diss., Göttingen, 1915.

plenty of examples of statesmen, as well as literary men, philosophers and artists, which the orator could bring in to illustrate his argument. So it comes about that Valerius Maximus, and doubtless many other compilers of his king, drawing on biographies and other historical works, provided the student of rhetoric with ready-made examples in a chapter about men "qui humili loco nati clari evaserunt."[8]

A word of explanation is perhaps necessary about the purpose and limitations of the list which follows here and the similar one in the next chapter on Unusual Deaths. Obviously not even the most hostile sceptic would suggest that all the biographical statements included in these lists are untrue. For instance, we have overwhelming evidence for the truth of the statements about the poverty of the young Hesiod and the death of Socrates. The point that should be made is that, while each case ought first to be considered separately, if no clear decision about its historicity can be arrived at through such a consideration, one may be prompted to reject the anecdote in question by the recognition that it belongs to a class of motif which can be shown to have had a particular appeal to the imagination of the Greek biographers or to have been characteristic of

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[8]Valerius Maximus. Facta et dicta memorabilia, 3.4. (His next chapter is about men "qui a parentibus claris degeneravit", cf. Euripides. Electra 369 f.

ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον ἄνδρα γενναῖου πατρὸς

τὸ μηδὲν ὄντα χρηστά τ' ἐκ κακῶν τέκνα.

the more unreliable of the sources on which they drew, folk tradition or invective.

Isocrates was the son of a flute-maker, according to Aristophanes and Strattis in their comedies. Westermann, p. 247.5 f; p. 256.80 ff. cf. p. 259.1. (Suidas.) At some point someone (Philochorus again?) seems to have argued that Isocrates' father was only a flute-maker in the sense that he owned a flute-factory staffed by slaves. Westermann, p. 245.3 ff; p. 247.2 ff; p. 253.1 ff.

Aeschines was the son of Atrometus, alias Tromes, and Glaucothea.

Aeschines Father. (1) According to hostile reports Atrometus was originally a slave called Tromes, who was a school teacher. Westermann, p. 265.1 ff. cf. Demosthenes, de Corona 129. He was later charged with some criminal offence. Westermann, p. 265.6 f. (Perhaps an inference from Demosthenes' reference to his fetters and collar in De Corona 129) (2) Sometimes the biographers reflect Aeschines' own, more favourable, picture of Atrometus. Pseudo-Plutarch mentions that he fled from the Thirty. Westermann, p. 262.1. Cf. Aeschines, On the Embassy, 78. Another biographer gives a garbled version of the passage where Aeschines claims his father belonged to a perfectly good phratry. Westermann, p. 267.36 ff. Cf. Aeschines, On the Embassy, 147.

Aeschines' Mother. (1) Glaucothea is said to have been a prostitue originally. Westermann, p. 265.8 ff. Cf. Demosthens. De Corona 129. She was nicknamed Empousa. Westermann, p. 268.4 ff. Cf. Demosthenes. De Corona, 130.

Homer, in rationalized version of his origin, was the son of the unmarried Kretheis, who earned her living by making woollen clothing, employed by the school master, Phemius. Phemius later persuaded Kretheis to live with him and adopted and educated the future poet. Westermann, p. 2.30 ff., p. 21.7 ff. (Ephorus).

Hesiod was obliged by poverty to work as a shepherd. Westermann, p. 45.6 (Obviously this is a reasonable deduction from his poems and is not to be classed with the general run of biographical legends, but Hesiod's case history was used as a rhetorical exemplum, cf. Westermann, p. 46.30 ff.)

Rhianus started out as a slave who worked as a palaestra guard. Westermann, p. 83.258.

Choerilus was a run-away slave from Samos, who developed an enthusiasm for literature from listening to Herodotus. Westermann, p. 88.364 ff.

Aesop was a slave. Westermann, p. 46.34, cf. Herodot. 2.134.

Alcman was of servile origin. Westermann, p. 103.5.

Sophocles was the son of Sophillos who was: (1) according to Aristoxenus, a carpenter or coppersmith, Westermann, p. 126.2. (2) according to Istros, a cutler, not of Athenian but Phliasian origin. Westermann, p. 126.3 ff.

The anonymous biographer who gives us those references, does so only to refute them. He suggests that the explanation for these allegations may be that Sophillus had slaves who were carpenters or metal workers, arguing that Sophocles would not have held high office if he had been of such a humble background. (So much for Athenian democracy!) Westermann, p. 126.3 ff.

Euripides was the son of Mnesarchus κάπηλος, (peddler, small shop-keeper, inn-keeper?) and Kleito, a green-grocer. Westermann, p. 133.1 ff; p. 139.1 f; p. 141.1 ff. (According to this last account, not true Athenians).

Valerius Maximus 3.4. Ext. 2. This information, as we have seen, is of comic origin. Philochorus, arguing against the allegations, set out to prove that Kleito was, in fact, well born. (Was he responsible for the attack on biographical traditions in Sophocles' case too?) Westermann, p. 141.3 ff. Euripides himself became a painter: Westermann, p. 134.15 f; p. 139.22 f.

Aristophanes was charged with not being a true Athenian. (He had criticized the use of the lot, when foreigners had been present, in a comedy called the Babylonians). Westermann, p. 156.24 ff.

Metagenes, the comic poet, was the son of a slave. Westermann, p. 168.78.

Rhinthon, the comic poet, was the son of a potter. Westermann, p. 184.29 f.

(The biographer here goes one step further than Demosthenes and makes her a real bogey-woman). She then became some sort of arranger of initiation rites. Westermann, p. 268.2 (τῆς τοὺς θιάσους τελούσης). Westermann, p. 265.10 ff. (ἔπειτα ὕστερον ἀναστᾶσαν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐργασίας ταύτης ἐπὶ τὸ τελεῖν καὶ καθαίρειν τους βουλομένους ἀποκλῖναι.) Cf. Demosthenes, De Falsa Legatione, 281 τῆς τους θίασους συναγόυσης. (2) Some biographers refrained from reporting this gossip. Westermann, p. 262.2. The mention of her (2nd ?) profession (τῆς τοῦς θιάεους τελόυσης) by itself is quite innocuous. Westermann, p. 268.2.

Aeschines' Brothers. One biographer mentions Aeschines' brothers Philochares, a decorator of alabaster boxes and drums, and Aphobetus with whom he worked as a junior clerk. Westermann, p. 266.13 f, 16 ff. Cf. Demosthenes. De Falsa Legatione 237 f.

Aeschines' early career. As a boy he worked as an assistant at his father's school. Westermann, p. 266.14 f. Cf. Demosthenes. De Falsa Legatione 258. He read aloud for his mother. Westermann, p. 268.4. Cf. Demosthenes. De Falsa Legatione 258, where it is explained that he did this to help her during initiation ceremonies. He becomes a clerk. Westermann, p. 266.16. Cf. Demosthenes. De Falsa Legatione 261. He worked as a tritagonist. Westermann, p. 266.18 cf. Demosthenes. De Falsa Legatione 249.262.

Demosthenes was the son of a cutler and a Scythian

woman. This was Aeschines' version. In Ctesiphontem 171f. Not all the biographers accepted it entirely. For example Libanius uses the familiar argument that the truth behind the allegations about Demosthenes' father was that he owned a cutlery factory. He records some quite impressive-looking research on his mother which concludes that she was half Scythian but had an Athenian father. Westermann, p. 293.14 ff. Cf. Valerius Maximus, 3.4., Ext. 2.

Demades was originally a sailor. Westermann, p. 333.41. or a fishmonger. Westermann, p. 46.31.

Demeas or Demades was his son by a flute player. Athenaeus 13.591 f. Westermann, p. 334.147 ff. Demeas is said to have been a sailor too. Westermann, p. 334.152.

Demades, son of Demeas, was also a sailor, a ship-builder and ferry-man. Westermann, p. 334.152 ff.

Aristogeiton (1) (the orator) was the son of a freed-woman nicknamed κύων because of her immodesty. Westermann, p. 329.41 f.

Aristogeiton (2) (the sycophant) was the son of a man who died in prison after embezzling public funds. Westermann, p. 330.47 ff.

Theodorus of Gadara was a slave who became the teacher of Tiberius. Westermann, p. 339.268 f. (There is, of course, nothing improbable in statements that eminent Greeks of the Roman period were of servile origin.)

Caecilius of Calacte was a slave. Westermann, p. 342.345 f.

Secundus, the Athenian sophist, was nicknamed Epiouros, (wooden peg), because he was the son of a carpenter. Westermann, p. 354.621.

Philiscus, the pupil of Isocrates, had been a flute player, and Isocrates called him the flute-borer. Westermann, p. 357.705 f. Cf. the Lives of Isocrates and particularly Strattis. Atalante. frag. Westerman, p. 256.80 ff.

Didymus, the grammarian, was the son of a dealer ✓ in salt fish. Westermann, p. 364.138.

Bias (one of the seven sages) was usually said to have been rich, but Duris said he was merely a πάροικος. Diogenes Laertius 1.82.

Anacharsis was a Scythian, and, though he was of the royal family, (Diogenes Laertius 1.101.) his foreign birth was accounted sufficient reason for mentioning him in the same breath as Aeschines and Euripides as an example of a man of dubious background who became prominent. Westermann, p. 46.30 ff.

Socrates was the son of a sculptor and a midwife. Diogenes Laertius 2.18 f. following Plato. Theatetus 149a. Cf. Athenaeus 5.219b. Duris elaborated on this information, saying that Socrates had been a slave stone-worker. Diogenes Laertius 2.19. Some sculptures on the Acropolis were said to be Socrates' work. Ibid. Demetrius of Byzantium said that Crito removed him from his workshop and educated him. Diogenes Laertius 21.21. cf. the story of Phaedo's emancipation.

Phaedo, an Elean of noble birth, was enslaved and forced into prostitution. He became a pupil of Socrates and was ransomed by Crito, (Diogenes Laertius 2.31) or Alcibiades (Ibid., 2.105).

Aeschines (the Socratic) was the son of a sausage maker. Diogenes Laertius 2.60.

Simon was a shoemaker who had discussions with Socrates in his workshop. Diogenes Laertius 2.122.

Menedemus was the son of Cleistrenes, a man of good family, though a builder and a poor man; others say that he was a scene-painter and that Menedemus learnt both trades.' Diogenes Laertius 2.125.

Bion was the son of a dealer in salt fish and his mother was a prostitute. Diogenes Laertius 4.46 f. Cf. Athenaeus 13.592.

Theophrastus was the son of a fuller, according to Athenodorus. Diogenes Laertius 5.36.

Demetrius of Phalerum was not well born but his mistress, Lamia, was. Diogenes Laertius 5.76. (n.b. Lamia is a bogey name).

Diogenes the Cynic was the son of a money-changer who was charged with adulterating the state coinage. According to Eubulides it was Diogenes himself who was guilty. A confession and explanation of this crime were found in a work ascribed to Diogenes, the Pordalus. Diogenes Laertius

6.20. (Would anyone, even Diogenes, have written an autobiographical work with a title like that?)

Monimus, (a pupil of Diogenes) was the slave of a Corinthian money-changer, according to Sosicrates. Diogenes Laertius 6.82.

Menippus was originally a slave, and according to Hermippus, a money lender. Diogenes Laertius 6.99.

Cleanthes was originally a boxer and while studying philosophy he was obliged to work at night drawing water in gardens. Diogenes Laertius 7.168.

Pythagoras was the son of a gem-engraver. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.

Protagoras 'invented the shoulder-pad on which porters carry their burdens, so we are told by Aristotle in his treatise On Education; for he himself had been a porter, says Epicurus somewhere.' Diogenes Laertius 9.53. cf. Athenaeus 8.354c, Westermann, p. 352.575 ff.

Pyrrho was originally a poverty-stricken painter. Diogenes Laertius 9.61 f.

Timon, orphaned when young, became a dancer. Diogenes Laertius 9.109.

Epictetus was a slave. Westermann, p. 46.34.

Note 1. We can gain some idea which of these case-histories were most likely to be used as rhetorical exempla from Valerius Maximus' list and from a remarkable digression in Proclus' Life of Hesiod. Valerius mentions Socrates first in his list of non-Roman examples:

> "Sed ut Romanis externa iungamus, Socrates, non solum hominum consensu, verum etiam Apollinis oraculo sapientissimus iudicatus, Phaernarete matre obstetrice et Sophronisco patre marmorio genitus ad clarissimum gloriae lumen excessit". etc.[9]

Then he notes the cases of Euripides and Demosthenes.

> "Quem patrem Euripides aut quam matrem Demosthenes habuerit ipsorum quoque saeculo ignotum fuit. alterius autem matrem ⟨holera alterius patrem⟩ cultellos venditasse omnium paene doctorum litterae locuntur. Sed quid aut illius tragica aut huius oratoria vi clarius?"[10]

We see that Valerius presents his examples in a rhetorical tone, stressing the contrast between humble beginnings and later eminence. They are, as it were, pre-packaged for use in the defence of any client whose occupation was one generally despised.

Proclus' list of examples is longer. After discussing Hesiod's rise to fame δι' ἀρετῆς και παιδεύσεως he is reminded of many other famous men:

> ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ Σωφρονίσκου Σωκράτης
>
> ὁ λιθοξόος καὶ ὁ ἰχθυοπώλης
>
> Δημάδης καὶ ὁ τῆς τυμπανιστρίας
>
> Αἰσχίνης Σίμων τε ὁ σκυτεὺς
>
> καὶ ὁ

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[9] Valerius Maximus. 3.4. Ext. 1.

[10] Ibid., Ext. 2.

λαχανεὺς Εὐριπίδης ἔτι δ' ὁ Σκύθης
'Ανάχαρσις καὶ ἄμφω τὼ δούλω
Αἴσωπος μαι 'Επίκητος και ὁ
Σύρος ῥήτωρ ὁ Λουκιανός ὁ
λιθοξόος τε καὶ ἡμίδουλος, καὶ
οἱ λοιπόι.[11]

This passage illustrates the way that people of foreign origin, however high-born[12] they may have been in their own countries, were classed along with the shoe-maker and the green grocer.

Note 2. Recurrence. Occasionally we find members of the same school, or exponents of the same genre, who are said to have come from the same type of humble background. The case of the Cynic money-changers is particularly noteworthy. In a book ascribed to Diogenes there was an admission by the philosopher that he had once adulterated the coinage.[13] It was probably on the basis of this passage that the biographers made Diogenes the son of a dishonest banker. What truth there is in the story is uncertain. We must surely reject, though, the association of the later Cynics,

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[11] Westermann, p. 46.30 ff.

[12] E.g., Anacharsis. cf. Diogenes Laertius 1.101.

[13] Diogenes Laertius 6.20.

Monimus and Menippus,[14] with money-changing.

Isocrates and his pupil Philiscus were both associated with the manufacture of flutes,[15] on the basis of comic allegations. Both Aristophanes and Strattis evidently made jokes about Isocrates' flutes.[16] It is interesting that Isocrates is said to have called Philiscus αὐλοτρύπην[17] and that this is the very word applied apparently to Isocrates in an extant fragment of Strattis' Atalante:

καὶ τὴν Λαγίσκην τὴν 'Ισοκράτους παλλακὴν
εὑρεῖν μὲν συκάζουσαν, εἶθ' ἥκειν ταχὺ
τὸν αὐλοτρύπην αὐτόν.[18]

Bion of Borysthenes is supposed to have stated that his father had been a freedman who wiped his nose on his sleeve. Diogenes Laertius takes this to mean that he had been a seller of salt fish.[19] It has been observed that Horace's freedman father was also said by some people to have been a seller of salted provisions despite

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[14]Diogenes Laertius 6.82 (Monimus); 6.99 (Menippus.) Cf. the statement which, Bion, (who had Cynic leanings is said to have made himself, that his father had cheated the revenue. Diogenes Laertius 4.46.

[15]Westermann, p. 247.5 f; p. 256.80 ff. (Isocrates); p. 357.705 f. (Philiscus.)

[16]Westermann, p. 247.5 f.

[17]Westermann, 357.705 f.

[18]Westermann, p. 256.80 ff.

[19]Diogenes Laertius, 4.46.

Horace's own testimony that he was some sort of collector of money. Someone is said to have exclaimed when quarrelling with Horace, "How often I have seen your father wipe his nose on his sleeve."[20] Perhaps the biographer's story based directly on Horace's references to sal (in the sense of scathing wit)[21] and the well-wiped nose,[22] but the biographer who first made it must surely have had at least in the back of his mind the parentage of Bion, whose satirical manner Horace had imitated.[23]

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[20]The parallel is noted by R. Heinze. De Horatio Bionis imitatore, Bonn, 1889; W. Süss. Ethos, Leipzig, 1910, 257 note. Stuart. Epochs, p. 146. Suetonius. Life of Horace init.: Q. Horatius Flaccus, Venusinus, patre ut ipse tradit libertino et exactionum coactore (ut vero creditum est salsamentario) cum illi quidam in altercatione exprobasset: 'Quotiens ego vidi patrem tuum bracchio se emungentum.'

[21]N.b. particularly, his association of this type of wit with Bion: Horace, Epistle, 2.2.59 f., "carmine tu gaudes, hic delectatur iambis, ille Bioneis sermonibus et sale nigro." Cf. Satire, 1.10.3 f. of Lucilius: " . . . sale multo/urbem defricuit".

[22]"emunctae naris" Satire 1.4.8. (of Lucilius.)

[23]Didymus, the Aristarchan grammarian, was also supposed to have been the son of a seller of salt fish. Westermann, p. 364.138.

CHAPTER VI

Unusual deaths

Valerius Maximus has a chapter entitled de mortibus non vulgaribus.[1] Why on earth, one may ask, did Valerius think a list of examples on this subject would be of use to the orators and students of rhetoric for whose benefit he was writing? One would have to go out of one's way, surely, to bring into any oration or declamation a reference to one of the stories he quotes, the tale that a bird dropped a tortoise on Aeschylus' bald pate, mistaking it for a stone.[2] The explanation is that these stories could be brought into discussions of the theme: "we all have to die",[3] and that, like the "rags to riches" stories, they could be used as illustrations of the locus de fortunae varietate.[4]

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[1] Valerius Maximus, 9.12, cf. Momigliano. Development of Greek Biography, p. 72 who notes that Phaenias of Eresos, the Peripatetic, wrote a book of anecdotes about the deaths of famous men. See further RAC s.v. Exitus illustrium Virorum.

[2] Valerius Maximus 9.12 ext. 2.

[3] Cf. Marcus Aurelius 3.3. for an example of the rhetorical use of death stories.

[4] Cf. Seneca the Elder. Contr. 18.16 for this technical term.

Our chief concern, however, is with the question why there are so many strange death stories in the Greek biographies in the first place, rather than with their use in later rhetoric. Their frequent appearance might be explained as due to the interest in the capriciousness of fortune amongst the Peripatetics and other Hellenistic philosophical schools. However, we are probably dealing with an idea which was very deep seated in the popular wisdom of the Greeks long before the rise of these philosophical schools, the idea which is expressed in the old adage that one should call no man happy until he is dead, the saying we find illustrated by Herodotus in the story of Croesus and Solon. It is also notable that in a number of the death stories incorporated in the biographies we find standard folk-lore themes.

Homer dies (of despair) after failing to answer a riddle. Westermann, p. 18.468 ff; p. 22.44 f; p. 25.23 ff; p. 28.17 ff; p. 30.33 ff; p. 31.22 ff; p. 45.320 ff. Valerius Maximus. 9.12. ext. 3. Cf. K. Hess. Der Agon Zwischen Homer und Hesiod, p. 64 for evidence that the story was told by Alcidamas. But cf Crusius Philologus 54 p. 714, Rohde. Rh. Mus. xxxvi 566, for recognition that Agon as a whole is earlier than Alcidamas.

Hesiod is murdered by the brothers of a girl he has seduced. The place of his death has been predicted in an oracle. Cf. chapter 1, p. 38 (Dolphins carry his body to shore).

Westermann, p. 41.214 ff; p. 48.88 ff; p. 50.9 ff. Cf. Thucydides, 3.96. Plutarch. Convivium septem sapientium, 19.162. Cf. K. Hess. Op. cit., p. 64.

Aesop is hanged, unjustly, from a cliff at Delphi. Westermann, p. 89.382 ff.

Epimenides is found, after his death, to have letters imprinted on his skin. Westermann, p. 72.42 ff.

Ibycus is murdered by pirates but cranes help to ensure he is avenged. Westermann, p. 106.66 ff. Plutarch. De garrulitate 14; Antipater Sidonius ap. Anth. Pal 7.745. Cf. Lehrs. Ueber Warheit und Dichtung, p. 401. Aarne/ Thompson. The Types of the Folk tales, p. 188 ff.

Anacreon chokes on a grape pip. Valerius Maximus, ext. 8. Pliny N.H. 7.7.

Pindar dies peacefully in the gymnasium when sleeping with his head on the lap of his beloved. Valerius Maximus, 9.12 ext. 7. Cf. Westermann, p. 93.97 ff; p. 98.33 ff. for Pindar's death as the answer to a prayer for the best thing that could happen to a mortal.

Aeschylus is killed when a bird drops a tortoise on his head. Westermann, p. 120.56 ff; p. 122.91 f. Valerius Maximus, 9.12. ext. 2. Pliny N.H. 10.3.3, cf. death of Odysseus, Sext. Emp. adv. gramm. 267.

Sophocles (1) dies from swallowing an unripe grape when very old. Westermann, p. 129.60 ff. (Versions of Istros and Neanthes.) Lucian Macrob. 24. (2) runs out of breath

when reading an unusually long sentence in the Antigone. Westermann, p. 130.65 ff. (Version of Satyrus.) Valerius Maximum, 9.12. ext. 5. Pliny, N.H. 7.53.54. (3) dies of joy at a victory. Westermann, p. 130.69 f.

Euripides is torn to pieces by dogs. Westermann, p. 135.46 ff; p. 140.34 ff; p. 141.18 ff; Valerius Maximus, 9.12. ext. 4. Gellius 15.20, Hygin Fab. 247. Solinus 15.

Aristophanes dies after wittily reciting some lines of Homer on the impossibility of knowing who one's parents were. (He had been charged with not being of Athenian parents.) Westermann, p. 156.31 ff.

Eupolis is drowned. (1) by Alcibiades, as a punishment for his attack on him in the Baptai. Platonius. De differentia comoediarum 4. Ovid. Ibis 593 f. (2) when sailing through the Hellespont during the Peloponnesian War. (Which prompted legislation forbidding any poet to serve in the army.) Westermann, p. 166.35 ff.

Antiphanes is killed when hit by a pear. Westermann, p. 173.145 f.

Philemon (1) has a vision of the Muses just before his death. Westermann, p. 178.236 ff. (2) dies of laughing. Valerius Maximus, 9.12. ext. 6. Lucian Macrob. 25, Apuleius, Florich 16.

Philistion dies of laughing. Westermann, p. 172.134 ff.

Kallisthenes and Neophron are thrown into a weasel trap by Alexander. Westermann, p. 218.221 ff.

Antiphon (1) is executed after being found to be implicated with the Four Hundred, and his body is cast out without burial. Westermann, p. 231.37 ff; p. 235.18 ff. Cf. Thucydides 8.68. (2) is executed by the Thirty. Westermann, p. 232.40 ff. (According to Pseudo-Plutarch this story is erroneous and was derived from a speech by Lysias on behalf of the daughter of Antiphon.) (3) is executed by Dionysius of Syracuse for a favourable reference to Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Westermann, p. 232.47 ff; p. 236.26 ff; p. 236.13 ff. (4) is executed by Dionysius for ridiculing his tragedies. Westermann, p. 232.55 f; p. 236.24 ff; p. 236.11 ff.

Isocrates dies just after Philip's victory at Charoneia, (1) after saying ἅμα τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τῆς πόλεως συγκαταλῦσαι τον βίον . . . Westermann, p. 246.39 ff. (2) after reciting the first lines of three of Euripides' tragedies, in which Danaus, Pelops and Kadmos are mentioned, (meaning that Philip is the fourth in a line of foreign conquerers.) Westermann, p. 249.56 ff; p. 258.142 ff. This is a particularly good case of the invention of famous last words, a feature of many of the death stories.

Demosthenes. (1) poisons himself. Westermann, p. 287. 167 ff; p. 302.140 ff; p. 308.173 ff; p. 309.14 ff; p. 312.75 f. (a) (accidentally?) when he sucks a pen smeared with poison. (Satyrus' version.) Westermann, p. 287.168 ff. (Cf. Westermann, p. 272.30 ff, Pseudo-Plutarch's Life of

Lycurgus, for the idea that writing might be 'poisonous'. οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ θανάτῳ χρίοντα τὸν κάλαμον κατὰ τῶν πονηρῶν . . .) (b) with poison from a bracelet he wore round his arms for fear of the Macedonians. (Eratosthenes' version.) Westermann, p. 287.170 ff. (c) with poison from a seal. Westermann, p. 287.172 f. and passim. (2) holds his breath deliberately. Westermann, p. 287.171 f.

Hyperides (1) bites out his own tongue when being tortured at Corinth, to avoid betraying his city, and so dies. Westermann, p. 313.38 ff. (2) has his tongue cut out on his way to Macedon, and is cast out unburied. (Hermippus' version.) Westermann, p. 313.41 ff. (3) is punished in this way at Kleonae. Westermann, p. 313.48 ff.

Zoilus the 'Homeromastix' is thrown over a cliff. Westermann, p. 337.223 ff. Cf. Vitruvius 7. praef. 8. for other punishments which he is supposed to have deserved for his 'parricide'.

Polemon gets into his tomb and starves himself to death to escape from arthritis, saying, "Give me another body and I will declaim." Westermann, p. 349.510 ff.

Philetus dies emaciated from trying to solve a logical problem. Westermann, p. 116.268.

Alexander of Miletus is killed when his house burns down. Westermann, p. 359.10 f.

Aristarchus starves himself to death to escape from dropsy. Westermann, p. 361.71 ff.

Eratosthenes starves himself to death since his sight is failing. Westermann, p. 368.215 f. (Suid s.v. Eratosthenes.)

Thales dies of heat and thirst while watching an athletic contest. Diogenes Laertius. 1.39; Westermann, 423.433.

Chilon dies just after congratulating his son on an Olympic victory. Diogenes Laertius 1.72 following Hermippus.

Bias dies in his grandson's arms just after making a successful speech in defence of a client. Diogenes Laertius 1.84.

Periander dies disheartened. Diogenes Laertius 1.95.

Anacharsis is killed by his brother while out hunting. Diogenes Laertius 1.102.

Pherecydes of Syros (1) gives instructions to an Ephesian to drag him into Magnesia, and when his countrymen have defeated the Magnesians to bury him there, thereby provoking a war. Diogenes Laertius 1.117. (Hermippus' version.) (2) throws himself off Mount Corycus at Delphi. Diogenes Laertius 1.118. (3) dies a natural death and is buried by Pythagoras at Delos. Ibid (Aristoxenus). (4) dies of lice. Ibid.

Anaxagoras condemned to death for impiety, is reprieved thanks to the intervention of Pericles, but commits suicide. Diogenes Laertius 2.13 ff.

Socrates' trial and death are described in Diogenes Laertius 2.38 ff.

Alexinus dies after the point of a reed runs into him as he is swimming. Diogenes Laertius 2.109.

Diodorus dies of despondency after failing to solve a logical problem. Diogenes Laertius 2.111 f.

Stilpo takes wine to hasten his death. Diogenes Laertius 2.120.

Menedemus in despair at not being able to secure freedom for his country, starves himself to death. Diogenes Laertius 2.143 f.

Plato (1) dies peacefully after a festival banquet. Westermann, p. 396.13. (2) dies in some way connected with lice. Diogenes Laertius 3.41. See below, under Death after failure to answer riddle.

Speusippus becomes despondent in old age and kills himself. Diogenes Laertius 4.3.

Archesilaus dies of drinking too much unmixed wine. Diogenes Laertius 4.44.

Aristotle poisons himself with aconite. Diogenes Laertius 5.6. Westermann, p. 402.16 ff.

Theophrastus dies (1) worn out from writing too many books. Westermann, p. 425.478 f. (2) after the marriage of one of his pupils. Westermann, p. 425.479.

Strato grows so thin he feels nothing when he dies. Diogenes Laertius 5.60.

p. 448.1059 f. (2) dies of laughing (at one of his own jokes.) Diogenes Laertius 7.185. Westermann, p. 448. 1060 f.

Pythagoras (1) escaping from his house, which has been set on fire, is captured by his pursuers when he refuses to cross a field of beans, and is killed by them. Diogenes Laertius 8.39. Westermann, p. 438.789 ff. (2) dies a fugitive in the temple of the Muses at Metapontum after starving for forty days. Diogenes Laertius 8.40. (Dicaearchus' version.) (3) retires to Metapontum and starves himself to death, not wishing to live any longer. Ibid., (Satyrus' version.) (4) fights with the Agrigentines in a battle against the Syracusans and is killed during the retreat when trying to avoid a beanfield. (Ibid) (Hermippus' version.) (5) goes to live underground and on reemerging claims to have been to Hades and is looked upon as divine. (Hermippus) Ibid. 41.

Empedocles (1) is believed to have become a god: he disappears one night, and a servant reports a loud voice calling Empedocles, and bright light from heaven. Diogenes Laertius 8.68. (Heracleides' version.) (2) leaps into the crater of Etna in order to have it believed that he had become a god. (Hippobotus' version.) Diogenes Laertius 8.69; Westermann, p. 418.314 ff. (3) leaps into a fire to confirm the faith of the people of Selinus who are worshipping him as a god after he has stopped a plague. (Version of Diodorus of Ephesus?) Diogenes Laertius 8.70.

Demetrius of Phalerum dies from a snake bite. Diogenes Laertius 5.78 f.

Heracleides makes arrangements to have it believed that he is immortal, (1) getting a servant to substitute a snake for his body under the shroud. Diogenes Laertius 5.89 f. (2) by jumping down a well, (presumably so that his body will not be found.) Westermann, p. 422.415.

Diogenes (1) dies from eating raw octopus. Diogenes Laertius 6.76. (2) dies when bitten by a dog while distributing the octopus among some dogs. (Refuses medical assistance.) Diogenes Laertius 6.77. Cf. Westermann, p. 416.269 f. (3) dies from deliberately holding his breath. Diogenes Laertius 6.77.

Metrocles dies of old age, choking himself. Diogenes Laertius 6.95.

Zeno (1) trips up, breaking a toe, and after calling out with some words from Timotheus' Niobe, ἔρχομαι τί μ' αὔεις; dies through holding his breath. Diogenes Laertius 7.28. (2) starves himself to death. Westermann, p. 421.383 f.

Cleanthes suffering from inflammation of the gums is advised by his doctors to abstain from food. Though cured after three days, he continues to starve himself to death. Diogenes Laertius 7.176.

Chrysippus (1) dies of the after-effects of drinking neat wine. Diogenes Laertius 7.184. Westermann,

(4) leaves Sicily for the Peloponnese, as a result of which the manner of his death is unknown. (Version of Timaeus.) Diogenes Laertius 8.71.

Heracleitus suffering from dropsy asks the doctors whether they can create a drought after heavy rain; they do not understand so he attempts to cure himself by covering himself with manure. He dies (a) because this cure is unsuccessful. Diogenes Laertius 9.3. (b) when, made unrecognisable by the congealed dung, he is torn to pieces by dogs. (Neanthes' version.) Diogenes Laertius 9.4. Westermann, p. 422.421 ff. (c) of another disease, having been cured of the dropsy. (Version of Ariston and HIppobotus). Diogenes Laertius 9.5. (2) buried under a heap of sand. Westermann, p. 422.424 f.

Zeno of Elea (1) is involved in a plot to overthrow a tyrant. He tells the tyrant he has something to tell him in his private ear, and takes the opportunity to lay hold of the ear with his teeth. He is stabbed to death. ("Demetrius in his work on Men of the same name says that he bit off, not the ear, but the nose".) Diogenes Laertius 9.27. (2) spits out his tongue in his final attack on the tyrant. Ibid. (3) is cast into a mortar and beaten to death. (Hermippus' version.) Ibid.

Democritus dies at the age of 109 after keeping himself alive, for the sake of his sister, during the Thesmophoria by applying hot loaves to his nostrils. Diogenes Laertius

9.43. Athenaeus 2.46e-f. (Here he is deliberately starving himself to death.)

Epicurus suffering from kidney disease, gets into a bath of warm water, drinks some unmixed wine, and dies, after bidding his friends to remember his teachings. Diogenes Laertius 10.15.

Hypatia is torn to pieces by the people of Alexandria and her remains are scattered through the city. (1) as a punishment for her excessive cleverness, especially her knowledge of astronomy. (2) διὰ τὸ ἔμφυτον τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων θράσος καὶ στασιῶδες. Westermann, p. 444.947 ff.

Lucian is torn to pieces by dogs. Westermann, p. 345.408 ff.

Pherecrates dies from a super-abundance of lice Westermann, p. 445.988.

Several types of death anecdote, it will have been noticed, are to be found recurring in different people's biographies.

(1) Death from laughing

Philemon, Philistion and Chrysippus[5] are said to have died from an excess of laughter. The first two were comedians, which perhaps is sufficient explanation for the stories. As their names are very similar; however, we may conjecture

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[5]Valerius Maximus 9.12. ext 6. (Philemon): Westermann, p. 172.134 ff. (Philistion.); Diogenes Laertius 7.185, Westermann, p. 448.1060 f. (Chrysippus.)

that a simple error could lie behind this case of duplication. Why this story should have been told of Chrysippus is quite unclear.

(2) Starving to death deliberately

A surprizingly large number of people; Pythagoras, Aristarchus, Eratosthenes, Zeno, Cleanthes, Democritus, Menedemus and Polemon,[6] are supposed to have starved themselves to death deliberately. Now, there is nothing inherently unlikely in the supposition that a number of people in antiquity may have chosen this type of suicide as an escape from the evils that beset them and if one notable person chose it, his admirers might follow his example. For example, there is contemporary testimony that Labienus, an Augustan rhetorician, shut himself up in the family vault after his books had been publicly burnt.[7] The story of Polemon, another rhetorician of the time of Trajan,[8] is markedly similar. Was Polemon emulating Labienus? Always, when one asks such questions, an alternative

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[6] Diogenes Laertius 8.40 (Pythagoras); Westermann, p. 361.71 ff. (Aristarchus); Westermann, p. 368.215 f. (Eratosthenes); Westermann, p. 421.383 f. (Zeno); Diogenes Laertius 7.176. (Cleanthes); Athenaeus 2.46e-f. (Democritus); Diogenes Laertius 2.143. (Menedemus.); Westermann, p. 349.510 ff. (Polemon.)

[7] Seneca the Elder. Contr. 10. Praef. 7.

[8] Westermann, p. 349.507 f.

explanation suggests itself: that the later anecdote may have been invented by analogy with the earlier one. Something of this sort probably happened in the case of the Lives of Zeno and Cleanthes, though here the anecdote is most likely to have been transferred back from the biography of the pupil to the master. In the Life of Cleanthes the story is told with considerable circumstantial detail, and it is the only story told of him. In Zeno's Lives it is only given as an alternative to the much more memorable tale in which the philosopher trips up, and after telling the earth not to worry because he is coming fast enough, dies from holding his breath.[9] In the biographies of Pythagoras too, the 'starving to death' story only appears as an alterantive to far more colourful stories. It is rather too much to hope that the truth about the death of such an early figure as Pythagoras had really come down to his biographers, so perhaps we must regard 'suicide by starvation' as part of the biographers stock-in-trade, particularly useful, maybe, if one wanted to discredit one's predecessor's versions of a person's death as over-fanciful.

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[9] Diogenes Laertius 7.28.

(3) Death from holding one's breath

It would obviously be pretty difficult to hold one's breath sufficiently long for suicide and this is enough to make one view with much suspicion stories involving this feat. Anecdotes of this type occur in the Lives of Demosthenes, Diogenes, and Zeno.[10] We may compare the highly unlikely story that Sophocles died from running out of breath when reciting an extra-long sentence in the Antigone.[11] One may conjecture that the story about Demosthenes could have originated from someone's experience of the difficulty of reading some of his sentences.

(4) The blessed death

In his biography of Pindar, Eustathius notes the similarity between the traditional account of the poet's death and the stories about the deaths of the people who founded the Delphic shrine and of Cleobis and Biton.

φέρεται δὲ λόγος καὶ θεωρούς ποτε
ἀπιόντας εἰς Ἄμμωνος αἰτῆσαι Πινδάρῳ
οἷα φίλῳ τὸ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἄριστον,
καὶ θανεῖν αὐτὸν ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ
ἐνιαυτῷ. τοῦτο δε πάντως καὶ

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[10] Westermann, p. 287.171 f. (Demosthenes); Diogenes Laertius 6.77 (Diogenes.); Westermann, p. 421.383 f. (Zeno).

[11] Westermann, p. 130.65 ff; Valerius Maximus 9. 12 Ext. 5.

θανάτου ἐστὶ σέμνωμα ὡς κολούοντος
τὴν ἐν κακοῖς μακροτέραν βιοτήν·
ὁ δὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κτισάντων τὸν
Πυθοῖ ναὸν ἱστόρηται, οἳ τὸ
ἔργον συντετελεκότες θαύματος
ἄξιον ὂν καὶ ἀγαθον μέγα
εαὐτοῖς θεόθεν αἰτησάμενοι, εἶτα
ἔωθεν οὐκέτ' ἦσαν ὡς θανάτῳ
ἀπεληλυθότες. καὶ Κλέοβις δὲ καὶ
Βίτων ὅμοια τῆς ὑπερ ἀγαθοῦ
εὐχῆς ἀπώναντο, ἡνίκα ἐκεῖνοι τὴν
μητέρα ἐπὶ ἁμάξης ἑλκύσαντες
διὰ μέσης ἀγορᾶς ἐς νενομισμένην
δημοτελῆ θυσίαν (οἱ γὰρ ἱεροὶ
βόες οὐ παρῆσαν) ἔτυχον μὲν εὐχῆς
μητρόθεν ὡς ἐπὶ κρέιττοσιν, αὐτοὺ
δὲ προυκαλέσαντο θάνατον, ὃς αὐτίκα
ἐκείνων ἑλάβετο.[12]

Clearly, we have a folk-motif here. The manner of Pindar's death reflects the favour of the gods he is supposed to have enjoyed: he dies in the gymnasium while sleeping with his head on the lap of his beloved.[13] Similarly happy deaths

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[12]Westermann, p. 93.97 ff.

[13]Valerius Maximus 9.12. Ext. 7.

are recorded for the other two great writers who were regarded by the biographers as particularly favoured by the gods: Sophocles and Plato. One version of the death of Sophocles has him die of joy at a victory.[14] Plato, according to one tradition, died peacefully after a banquet at a festival.[15] We may compare the traditions about the deaths of two of the seven sages: Chilon, who dies after congratulating his son on an Olympic victory,[16] and Bias, who dies in his grandson's arms after succesfully defending a client in court.[17]

(5) Choking on a grape

Anacreon was said to have died, at an advanced age, from choking on a grape pip -- a suitable fate for an irrespressible composer of drinking songs. This story is found in Valerius Maximus' collection:

"sicut Anacreonti quoque, quem usitatum humanae vitae modum supergressum [dum] passae uvae suco tenues et exiles virium reliquias foventem unius grani pertinacior in aridis faucibus mora absumpsit."[18]

A very similar story was told of Sophocles:

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[14] Westermann, p. 130.69 f.

[15] Westermann, p. 396.13.

[16] Diogenes Laertius 1.72.

[17] Diogenes Laertius 1.84.

[18] Valerius Maximus 9.12. Ext. 8.

τελευτῆσαι δ' αὐτὸν Ἴστρος καὶ
Νεάνθης φασὶ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον·
Καλλιππίδην ὑποκριτὴν ἀπ' ἐργασίας
ἐξ Ὀποῦντος ἥκοντα παρὰ τοὺς Χόας
πέμψαι αὐτῷ σταφυλήν, τὸν δὲ Σοφοκλέα λαβόντα εἰς το στόμα
ῥᾶγα ἔτι ὀμφακίζουσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ
ἄγαν γήρως ἀποπνιγέντα τελευτῆσαι.[19]

(6) Death from eating octopus

According to the comic poet Machon, Philoxenus of Cythera, a writer of dithyrambs, who was excessively fond of fish, died from eating a large octopus. Athenaeus quotes a long extract from Machon's comedy, describing Philoxenus' last hours,[20] and then proceeds to state that Diogenes the Cynic also died after eating raw octopus.[21] Diogenes Laertius gives a variant of this story in which the Cynic, intending to feed his dogs with the octopus, is bitten by them through the tendon of his foot and so dies.[22] This story is to be viewed in relation to various others in which people are torn to pieces by dogs.

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[19] Westermann, p. 129.60 ff.

[20] Athenaeus 8.341a-d.

[21] Ibid. 8.341e. cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.76.

[22] Diogenes Laertius 6.77. Note that Diogenes, like Achilles, has a vulnerable heel.

(7) Death after failure to answer riddle

It was said that Homer died after failing to solve a simple riddle which was put to him by some passing sailors or by children.[23] The riddle was: "We leave behind all we have caught: we carry away all we have not caught." What is it? The answer is "lice". Basically the story seems at some stage to have been told of Plato too, and to have remained in circulation for an astonishingly long time. At any rate, E.R. Curtius[24] refers to a passage in John of Salisbury's Policraticus in which it was related "that certain seamen asked Plato a simple question which the latter could not answer. Plato took it so to heart that he died."

Perhaps we should consider along with these riddle legends a death story in which a philosopher is supposed to have died from despondency after failing to solve a philosophical problem, though it is not inconceivable that a story of this type might have some factual basis. Diogenes Laertius says of a minor philosopher called Diodorus that:

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[23] Ibid., p. 22.44 f. (an oracle predicting the riddle death); Ibid., p. 25.23 ff; p. 28.17 ff; p. 30.33 ff; p. 31.22 ff; p. 45.320 ff.

[24] E.R. Curtius. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. (1948) Trans. W.R. Trask, Harper: New York and Evanston, 1963, p. 52. John of Salisbury. Policraticus 1.141.1 ff ed. Webb. Cf. Diogenes Laertius 3.41 for a reference to a story in which Plato's death was in some way connected with lice. For riddle deaths in folk lore cf. J. de Vries. Die Märchen von klugen Rätselösern. Helsinki, 1928.

"When he was staying with Ptolemy Soter, he had certain dialectical questions addressed to him by Stilpo, and, not being able to solve them on the spot, he was reproached by the king and, among other slights, the nickname Cronus was applied to him by way of derision. He left the banquet and, after writing a pamphlet upon the logical problem, ended his days in despondency."

(8) Tearing to pieces by dogs

D.R. Stuart recognises that tearing to pieces by dogs is a recurring motif in biography and points out that this form of death seems to have been regarded as a "meet end for the atheistic".[26] It should be noted that this type of story has a mythological precedent; the death of Actaeon, who was killed by his own hounds as a punishment for having seen Artemis in the nude.[27]

The story of Heraclitus' death is complicated and will be discussed further in the next section, but we must note now that in one version it is dogs who eventually put an end to him: καὶ κείμενον αὐτὸν κύνες προσελθοῦσαι

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[25] Diogenes Laertius 2.111 f. cf. the death of Philetas, a scholar ὃς ἰσχνωθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ ζητεῖν τὸν καλούμενον ψευδόμενον λόγον ἀπέθανεν. Westermann, p. 116.268; cf. also, one account of the death of Heraclitus in which he dies after his physicians have been unable to understand an enigmatic description he gives them of the cure he needs. Diogenes Laertius 9.3.

[26] Stuart. Epochs, p. 147.

[27] Stesichorus. frag. 59. Page, Ovid Metamorphoses. 3.138. When considering the 'tearing to pieces by dogs' stories we should also remember the ancient practice of casting out unburied the bodies of wrong-doers and criminals, as food for beasts and birds. But, of course, these people were already dead, whereas the victims in our stories faced the dogs while alive, cf. also Eur. Bacch. 336 ff.

διέσπασαν.[28] Euripides was said to have met a similar end. One version was that a Molossian hound had wandered into a Thracian village, where the locals, according to their custom, sacrificed and ate it. Unfortunately for them, the hound belonged to King Archelaus, who fined them a talent. Not having the money, the villagers asked Euripides for a loan. Later the hounds of Archelaus came upon Euripides during a hunt and tore him to pieces. We are invited to ponder on the Macedonian proverb: κυνὸς δίκη.[29] According to a delightful variant of this tale it was women who tore him to pieces and not dogs:

> ἕτεροι δ' ἱστόρησαν οὐχ ὑπο κυνῶν,
> ἀλλ' ὑπὸ γυναικῶν αὐτὸν διασπασθῆναι
> πορευόμενον ἀωρὶ προς Κρατερον
> τον ἐρώμενον Ἀρχελάου (καὶ γὰρ
> σχεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ περὶ τοὺς τοιούτους
> ἔρωτας), οἱ δε προς τὴν γαμετὴν
> Νικοδίλου τοῦ Ἀρεθουσίου.[30]

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[28]Westermann, p. 422.423 f. cf. Diogenes Laertius 9.3-4.

[29]Westermann, p. 135.46 ff; cf. p. 140.34 ff. (where no motivation for the hounds is suggested); p. 141.18 (a variant in which two poets bribe the keeper of the king's hounds to set them loose on their rival.) Cf. Satyrus. Life of Euripides; Hermesianax of Colophon quoted in Athenaeus. 13.598d. Another proverbial expression which may be relevant is: θάνατος κύνειος (Aristophanes. Wasps 898), meaning a particularly unpleasant sort of death.

[30]Westermann, p. 142.23 ff. Of course this story should be viewed as some sort of inference from the fact that Euripides wrote the Bacchae.

We have already seen that Diogenes was said to have died as a result of a dog bite.[31] Diogenes ὁ κύων was, of course, a likely person to have this story attached to him.[32] Lucian was also said to have been killed by dogs as a punishment for his blasphemies:

> τελευτῆσαι δ' αὐτὸν λόγος ὑπὸ
> κυνῶν, ἐπει κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας
> ἐλύττησεν· εἰς γὰρ τὸν Περεγρίνου
> βίον καθάπτεται τοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ
> καὶ αὐτὸν βλασφημεῖ τὸν Χρίστον
> ὁ παμμίαρος.[33]

Stuart seems to be right in his suggestion that this was a death generally reserved for those who did not respect the gods. Diogenes, whose death story Stuart does not include, fits well enough into this category. We may notice particularly that, according to Diogenes Laertius,

"he saw no impropriety either in stealing anything from a temple or in eating the flesh of any animal; nor even anything impious in touching human flesh, this, he said, being clear from the custom of some foreign nations."[34]

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[31] Diogenes Laertius 6.77; Westermann, p. 416.268 ff. See under Death from eating octopus.

[32] It provides the sort of irony that the biographers loved. Cf. the next section: Philosophers' theories rebound to cause their authors' deaths. There was evidently a Greek proverb: κύων κυνος οὐχ ἅπτεται (cf. RE (111 2 2575; Hund), which the story of Diogenes amusingly refutes.

[33] Westermann, p. 345.408 ff.

[34] Diogenes Laertius 6.73.

However, perhaps a man who was as closely associated with dogs as Diogenes was would have had this story told about him whatever his religious convictions.

(9) Philosophers' theories rebound on their authors

It is widely recognized that most of the anecdotes in the ancient biographies of philosophers are based on more or less fanciful deductions from the philosophers' teachings.[35] Many more of the death stories than will be mentioned here may have originated in this way but it would be a large undertaking to seek out all the evidence. Here, however, are a few examples which will serve to show how the biographers' minds worked.

Everyone knows that Pythagoras is supposed to have abstained from beans. This unusual taboo seems to have intrigued people in antiquity, just as it does today. At any rate, stories arose which made Pythagoras' respect for beans one cause of his death:

"Pythagoras met his death in this wise. As he sat one day among his acquaintances at the house of Milo, it chanced that the house was set ablaze out of jealousy by one of the people who were not accounted worthy of admittance to his presence, though some say it was the work of the inhabitants of Croton anxious to safeguard themselves against the setting-up of a tyranny. Pythagoras was caught as he tried to escape; he got to a certain field of beans, where he stopped, saying he would be captured rather than cross it, and be killed rather than prate about his doctrines;

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[35] E.g. G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven. The Presocratic Philosophers, Cambridge, 1957, p. 183, on the ancient Lives of Heraclitus.

and so his pursuers cut his throat. So also were murdered more than half of his disciples, to the number of forty or thereabouts . . ."[36]

Hermippus gave a variant of this story:

" . . . when the men of Agrigentum and Syracuse were at war, Pythagoras and his disciples went out and fought in the van of the army of the Agrigentines, and, their line being turned, he was killed by the Syracusans as he was trying to avoid the beanfield; the rest, about thirty-five in number, were burned at the stake in Tarentum for trying to set up a government in oppositon to those in power."[37]

The account of the death of Thales is also probably to be regarded as an ironic inference from a theory ascribed to him. Thales is said to have died while watching a gymnastic contest, πιληθεὶς δ' ὑπὸ τοῦ ὅλλου καὶ ἐκλυθεὶς ὑπο τοῦ καύματος.[38] expression here is clearly borrowed from the terminology used in scientific theories about condensation and rare-faction. The closest parallels are to be found among the testimonia for Anaximenes' theory of the varying density of ἀήρ,[39] but the teaching ascribed to Thales that water

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[36]Diogenes Laertius 8.39. cf. Westermann, p. 438. 789 ff.

[37]Diogenes Laertius 8.40.

[38]Westermann, p. 423.434.

[39]Anaximenes A.5; A.7. Diels/Kranz. Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Weidmann Zürich and Berlin, 1952. Vol. 1. Indeed the metaphorical use of πίλησις, πιλεῖσθαι for solidification used to be thought to be peculiar to Anaximenes. Kirk and Raven, however, point out (p. 145) that: "the expression . . . was probably used by Theophrastus; it was a common fourth-century term and need not have been used in this form by Anaximenes himself, contrary to what Diels and others say."

was the beginning of all things was also sometimes interpreted in the Hellenistic period as a theory of condensation and rarefaction, like Anaximenes'. For example, Heraclitus Homericus, explaining Thales' teaching writes:

"For moist natural substance, since it is easily formed into each different thing, is accustomed to undergo very various changes: that part of it which is exhaled is made into air, and the finest part is kindled from air into aither, while when water is compacted and changes into slime it becomes earth. Therefore Thales declared that water, of the four elements, was the most active, as it were as a cause."[40]

One may conjecture that behind the tale of the death of Thales there lies some such explanation of his theory which included the words: πιλέω, ἐκλύω and καῦμα.

Diogenes the Cynic, as we have already seen, in one story, meets a death appropriate to his teachings and way of life. After living his "dog's life" he dies from a dog bite when distributing octopus to his canine friends.[41] This story, however, as we have noted, has affinities with other sorts of death anecdote. It is an elaboration on a

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[40]Heraclitus Homericus Quaest. Hom. 22 cited by Kirk and Raven, p. 90. This was, however, not Aristotle's interpretation of Thales' teaching about water, for which see Diels/Kranz Thales A.3. The language of the Heraclitus Homericus extract is, according to Kirk and Raven, (p. 90) markedly Stoic. One might expect a Peripatetic biographer to follow the Aristotelian line, so we have to consider the possibility that the author of the story of Thales' death had confused Thales with Anaximenes. But there was no law preventing a man who had read Stoic works from contributing to the biographical tradition.

[41]Diogenes Laertius 6.77. cf. Westermann, p. 416. 269 f.

story in which Diogenes simply dies from eating octopus and it is reminiscent of other stories of tearing to pieces by dogs.

It is now time to consider the case of the death of Heraclitus, about which something of a learned debate is in progress. Diogenes Laertius records four versions of the story:[42]

"Finally, he became a hater of his kind and wandered on the mountains, and there he continued to live, making his diet of grass and herbs. However, when this gave him dropsy, he made his way back to the city and put this riddle to the physicians, whether they were competent to create a drought after heavy rain. They could make nothing of this, where upon he buried himself in a cowshed, expecting that the noxious damp humour would be drawn out of him by the warmth of the manure. But, as even this was of no avail, he died at the age of sixty."

"Hermippus, too, says that he asked the doctors whether anyone could by emptying the intestines draw off the moisture; and when they said it was impossible, he put himself in the sun and bade his servants plaster him over with cow-dung. Being thus stretched and prone, he died the next day and was buried in the market-place."

"Neanthes of Cyzicus states that, being unable to tear off the dung, he remained as he was and, being unrecognsiable when so transformed, he was devoured by dogs."

" . . . Ariston in his book On Heraclitus declares that he was cured of the dropsy and died of another disease. And Hippobotus tells the same story."

In addition Suidas gives an anecdote quite distinct from these, namely, that Heraclitus died buried under a heap of sand.[43]

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[42] Diogenes Laertius 9.3 ff. cf. Westermann, p. 422. 421 ff. Marcus Aurelius 3.3.

[43] Westermann, p. 422.424 f.

This story seems to belong to the class of anecdotes in which a philosopher's teachings rebound on him for, if Diels' emendation of Frag. 124 is correct, Heraclitus said that the most beautiful kosmos was like some kind of a heap piled up at random.[44] The stories of the dropsy cure however are the ones which have aroused interest. There is no agreement on their origin. According to one view the main points in the death narratives, like other anecdotes in the Lives of Heraclitus are to be seen as ludicrous inferences from his writings. We may quote as an example of this view, that of Kirk and Raven:

"Most of these stories are based on well-known sayings of Heraclitus; many were intended to make him look ridiculous, and were invented with malicious intent by Hellenistic pedants who resented his superior tone. For example, extreme misanthropy is deduced from his criticisms of the majority of men . . ., vegetarianism from a mention of blood-pollution . . ., the fatal dropsy from his assertion 'it is death for souls to become water' . . . He was known as an obscure propounder of riddles, and this is made out to have cost him his life: the doctors, whom he appeared to criticize in fr. 58 do nothing to save him. He is said to have buried himself in dung because he had said in fr. 96 that corpses are more worthless than dung; 'being exhaled' refers to his theory of exhalations from the sea."

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[44] Diels/Kranz, B.124. = Marcovitch fr. 107 ὥσπερ σάρμα εἰκῇ κεχυμένων ὁ κάλλιστος . . . κόσμος. (σὰρξ mss., σάρμα Diels, σωρὸς Usener; κεχυμένον Usener.) For criticisms of Diels' reading see G.S. Kirk. Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments, Cambridge, 1954, p. 220, and p. 82. And see J. McDiwmid, AJP 62 (1941) 492 ff; P. Friedländer, AJP 63 (1942) 336.

A radically different interpretation of the strange death of Heraclitus,[45] originally proposed by August Gladisch,[46] has recently been revived. Gladisch looked at the most developed account of the dropsy story, in which the philosopher remains covered with dung and is torn to pieces by dogs and saw in it evidence that Heraclitus had arranged a Zoroastrian funeral for himself. Gladisch' findings have received whole-hearted support from F.M. Cleve.[47] They are also discussed by M.L. West in his Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient.[48] West sets out the details of the strange purification ritual which led Gladisch to his conclusion:

"The Avesta prescribes a curious method of purification for the man who has touched a corpse while Nasu the Druj is still on it, and so tainted himself with the miasma of death. He must rub himself all over with bull's urine. Until it dries, a dog is set in front of him to look at him. When it is thoroughly dry, he washes in water, and then he is pure again."[49]

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[45] Kirk and Raven, p. 183.

[46] August Gladisch. Herakleitos und Zoroaster, 1859, pp. 65-7.

[47] F.M. Cleve. The Giants of Pre-Socratic Greek Philosophy, Nijhoff, The Hague, 2nd ed., 1969, p. 33 ff.

[48] M.L. West. Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient, Oxford, 1971, p. 196 ff.

[49] Ibid, p. 201.

West notes four correspondences between this ritual and the story of Heracleitus' attempted cure: the covering of a man with bovine excreta, his exposure in the sun to dry, the presence of a dog, the aim of freeing the man from deadly pollution, and finds the parallels "too striking, surely, to be fortuitous". However, West cannot accept Gladisch' explanation. For one thing, it involves "a conflation of purification-ritual with exposure of the dead". West's main point, though, is that it is highly unlikely that Heracleitus would actually have indulged in a ritual of this kind, seeing that we find him, in one fragment, comparing people who tried to cleanse blood-pollution with blood with men who had trodden in mud and tried to wash it off with more mud. West then advances cautiously a most ingenious hypothesis that Heraclitus, after making this comparison, went on to allude a purification-ritual involving bovine excreta and dogs. West has earlier[50] supported the view that Heraclitus' dropsy is a fiction based on his teaching that water is death to the soul. He has also alluded to ancient evidence that the application of dung was one recognised treatment of dropsy. He now suggests tentatively that a biographer, knowing of this cure, invented the rest of the death story, the plastering with dung and the tearing to pieces by dogs, on the basis of a reference by Heraclitus

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[50] Ibid., p. 197.

himself to the purification ritual.

West admits that this hypothesis in tenuous and he anticipates various objections to it but the study of recurring motifs in ancient death stories provides us with a further means of critizing West's, and indeed Gladisch's theories. The first thing we should notice is that the version of Heraclitus' death that Gladisch and West discuss is only one of several variant stories. The dung treatment is common to all four of the dropsy stories given by Diogenes Laertius, but the dogs only appear in one version, that of Neanthes. To summarize, what we have is this:

The "standard version"[51] followed by Diogenes Laertius.	Dropsy + Dung treatment (which fails.)
Hermippus' variant.	
Neanthes.	Dropsy + Dung treatment + Dogs.
Ariston.	Dropsy + Dung treatment (which succeeds) + death from another disease.
Hippobotus.	

The dogs are far from being an essential part of the story, and when they do appear they do rather more than just look on,

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[51] It is unfortunate that Diogenes does not name the authority he himself follows. Of those he does name, Neanthes, being the pupil of Philiscus, is probably the earliest. This means that people who believe in the 'Zoroastrian funeral' theory might object that the dogs have accidentally dropped out of the tradition. Still, Diogenes must have had his reasons for regarding Neanthes' story as a mere variant and the independent existence of the 'dog' motif gives one a strong argument against thinking that the dogs were a necessary part of the Heraclitus legend.

they devour poor Heraclitus. Now, we have seen that 'tearing to pieces by dogs' as a form of death is found in the ancient Lives of Euripides and Lucian, and that Diogenes the Cynic was also said to have died of a dog bite. Here is a biographical topos if ever there was one.[52] In the Life of Diogenes we even have a clear case where the motif of canine intervention is superimposed on a simpler biographical legend:

(1) Diogenes dies from eating octopus.[53]

(2) He dies when bitten by dogs to whom he is distributing octopus.[54]

Surely the dogs in the Heraclitus story are to be regarded as optional extras too. If this is so we have to dismiss the Zoroastrian parallels as fortuitous. Perhaps this is not too sad a loss, for there is nothing in the dropsy stories which requires us to look so far afield for explanation. Let us look at the stories point by point.

The dropsy

Clearly this is a deduction from Heraclitus' statement that 'it is death for souls (ψυχῆσιν) to become water.'[55]

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[52] See under Tearing to Pieces by Dogs, p. 113 ff.

[53] Diogenes Laertius 6.76.

[54] Diogenes Laertius 6.77; Westermann, p. 416.269 f. Marcovitch R.E. Supp. X. 253 (following Gigon) compares the intervention of the dogs in Diogenes' death story, (but not the similar stories in the Lives of Euripides and Lucian) cf. West, p. 199 note 4.

[55] Diels/Kranz, Heraclitus B36, and B77, B118. Cf. Kirk and Raven, p. 183. West, p. 197.

The riddle to the doctors

Heraclitus' obscurity, like Pythagoras' respect for beans, was the death of him, according to his biographers.[56]

Doctors being unable to help him, Heraclitus tries to cure himself

Heraclitus in one fragment appears to criticize physicians.[57] It may be relevant to compare again the death of Diogenes. The Cynic refuses medical aid after his dog bite.[58]

The dung treatment

This is attested as one treatment for dropsy used in antiquity.[59] Why was it thought appropriate for Heraclitus, though? Various explanations have been suggested. Kirk suggests that it depends on inferences from Heraclitus' saying that corpses are more worthless than dung, and from his theory of evaporation from the sea.[60] West criticizes Kirk's explanation,[61] objecting that he can see no logic behind the

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[56] Kirk and Raven, p. 183.

[57] Diels/Kranz, Heraclitus, B.58. Kirk and Raven, p. 183.

[58] Diogenes Laertius 6.76.

[59] West, p. 198.

[60] Kirk and Raven, p. 183; Kirk. Heraclitus: The cosmic fragments, p. 5.

[61] West (p. 199) also discusses a theory of Fränkel "that Heraclitus had spoken of mankind as being 'buried in the slime' βορβόρῳ κατορωρυμένοι. (A.J.P. 59. 1938 310) and refers us (p. 197 note 1) to J. Haussleiter, Altertum 10 1964 and Marcovich R.E. Supp. 10 for further theories about the legend.

first inference; that the knowledge and not peculiar to Heraclitus' teaching, and that the medical writers do not explain the dung treatment as an aid to evaporation. But surely we do not have to suppose that the ancient biographers based their findings on strict logic and the first of the biographers cited by Diogenes Laertius is explicit enough in stating that Heraclitus was hoping to induce a process of evaporation when he buried himself in the dung: αὐτὸν εἰς βουστάσιον κατορύξας τῇ τῶν βολίτων ἀλέᾳ ἤλπισεν ἐξατμισθήσεσθαι.[62] We have seen from the case of the death of Thales that it was not unknown for the biographers to invent stories in which a philosopher's theories about the composition of the universe rebound on him. Now, Heraclitus was known to have been interested in the interchanging of elements. Perhaps we need look no further for an explanation of the dung treatment than the fragment in which he says that it is death for the soul to become water, for he goes on straight away to say that it is death for water to become earth: ψυχῇσιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι ὕδατι δε θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι . . .[63] The dung (known to the biographer as one treatment for dropsy?), is as near to 'earth' as makes no

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[62]Diogenes Laertius 9.3.

[63]Diels/Kranz, Heraclitus B.36.

difference. It was intended to be death to the water that was being death to Heraclitus' ψυχή.

The dogs

For this part of the story see section 8: Tearing to pieces by dogs. Several of Heraclitus' fragments show he was critical of established religion.[64] The dogs' failure to recognize Heraclitus is an inference from a saying of his: κύνες καταβαύζουσιν ὧν ἂν μὴ γινώσκωσιν.[65]

Heraclitus cured but dies of another disease

We may compare the way Pseudo-Herodotus, posing as a rationalist, makes out that Homer did not die as the direct result of his failure to answer the riddle, but from weakness.[66]

(10) Pretensions to immortality

There were several stories current in the Hellenistic world about philosophers who contrived to have it thought that they were immortal. They were almost always disbelieved. Hermippus, for example regarded Pythagoras' descent to Hades as a hoax:

"Pythagoras, on coming to Italy, made a subterranean dwelling and enjoined on his mother to mark and record all that passed, and at what hour, and to send her notes down to him until he should ascend. She did so. Pythagoras some time afterwards

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[64] Diels/Kranz, B.5, 14, 15, 96.

[65] Ibid., B.97, cf. Fränkel, A.J.P. 59, 1938, p. 310.

[66] Westermann, p. 19.489 ff.

came up withered and looking like a skeleton, then went into the assembly and declared he had been down to Hades, and even read out his experiences to them. They were so affected that they wept and wailed and looked upon him as divine, going so far as to send their wives to him in hopes that they would learn some of his doctrines: and so they were called Pythagorean women."[67]

Empedocles had once written:

χάιρε' ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητὸς
πωλεῦμαι . . .[68] so it is not very surprizing that a legend arose in which he was said to have become a god. Here is the version of Heraclides (Ponticus):[69]

" . . . he was offering a sacrifice close to the field of Peisianax. Some of his friends had been invited to the sacrifice, including Pausanias. Then, after the feast, the remainder of the company dispersed and retired to rest, some under the trees in the adjoining field, others wherever they chose, while Empedocles himself remained on the spot where he had reclined at table. At day break all got up, and he was the only one missing. A search was made, and they questioned the servants, who said they did not know where he was. Thereupon someone said that in the middle of the night he heard an exceedingly loud voice calling Empedocles. Then he got up and beheld a light in the heavens and a glitter of lamps, but nothing else. His hearers were amazed at what had occurred, and Pausanias came down and sent people to search for him. But later he bade them take no further trouble, for things beyond expectation had happened to him, and it was their duty to sacrifice to him since he was now a god.[71]

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[67]Diogenes Laertius 8.41.

[68]Frag., 112.4. D. Diogenes Laertius 8.66.

[69]That it is Heraclides Ponticus (4th century) whom Diogenes is following here and not Heraclides Lembus (2nd century), whose works he is known to have used elsewhere, is proved by the fact that Timaeus (4th - 3rd century) criticized his credulity. (Diogenes Laertius 8.72)

[70]Diogenes Laertius 8.68.

There was another, more sceptical account of Empedocles' disappearance derived from Hippobotus, which was probably mentioned, but rejected, in Heraclides' treatment of the subject:

"Hippobotus, again, asserts that, when he got up, he set out on his way to Etna; then when he had reached it, he plunged into the fiery craters and disappeared, his intention being to confirm the report that he had become a god. Afterwards the truth was known, because one of his slippers was thrown up in the flames; it had been his custom to wear slippers of bronze. To this story Pausanias is made (by Heraclides) to take exception."[71]

In another version of the story he leapt into the fire wishing to confirm the faith of the people of Selinus, who were worshipping him as a god after he had freed them from a plague.[72] Timaeus, however rejected all these stories, asserting that the reason why it was not known where Empedocles was buried was simply that he had left Sicily. Timaeus critized Heraclides in particular: ἀλλὰ διὰ παντός ἐστιν Ἡρακλείδης τοιοῦτος παραδοξολόγος, καὶ ἐκ τῆς σελήνης πεπτωκέναι ἄνθρωπον λέγων.[73]

Heraclides himself, this writer of amazing stories about Empedocles who was also the source of much that was written about Pythagoras' supernatural powers, arranged, according to his biographers, a fitting end for himself.

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[71] Ibid., 69.

[72] Ibid., 70.

[73] Ibid., 72.

According to Demetrius of Magnesia:

"As a boy, and when he grew up, he kept a pet snake, and, being at the point of death, he ordered a trusted attendant to conceal the corpse but to place the snake on his bier, that he might seem to have departed to the gods. All this was done. But while the citizens were in the very midst of the procession and were loud in his praise, the snake, hearing the uproar, popped up out of the shroud, creating widespread confusion. Subsequently, however, all was revealed, and they saw Heraclides, not as he appeared, but as he really was."[74]

Another story was that, in order that his body should not be found and that men should think him immortal, he jumped down a well.[75] What could be more appropriate?

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[74] Diogenes Laertius 5.89 f.

[75] Westermann, p. 422.415.

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