FICTION IN THE BIOGRAPHIES OF ANCIENT WRITERS

It is generally recognized that the ancient *Lives* of literary men contain much that is of doubtful historicity, and, as anyone who studies Greek and Roman literature feels bound to come to some conclusions about the value of statements in these biographies, there is no shortage of studies examining particular problems in particular authors' *Lives*. What is lacking is a comprehensive survey of the types of fiction to be found in ancient biographies of writers. General works on the Greco-Roman biographical tradition have tended to concentrate on the formal aspects of biography, detailed investigation of the sources of individual biographers, or the history of human self-awareness [1]. The most inspiring introduction to the subject of fiction in the *Lives* is still a paper by Karl Lehrs which first appeared in 1847, *Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung in der griechischen Litteraturgeschichte* [2]. A further important contribution to the study of this subject was that of F. Leo, not so much in his famous work, *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form*, as in his discussion of the life of Plautus, in which he made some useful generalizations about Hellenistic biographical technique while showing that the Latin biographers took over many of the methods used by their Greek predecessors [3]. The English-speaking world is particularly indebted to D.R. Stuart, who undertook the valuable task of summarizing many of the findings of Lehrs, Leo and other German scholars, and shed new light on a variety of problems. In certain sections of his Sather Lectures, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, and in a paper entitled *Authors' Lives as revealed in their Works* [4], he touches on many aspects of the question of the fictional element in the biographies of ancient writers. However, a great deal

[1] For a recent survey of modern scholarship see A.D. MOMIGLIANO, *The Development of Greek Biography*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1971, p. 10 ff.

[2] *Populäre Aufsätze*, Leipzig 1875², p. 385 ff.

[3] *Plautinische Forschungen*, Berlin 1912², p. 63 ff. cf. F. LEO, *Vergils erste und neunte Eklogen*, *Hermes* 38 (1903) = *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* II, p. 1 ff. In his *Die griechisch-römische Biographie*, Leipzig 1901 (repr. Olms Hildesheim 1965), Leo is, of course, primarily concerned with the structure of ancient biographies.

[4] *Sather Classical Lectures* IV, Berkeley 1928, p. 143 ff.; p. 172 ff.; *Classical Studies in honor of John C. Rolfe*, Philadelphia 1931, p. 285 ff. Cf. *On Vergil Eclogue IV 60-63*, *Class. Philol.* 16 (1921), p. 209 ff.

more remains to be written along the lines suggested by such studies.

In order to come to an understanding of the way truth and fiction are mingled in the biographies, the question we have to ask is how one went about writing an author's *Life*, if one was working in the Greco-Roman tradition. It should become fairly clear, as we consider this question, which types of assertion and anecdote we ought to treat with scepticism. That is not to say that it is possible to formulate rigid criteria for the rejecting or accepting of statements.

I

The ancient researcher into the history of literature [5] had at his disposal, if nothing else, the writings by, or attributed to, the men he intended to study. It was his task to search them for autobiographical references and general clues about their personality. Now, the technique of deriving information about a man from his writings is a perfectly acceptable one — up to a point. The trouble is that, with a few exceptions, ancient writers do not exactly let their lives stand open to view as if on a votive tablet. For many ancient poets it was quite unthinkable to let their personality obtrude too clearly into their works; orators may sometimes appear to be giving detailed exposés of their past careers, but of course the principles of ancient rhetoric did not demand strict historical accuracy from a man who was defending himself; philosophers may, in their more inspired moments, take to hyperbole and poetic expression and say things they do not expect to be taken literally. Anyone, then, who is attempting to derive biographical information from an ancient author's works will ignore at his peril the factor of the poetic, rhetorical, or philosophical *persona*. It seems, unfortunately, that some ancient scholars were not above ignoring such subtle considerations completely.

Of course, even in the case of poets, some inferences may safely be drawn from a man's works. It is legitimate to infer, as the ancient biographers did [6], from Hesiod's *Works and Days* (633 ff.) that the poet's

[5] Writers of histories of the various literary genres, commentaries and studies on particular works, will have used much the same research techniques as the biographers. We need not, for our present purposes, distinguish biography from the so-called περί literature (on which see A.D. Momigliano, *Development*, p. 70 ff.).

[6] E.g. *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* B 225. 2 ff Allen (*Homeri Opera* V, O.C.T. 1912) = *BGM* (*Biographi Graeci Minores* ed. A. Westerman, 1845, repr. Hakkert, Amsterdam 1964) 33.2 ff.; *Suda* s.v. '*Ησίοδος* = *BGM* 49.1 f.

father had been forced by poverty to leave Aeolian Kyme and had settled at Ascra. One can imagine no reason why the poet should have made these details up.

It was when deductions were made from passages where poets were employing traditional devices or materials that ancient scholars ran into trouble. There seems to have been much over-confidence amongst them in the assumption that any type of poetry could be relied on to give precise information about the poet's personality and activities [7]. Consider, for example, this passage in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, in which one of the guests presents evidence from Alcaeus' poems that he was extremely fond of wine. The conclusion reached may not necessarily be far from the truth, but the passage illustrates well the type of literal interpretation of poetry which might lead to biographical error :

« 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 water are frozen ... Beat down the winter, piling high the fire, and mixing the while 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 : '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 ? » [8]

Now, it would be unnatural to assume that Alcaeus was intellectually aloof when he sang the praises of the brimming wine-cup, even though he was doubtless heir to a long tradition when he incorporated in his

[7] Cf. D.R. Stuart, *Authors' Lives*. Note particularly the extensive use of Euripides' tragedies as evidence of his character in Satyrus, *Life of Euripides* (*P. Oxy.* 1176), ed. G. Arrighetti (*Studi Classici e Orientali* 13), Pisa 1964.

[8] Ath. 430a-c, transl. C.B. Gulick (Loeb 1927). (The last sentence here is a criticism of Chamaeleon.) Athenaeus is doubtless quoting some learned source, perhaps the same work by one Seleucus from which he took a further criticism of Chamaeleon quoted in 430c.

drinking songs allusions to the time of year and reflections on good times and bad. [The deipnosophist's account of the evidence at any rate carries more conviction than the reasoning of Chamaeleon, the authority whom he was aiming to refute. Chamaeleon, a 3rd century B.C. Peripatetic scholar who wrote monographs on early poets and a treatise *On Drunkenness*, had taken five words from a drinking song by Alcaeus, ἔγχεε κέρναις ἕνα καὶ δύο (fr. 346.4 Lobel/Page) out of context, and, by means of an ingenious misinterpretation, had used them to support a theory that the poet was σωφρονικός, as if a drinking song were any place to look for evidence of a poet's self-control.]

The dangers inherent in the method used by our deipnosophist are obvious, though, if we ask ourselves what the result would be if it were applied to the works of a later poet whose debt to tradition can be more accurately assessed. Think, for instance, of all the women Horace mentions in his *Odes* : a sophisticated reader may realize that they were figures taken from Greek lyric, but we may depend upon it that the type of mind which would enjoy searching Alcaeus' poems for evidence that he drank in spring, summer, autumn, and winter, would assume unquestioningly that they were real people. One may wonder to what extent the popular view of Horace, recorded in his *Life* :

ad res Venerias intemperantior traditur; nam speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita, ut quocumque respexisset ibi ei imago coitus referretur [10].

owed its origin to an over-literal interpretation of his love poems.

If inferences about the poet's character from solo lyric are hazardous, how much more so are deductions from the more complex forms of poetry. Epic poets are generally not in the least concerned to impress the stamp of their own personality on their poems. Writers of choral lyric are no more self-assertive, although their poems do include first person singular utterances by the chorus which can easily mislead a reader who is not thinking about the context for which the poem was composed, into thinking that the poet is talking about himself [11]. Tragedians do not always make it clear where, in the interplay between

[9] Ath. 430a = Chamaeleon fr. 12 Wehrli (*Die Schule des Aristoteles* 9); cf. Ath. 430c for Seleucus' criticism.

[10] *Life of Horace* in *Suetonius* II, ed. and transl. J.C. Rolfe (Loeb 1914), p. 488; but cf. *Horace*, ed. F. Klingner (Teubner 1959) 3.15 ff. for various emendations suggested for this sentence. For the reasoning possibly underlying the anecdote cf. *Suda* s.v. *Ἀλκμάν* = *BGM* 103.4 f. καὶ ὢν ἐρωτικὸς πάνυ εὑρετὴς γέγονε τῶν ἐρωτικῶν μελῶν.

[11] Cf. W.J. Slater, *Pindar's House*, *GRBS* 12 (1971), p. 141 ff.

characters and chorus, their own sympathies lie. The ancient biographers rushed in, however, where angels would fear to tread, confident that the character of any poet would be evident from his writings : Satyrus, the biographer of Euripides (3rd century B.C.) quotes a saying of Aristophanes in this connection : οἷα μὲν π[οι]εῖ λέγε[ι]ν τοιός ἐστιν [12]. The biographers would have to decide arbitrarily, of course, which utterances and which characters reflected the poet's personality. Their opinions on such issues are not always shared by modern critics. Thus, much modern criticism of Sophocles amounts to a challenge to the assertion of the ancient biographer (which may be based on nothing more than a selective reading of the tragedies) that Sophocles was on good terms with the gods, θεοφιλὴς [13].

The biographers were not content to make general observations about their subjects' supposed virtues and vices. They liked to illustrate each with anecdotes. We have seen the case of Horace's hall of mirrors. We are given as evidence of the gods' favour towards Sophocles an anecdote in which the tragedian is told by Herakles in a dream where a gold wreath stolen from the acropolis is hidden, and is able to give this information to his fellow citizens [14].

Whole episodes in the *Lives* can be based on nothing more than fanciful deductions from poetry. For instance, in the *Lives* of Homer the assumption is made that the *Odyssey* is very much the product of the poet's travels around the world. This in itself is not a bad deduction, given that one cannot expect ancient scholars to consider the possibility that much of the poem could consist of traditional material and need not necessarily be the fruit of one particular man's experiences. One cannot help being amazed, though, at the confidence with which the author of the pseudo-Herodotean *Life* asserts that Homer was educated by a schoolmaster called Phemius, whom he later honoured by naming a lyre-player in the *Odyssey* after him [15] ; that he was taken on his travels around the Mediterranean by a ship's captain called

[12] Satyrus, *Life of Euripides* (cf. note 7), fr. 39ix.

[13] *Life of Sophocles* 12 in *Sophocles*, ed. A.C. Pearson (O.C.T. 1924) = *BGM* 129.44; cf. C.M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy*, Oxford 1944, p. 4 ff.; C.H. Whitman, *Sophocles*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1966, p. 3 ff.

[14] *Life of Sophocles* 12 Pearson = *BGM* 129.44 ff.

[15] Ps.-Hdt., *Life of Homer* 194.36 ff.; 208.354 ff. Allen = *BGM* 2.34 ff.; 13.339 ff. Note that the variant of *Od.* 1.154 quoted by the biographer is more complimentary to Phemius than the version now standard.

Mentes, who also figures in the *Odyssey* [16]; that it was when he was first suffering from the disease of the eyes which was to cause his blindness [17] that he was left in the care of one Mentor, in Ithaca, and learnt of the story of Odysseus [18]. This *Life* presents us with a warning of the exuberance with which some ancient biographers were prone to invent anecdotes on the basis of unwarranted deductions from texts.

There were, to be fair, occasional scholars who reacted against this unbridled inventiveness. It is refreshing to find in a work *On Homer* ascribed to Proclus, the theory that the *Odyssey* was the work of a much-travelled man stripped down to its bare essentials and presented in a manner probably intended to remind the reader of Thucydides' *archaeologia* :

« It is evident from Homer's detailed knowledge of places that he travelled over a great part of the inhabited world. It may further be deduced from this that there was plenty of money at his disposal. For long journeys involve great expenditure, all the more so in that period when it was not possible for everyone to sail without risk, and when men could not easily visit just any people they pleased » [19].

If all ancient biographers had been as cautious as that in their use of the deductive method, even if they had occasionally come to the wrong conclusions, things would be simpler for the student of literary history today.

The tendency of orators to falsify history when speaking in self-defence presents difficult problems for any historian, ancient or modern. Faced with the evidence of a pair of rival orators, each defending himself against the allegations of the other, and each assuming that verisimilitude, rather than truth, is all that is required of him, one cannot be sure whether there is a grain of truth underlying either account, or determine the precise extent of such truth as there may be. This kind of historical problem would be insoluble if it were not for the fact that the great ancient orators were usually important

[16] 195.61 ff.; 209.361 ff. Allen = *BGM* 3.58 ff.; 13.346 ff.

[17] The reason why there was a tradition that Homer was blind was probably that the man from Chios who figures in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (*I.*172) was blind. The author of the *Iliad* is identified as a man of Chios in Simonides fr. 8 (dubium) West (*Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, Oxford 1972) = Semonides fr. 29 Diehl.

[18] 196.73 ff. Allen = *BGM* 3.70 ff.

[19] 'Proclus', *On Homer* V 67 ff. Severyns (*Recherches sur la Chrestomathie de Proclos* III, Paris 1953) = *BGM* 26.60 ff. Cf. G. Lippold, art. *Proklos* 4, *RE* 23 (1957), col. 207 f. on the question of authorship.

politicians, and that consequently the happenings they recount in self-defence may have been recorded independently by less biassed authorities. Sometimes, however, no evidence apart from that contained in a speech may be available for some aspect of a man's life. It is interesting to see how ancient biographers set to work in such a case.

Consider, for exemple, the conflicting evidence provided by Aeschines and Demosthenes about Aeschines' parentage. Aeschines claims in his *De Falsa Legatione* (78, 147) that his father and mother were both from perfectly respectable families, and that his father, though unfortunate enough to lose his property during the war and to be exiled by the Thirty, had been an athlete in his youth, and had gone on to distinguish himself as a soldier and restorer of the democracy. Demosthenes (*De Cor.* 129 f.), on the other hand, alleges that Aeschines' father, far from having always been Atrometus, a respectable Athenian citizen, had once been Tromes, a slave school-master who had been kept in fetters, and that his mother had been a notorious hetaira nicknamed Empousa, who officiated at certain initiation rites. Demosthenes claims to know the exact places where the couple plied their trades.

What was a biographer to do when faced with this evidence? One biographer, named as Apollonius, is conscientious enough to set the two accounts side by side, but leaves the reader to make up his own mind about the truth of the matter [20]. Pseudo-Plutarch, however, attempts a synthesis of elements from the conflicting accounts [21]. He disregards both Demosthenes' innuendo that his rival's parents were the scum of the earth, and Aeschines' heavy emphasis on his family's extreme respectability, and, taking up a position mid-way between the two versions, asserts that Aeschines came from an unremarkable family : οὔτε κατὰ γένος τῶν ἐμφανῶν οὔτε κατὰ περιουσίαν χρημάτων. This is an intelligent enough deduction, all the more worth taking note of because ancient scholars were more familiar with the conventions of classical invective than we are. However, in the other extant *Lives* of Aeschines we find Demosthenes' account simply presented as fact [22]. It is worth noticing how the more sensational story here survives the epitomizer's axe, while the more respectable version is disregarded.

[20] *BGM* 265.2 ff. (Demosthenes' version); 267.36 ff. (Aeschines' version).

[21] Ps.-Plut., *Vitae X Oratorum* 840a ff., ed. J. Mau in *Plutarchi Moralia* V 2.1 (Teubner 1971) = *BGM* 262.1 ff.

[22] *BGM*. 268.1 f.; 270.10 ff.

False, or probably false, biographical statements about philosophers derived from their writings are many, but difficult to classify. Any striking saying a philosopher may make can provide his biographers with a springboard for a leap into the realms of fantasy. Particularly popular is the type of anecdote which illustrates ironically what types of surprising conduct and mishap a philosopher would be led to if he were to follow his own precepts strictly. Thus, many stories were told relating how Pythagoras' unwillingness to harm beans brought about his death : he refuses to cross a field of them, even to escape from some pursuers who are after his blood [23]. Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Heraclitus* has been shown to consist probably almost entirely of fabrications based on the most famous of his enigmatic sayings [24]. For example, the anecdote in which Heraclitus, who is said elsewhere to have renounced the kingship of his native city (D.L. IX 6), leaves the adult politics of Ephesus in disgust and goes and plays games with children (D.L. IX 3), may well be based on an inference from his saying : *αἰὼν παῖς ἐστι παίζων, πεσσεύων. παιδὸς ἡ βασιληίη* [25].

The works of historians do not provide so rich a quarry of strange sayings on which memorable anecdotes may be based. Still, sometimes the bias, or unusual political views, shown by a historian, may tempt the reader into making conjectures about his background. We find one such inference quoted in Marcellinus' *Life of Thucydides* [26]. It appears that Hermippus (a scholar of the 3rd century B.C.) declared that Thucydides was descended from the Pisistratid tyrants. He proceeded to maintain that this was the reason why he was so concerned to argue that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were not really tyrannicides, having only killed the brother of the tyrant, not the tyrant himself. Hermippus' statement would be very interesting to us, if we could be sure it was true. However, if one considers the dubious quality of the biographical data to be found in other fragments of Hermippus' work [27], one is obliged to conclude that it would not have been beyond

[23] D.L. VIII 39-40.

[24] Cf. G.S. Kirk, *Heraclitus : The Cosmic Fragments*, Cambridge 1954, p. 4 f.

[25] Heraclitus fr. 93 Marcovich = B52 Diels/Kranz. For further bibliography, see now my article *The Death of Heraclitus*, *GRBS* 14 (1973), p. 233 ff.

[26] Marcellinus, *Life of Thucydides* 18 Jones (Thucydides O.C.T. 1898) = *BGM* 190.85 ff.

[27] He is responsible for some of the most improbable anecdotes in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers*. Fragments in *FHG* III 35-54; Heibges, art. *Hermippos* 6, *RE* 8 (1912), col. 845 ff.

him to deduce a family relationship between Thucydides and the Pisistratids simply on the basis of the passage in the *History* (I 20) about the 'tyrannicides', and to present his conjecture as fact [28].

Such were the methods of deduction from a writer's works which ancient scholars must be suspected of using. We must always be alert to the possibility that such processes may underlie almost any anecdote in ancient biography, even where we do not have the resources to prove it positively. Every time one is confronted with an anecdote that looks suspicious one ought to ask the question : could it possibly have arisen from an illogical deductions from the author's writings ? If the answer is 'Yes', one has, if nothing else, a justification for assigning the story to the category of possible fiction. If the anecdote is for other reasons somewhat improbable, one has here an argument which may tip the balance in the weighing up of probablities, and allow one to reject it more confidently.

One unfortunate outcome of the ancient biographers' tendency to draw fanciful deductions from texts is that the modern scholar has to be extremely cautious over applying to ancient literature a technique of literary criticism which can be most fruitful where modern authors are concerned : the detecting of psychological motivation for aspects of a man's writing in events which are known to have happened to him in the course of his life [29]. We would all like to know what Virgil's sources of inspiration were when he wrote the *Georgics*, but the assertion of Donatus that Virgil's father 'increased his little property by buying up woodlands and raising bees' [30] could so easily be an inference from the *Georgics*, unsupported by external evidence, that we are obliged to disregard it. Similarly, speculations as to whether the exile which Juvenal is supposed to have endured was one of the reasons for his famous *indignatio* [31], ought to be delayed until someone proves conclusively that the tradition of the exile is not based on flimsy deduc-

[28] For more destructive criticism of the biographical traditions about Thucydides see U. von Wilamowitz - Moellendorff, *Die Thukydideslegende* (1877), reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* III, Berlin 1969, p. 1 ff.

[29] Cf. H.F. Cherniss, *The biographical fashion in literary criticism*, *Univ. Cal. Publ. Class. Phil.* 12 (1943), p, 279 ff.

[30] Donatus, *Life of Vergil* I, transl. J.C. Rolfe in *Suetonius* II (Loeb 1914).

[31] E.g. G. Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist*, Oxford 1954, passim, esp. p. 20 ff. For more sceptical discussions of the tradition of exile see : J. Wight Duff - A.M. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age*, London 1964², p. 477 ff; M. Coffey in new edition of Duff's *Juvenal* (Cambridge 1970).

tions from the *Satires*, postponed, that is, until the Greek Kalends.

As it is, the fact that the authorities for Juvenal's life cannot agree on the place or the date of his exile ought to warn us not to take too much notice of it. In the most important *Life of Juvenal* [32], to which the others can be seen to be more or less closely related, the exile is placed at the very end of his life. This *Life* (*Vita* I) [33] tells us that some lines in *Satire* VII (which had originated, we are to believe, in an early, unpublished work of Juvenal's) where he attacks the excessive influence of Paris, the pantomime actor, in particular his ability to grant military commands, were taken as an indirect attact on an actor who happened to be a court-favourite at the time the satire appeared; Juvenal, suspected of attacking the powers of his own day obliquely through his tirades against people of the past, was sent, though already eighty years old, to the far end of Egypt, in charge of a cohort.

Perhaps what lies behind the traditions of exile is this : a biographer (maybe in the 4th century, when Juvenal seems to have gained sudden popularity [34]) is puzzled by the fact that, of Juvenal's last two *Satires*, one is about the far end of Egypt and the other is about soldiers-strange subjects for an old man to choose. Looking for a clue to this mystery he lights on Juvenal's attack on Paris in *Satire* VII. The two lines immediately before the three quoted in *Vita* I [35] are these :

[32] Text in *Persi et Iuvenalis Saturae*, ed. W.V. Clausen (O.C.T. 1959), p. 179.

[33] See Juvenal ed. O. Jahn (Berlin 1851) for the text of 6 other *Lives*; *Persi Iuvenalis Sulpiciae Saturae* ed. Jahn (Berlin 1904) for other testimonia relating to the exile. These other *Lives*, though valueless as historical documents, deserve our attention, as they often, by their very naïvety, give clues to the thought processes which may underlie the main *Life*, in which a certain amount of artistic concealment of dubious research seems to have been done. For instance, whereas the author of the main *Life* just states it as a fact that Juvenal declaimed until middle age, *Vita* II (Jahn) goes into more detail : *ad mediam fere aetatem declamavit animi magis causa quam quod scholae se aut foro praepararet. deinde ad poetices* (sic) *se applicavit, et postquam diu tacuit, uberiori vitiorum iam gliscente contagione ab indignatione incepit : 'semper ego auditor tantum'*. Any suspicions one may have had that the statement about Juvenal's long apprenticeship in the schools of rhetoric could have been based simply on the opening of *Satire* I receive some corroboration here. (N.b. *auditor* could mean 'student' in the schools of rhetoric e.g. Sen. *Contr.* IX 2.23, as well as 'hearer' in general.) A sentence in *Vita* IV : *declamavit non mediocri fama, ut ipse scribit : 'et nos consilium dedimus Syllae'*, is also significant.

[34] Cf. J.W. & A.M. Duff, *Silver Age*, p. 477 f.; G. Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist*, p. 2; p. 233.

[35] *Sat.* VII 90 ff. : *quod non dant proceres dabit histrio. tu Camerinos/et Bareas, tu nobilium magna atria curas ? praefectos Pelopea facit, Philomela tribunos.* But n.b. *Vita* II gives us *l.*88 as well.

ille (sc. *Paris*) *et militiae multis largitus honorem*
semenstri digitos vatum circumligat auro (*l.* 88 f.).

Perhaps, the biographer reasons, this Paris took offence at these and the subsequent lines, and thought that a fitting punishment for the satirist would be one of those military commands he was able to procure — but not one that he would enjoy : a trip to furthest Egypt [36]. At some stage, however, the biographer or some later scholar notices a chronological problem : there were two influential actors named Paris, he learns, during the early Empire, one under Nero, and another under Domitian [37]; it must be the latter to whom Juvenal was referring, but even he must have been dead before Juvenal wrote the seventh *Satire*, let alone the last two [38]. He elaborates the theory to cope with this awkward fact : the lines about Paris in *Satire* VII, he suggests, must have originally come from an earlier poem, written at a time when, for fear of retribution, Juvenal had not publicized his work; and it was not Paris, but another, later, actor who, suspecting that he was being attacked obliquely in these lines, was responsible for the satirist's unpleasant military command.

Other biographers found this theory too elaborate. They were content to have Juvenal exiled early in his career, presumably through the agency of Paris, under Domitian [39], or even under Nero [40] ! If the mood so took them, they would vary the place of the exile. Ioannes Malalas [41] has him exiled to the Pentapolis in Libya, which is puzzling, until one learns that in about 500 A.D. the Libyan Pentapolis was designated a

[36] Compare the wording of *Vita* I with *Sat.* VII 88 ff. : *ac statim per honorem militiae* (cf. *l.* 88 : *militiae ... honorem*) *quamquam octogenarius urbe summotus est missusque ad praefecturam cohortis* (cf. *l.* 92 : *praefectos Pelopea facit ...*) *in extremam partem Aegypti tendentis.*

[37] Cf. E. Wüst, art. *Paris* 2, 3, *RE* 18 (1949), col. 1536 ff.

[38] This raises the question of how much an understanding of the chronology of Juvenal's *Satires* would be necessary to induce a biographer to elaborate the theory. Perhaps all that happened was that he felt it necessary to take into account Juvenal's famous decision to write only about the dead : *experiar, quid concedatur in illos/ quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina* (*Sat.* 1.170 f.).

[39] Schol. Iuv. I 1; IV 38; *Vitae* III, IV.

[40] Schol. Iuv. VII 92; *Vita* VII.

[41] *Chron.* X 341 Chilmead. Malalas' account of the end of Paris is worthless (cf. G. Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist*, p. 242 n. 25). Compare Malalas on Paris : ὃς κτίσας οἶκον καὶ λουτρὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως ἐκεῖ τελευτᾷ with the description of the rich man's baths and house in *Sat.* VII 178 ff.

limes to be administered in future from Egypt [43], and one notes that one of the manuscripts of *Vita* I contains a reading according to which Juvenal was sent to the furthest part of *Western* Egypt : ... *missusque ad praefecturam cohortis in extremam Aegypti partem occidentis* (whereas the other manuscripts have : *in extremam Aegypti partem tendentis*, or these words in a different order) [43]. Other authorities have him sent *contra Scotos*, probably on the basis of a number of vivid references to Britain in the *Satires* [44].

The main point to notice is this : if exile had been the cause of Juvenal's *indignatio* (which is most fierce in the early *Satires*), it would have been inflicted on him in the early part of his life, before the composition of the *Satires* we know. The curious fact is, however, that, although there is a persistent tradition that the lines about Paris in *Satire* VII came from an earlier poem, the biographers do not say that it was this earlier poem that brought about the exile. (The notices [45] which maintain that Juvenal was exiled by Domitian, and wrote or revised his *Satires* in exile, are too garbled to inspire much confidence, and there is nothing to prevent us from regarding them as degenerate versions of the tradition set out in *Vita* I.) Instead, the dominant tradition is that the exile took place after the transference of the lines to *Satire* VII and intimately bound up with this tradition is the improbable assertion that Juvenal was an octogenarian when he was sent on his military expedition to Egypt, an assertion which only becomes intelligible if one regards it as an inference from the subject-matter of Juvenal's last two *Satires*.

II

As well as ransacking an author's works for auto-biographical allusions, a biographer would search the writings of the author's

[43] Cf. H. Kees, art. Pentapolis 3, *RE* 19 (1937), col. 509-510.

[43] Cf. apparatus in Clausen's edition.

[44] Cf. J.W. & A.M. Duff, *Silver Age*, p. 478; p. 480.

[45] Schol. Iuv. I 1; *Vita* IV. It goes almost without saying that one should not trust for one moment the hypothetical identification of the army officer, Junius Iuvenalis, mentioned in a (lost) inscription from Aquinum (Dessau, *ILS* I 2926), with the poet Juvenal as he was in the prosperous days he is supposed to have enjoyed before his exile. Even Highet, who dwells on the identification at considerable length (*Juvenal the Satirist*, p. 32-40), admits that it is far from certain (p. 33).

contemporaries. The evidence he would find in these works would be of varying quality.

Some of it would be reliable. Sceptical though we may be about data in the ancient *Lives*, we should never forget that the men who wrote them may have had access to biographical miscellanies and the like, actually complied by contemporaries of the men in question. Even in the 5th century B.C. Ion of Chios was jotting down gossipy anecdotes about the famous tragedians of his day, among other people [46]. Later we find Antigonus of Carystos writing about contemporary philosophers [47], and Seneca the Elder reminiscing about rhetoricians he had known. Such writers might provide a mine of information for the biographer. Antigonus' writings are quoted extensively by Diogenes Laertius [48]; the elder Seneca's pen-portraits of the rhetoricians must have been an important source for Suetonius' *De Rhetoribus*, to judge by the extant *Life of Albucius Silus* [49]. The contemporary biographical miscellany is obviously a type of source to be viewed with respect. The existence of the *Epidemiai* of Ion of Chios means that we must temper our scepticism just a little when examining the biographies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, men whom Ion is known to have referred to [50]. That is not to say that all the evidence provided by contemporary authorities of this kind is totally reliable. They need not have been eye-witnesses of all the amusing and scandalous events they describe. They may be no freer than any other type of biographical writer from the tendency to force history into pre-conceived patterns.

The biographer might also have at his disposal letters said to have been written by, or about, the author he was interested in. Often they would be forgeries, but sometimes genuine letters might be preserved. The letters of Augustus to Maecenas and Horace, preserved in the Suetonian *Life of Horace* [51], have an air of authenticity. The friendly

[46] *FGrHist* 392F4 ff.

[47] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Antigonos von Karystos*, Berlin 1881.

[48] D.L. II 136, 143 (on Menedemus); V 67 (on Lycon); III 66, VII 12 (on Zeno); IX 62 (on Pyrrho) IV 17 (on Polemon).

[49] Suetonius, *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* 30 Brugnoli (Teubner 1963); cf. Seneca, *Contr.* 7 *Praef.* It was probably an intermediate source that Suetonius was using, however, cf. W.-D. Lebek, *Hermes* 94 (1966), p. 360 ff.

[50] Schol. Aesch. Pers. 432 = *FGrHist* 392F7; Ath. 603e-604d = *FGrHist* 392F6.

[51] *Life of Horace* p. 2.2 ff. Klingner (Teubner 1959); cf. *Imp. Caes. Aug. Operum Fragmenta*[4], ed. H. Malcovati (1967), p. 6-50; E. Fraenkel, *Horace*, Oxford 1957, p. 17 ff.

irony, witticisms, and use of sesquipedalian Greek words set these letters apart from the usual products of the spurious letter-writer's art.

Serious deviations from the truth may occur, though, when a biographer turns to poetry in search of information. Occasional poems addressed to, or in praise of, famous authors, might sometimes spark off biographical invention. Thus, the fact that Martial writes of Juvenal as a friend, and in one epigram contrasts his own retirement in Spain with Juvenal's activities in Rome [52], suggested to one biographer a sentimental twist to the exile story : Juvenal returns to Rome after his exile, but dies of grief at not finding his friend Martial there [53]. The ambiguity of the word *furor* [54] in a line of a poem by Statius : *et docti furor arduus Lucreti* (*Silv.* II 7.76) may have been one of the factors which gave rise to the tradition, attested by St. Jerome, that Lucretius wrote the *De Rerum Natura* in lucid intervals during a madness, induced by a love potion, which eventually drove him to suicide [55]. (When assessing this tradition we have also to consider that it was standard practise among critics, pagan and Christian, of the Epicureans, to describe them as 'mad' [56]; that the 'love potion' could have been suggested by the reputation for hedonism which all Epicureans had to live down, or by one particular passage of Lucretius, the description of the sexual instinct in book IV 1030 ff; and that suicide was a type of death which, according to popular moralizing in antiquity, was most appropriate for an enemy of religion [57].)

In comedy and satirical poetry the biographers found a particularly rich vein of interesting material about great men. The unreliability of comic evidence was recognized occasionally in antiquity. For instance

[52] Martial VII 24; VII 91; XII 18.

[53] *Vita* III Jahn.

[54] Cf. C. Bailey, *Lucretius*, Oxford 1947, vol. I, p. 8 : « ... *furor* there is more likely to mean 'divine inspiration'; indeed it might be suggested that a misinterpretation of the word was the original source of the story ».

[55] Hieronymus, *Eusebii Pamphili Chronici Canones* 231 Fotheringham. Jerome's source is quite likely to have been Suetonius; cf. R. Helm, *Hieronymus Zusätze in Eusebius Chronik*, *Philologus* Supp. XX 2 (1929), p. 26, p. 33. For bibliography see *Lucretius* ed. W.A. Merrill (New York 1907), p. 15 ff.; *Lucretius* ed. Bailey, p. 8-12; *Lucretius* III ed. E.J. Kenney (Cambridge 1971), p. 6 f.

[56] E.g. Hor. *Carm.* I 34.1 ff. : *Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens/ insanientis dum sapientiae/ consultus erro ...*; Lactantius, *De Opificio Dei* 6.1 : *non possum hoc loco teneri quominus Epicuri stultitiam rursum coarguam : illius enim sunt omnia quae delirat Lucretius.*

[57] Cf. W. Nestle, *Legenden vom Tod der Gottesverächter*, *Griechische Studien*, Stuttgart 1948, p. 595 f.

in a *Life of Isocrates* one biographer refers to insinuations made by comic poets about the orator's relations with the prostitute Lagiske, and remarks :

« I also maintain that another factor frees him all the more from blame: the jibes of the comic poets are untrue. For it is the custom of comedians to poke fun at great personages to get laughs; for example they bring Socrates on stage as a lover of youths » [58].

However, there was too much of a taste for spicy stories in antiquity for the biographers to ignore comedy as a source completely. This is particularly evident in the case of the *Lives* of Euripides. The biographers seem to have derived from a comedy of Telecleides a story that Euripides had collaborated with Socrates when writing some of his tragedies [59]. From Aristophanes they took the insinuations that Euripides' father was a huckster and his mother a greengrocer [60], and that Kephisophon had helped to write the tragedies [61]. Satyrus and others can be seen to have taken parts of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the women's campaign to get rid of Euripides, and the poet's oath not to write any more libels against women, as historical fact [62]. Satire on literary figures continued to be a possible subject for comedy when political comedy was no longer acceptable. Middle comedy produced a number of burlesques about poets, notably Sappho [63], and the teachings of philosophers, notably of Pythagoras [64], and the biographies of these people doubtless included traditions first popularized by the comic poets [65].

Ancient orators had much the same repertoire of invective themes as the comic poets. They would seize upon any hint that a man's previous career might have included any episode which did not befit

[58] *BGM* 255.48 ff.

[59] *Ibid.* 133.10 ff. cf. D.L. II 18, and Meineke's discussion of the textual difficulties in *CGF* II, p. 371 f.

[60] *BGM* 133.1 ff., 139.1 ff., 141.1 ff., cf. Ar. *Thesm.* 387, 456; *Ach.* 478; *Eq.* 19.

[61] *BGM* 134.14, 138.97 f. cf. Ar. *Ran.* 944, 1452 f.

[62] Satyrus, *Life of Euripides* fr. 39x; cf. F. Leo, *Satyros, Βίος Εὐριπίδου* (1912), in *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* II, p. 382 : « Dass Satyros ausser Euripides und den Komikern keine Autoren citiert, ist merkwürdig ... ».

[63] Comedies on Sappho : Edmonds I 483 (Ameipsias); II 161 (Ephippus), 263 (Antiphanes), 327 (Amphis), 623 (Timocles); III 133 (Diphilus).

[64] Comedies on Pythagoreans : Edmonds II 5 Cratinus, *Πυθαγορίζουσα*, 469 Alexis, *Πυθαγορίζουσα*, 525 Aristophon, *Πυθαγοριστής*.

[65] Cf. K. Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze*, p. 398 ff.

a gentleman. It was not just scandalously immoral conduct, but participation in any activity associated with the lower orders, that was subject to the orator's lofty contempt. Thus, Demosthenes reckoned that a good way to prejudice his hearers against Aeschines was to relate that he had started his career as an assistant school-master, and had gone on to work as a clerk and as tritagonist in a troupe of actors [66]. Presumably, when an orator was dealing with his opponent's recent activities, his allegations would have to bear some relation to fact, but the further he chose to go back the more inventive he could be. One useful device was to make fun of one's enemy's parentage. We have seen how Demosthenes made out that Aeschines was the son of a slave and a prostitute. (Aeschines' father was ninety-four years old, according to his son, at the time of the *De Falsa Legatione* controversy [67].) Aeschines uses the same tactics when he claims that Demosthenes was the son of a cutler and a Scythian woman [68]. (It is clear that both orators and biographers regarded foreign birth as low birth).[69]

What relation, if any, such allegations bear to the truth is unclear, though we do get occasional clues from ancient writers about the conventions of invective. For instance, we may deduce from several passages in the *Lives* that one technique was to attribute to a man the menial occupation in which slaves of his were engaged. In this way, the owner of a sword factory can be described as a cutler [70].

The biographies are full of statements about people's ignoble origins and scandalous conduct. Such allegations, as we have seen, survive the epitomizing process very well. One point to notice is the way that, in cases where we know that the biographers' source is a piece of rhetorical abuse, they tend to introduce the allegations with vague expressions : « People say that ... »; « Some people have written that ... » [71] Biographers do not always make it clear when the source they are using is a passage of invective.

[66] Dem. *De Fals. Leg.* 249; *De Cor.* 258 ff.

[67] Aeschin. *De Fals. Leg.* 147.

[68] Aeschin. *In Ctes.* 171 f.; cf. Val. Max. III 4 *Ext.* 2; Plut. *Dem.* 4.1; *BGM* 293.14 ff.

[69] Note how Anacharsis, a Scythian of royal birth, is included in a list of people who rose to eminence from unpromising beginnings, *BGM* 46.30 ff.

[70] Plut. *Dem.* 4.1; *BGM* 293.18 ff. (Libanius on Demosthenes) cf. *Life of Sophocles* 1 Pearson = *BGM* 126.1 ff.; Ps.-Plut. *Vitae X Oratorum* 836e = *BGM* 246.1 ff.

[71] *φασί* : *BGM* 265.2; 268.2; *τινὲς ... γεγραφήκασιν* : *Ibid.* 270.3 f. = *Suda* s.v. *Αἰσχίνης*.

We do not have to assume, though, that all the malicious gossip we find in the biographies originated in comic or rhetorical sources. It is clear that biographers sometimes went in for scandal-mongering on their own account. One biographer goes a step further than Demosthenes in his insinuations about Aeschines' mother. Demosthenes had said that people called her Empousa, « a nickname she owed clearly to the diversity of her acts and experiences » (*De Cor.* 130). The biographer makes her a real bogey-woman :

« They say that this woman got the name Empousa from her habit of rushing out of dark places and frightening women and children, since Empousa is a phantom of the night » [72].

In the *Life of Sophocles* we read that the biographer Aristoxenus alleged that Sophocles' father was a carpenter or bronze worker, and that another authority, Istros, stated that he had been a cutler. None of these allegations, we are assured by the author of the extant *Life*, was to be found in any comedy [73].

To sum up : when we study ancient biographies we have to be on the look-out for stories reminiscent of the conventional topics of invective. It will be seen that we have to call into question a wide range of assertions : any statements, indeed, imputing to famous writers low birth or disgraceful morals.

Rhetorical eulogy also made a contribution to the *Lives*. In his *Life of Plato*, Diogenes Laertius cites a work by Speusippus called *Plato's Funeral Feast* and an *Encomium of Plato* by Clearchus, as authorities for the story of Plato's miraculous conception [74]. In various other *Lives* we find the use of a particularly characteristic feature of eulogy : the technique of stringing together lists of anecdotes about a man, each one illustrating a different virtue with which he is supposed to have been endowed [75].

There remains to be discussed one more type of primary source available to the biographers : the references made by philosophers to their contemporaries and men of earlier years. Aristotle described

[72] *BGM* 268.4 ff.

[73] *Life of Sophocles* 1 Pearson = *BGM* 126.1 ff.

[74] D.L. III 2.

[75] E.g. parts of Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Socrates* : II 22 *ἐπεμελεῖτο δὲ καὶ σωμασκίας καὶ ἦν εὐέκτης ...* 24 *ἦν δὲ καὶ ἰσχυρογνώμων καὶ δημοκρατικός ... αὐτάρκης τε ἦν καὶ σεμνός ...* 27 *ἦν δ'ἱκανὸς καὶ τῶν σκωπτόντων αὐτὸν ὑπερορᾶν ...* 29 *ἱκανὸς δ'ἀμφότερα ἦν, καὶ προτρέψαι καὶ ἀποτρέψαι.*

Plato's writings as belonging to a genre intermediate between poetry and prose [76], and the 'ambiguous position between fact and imagination' [77] occupied by the Socratic writings makes it difficult for anyone to assess their value as historical documents. However, two passages in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* [78], in which a critic of the Socratics inveighs against the untruthfulness of philosophers, sum up very well, despite occasional silliness, the kinds of unhistorical statements most likely to be found in these writings. It is pointed out how Socrates is glorified at the expense of other great men :

« 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* » (Ath. 220 a,e).

It is noted how Plato sometimes perpetrates anachronisms in his dialogues :

« In fact, to make Plato's Socrates converse with Parmenides is scarcely possible on account of Socrates' youth, which would have prevented him from making or listening to such a discourse » (505 f).

Plato is also accused of introducing unnecessary gossip :

« But the most outrageous thing of all is also to say, without any compelling need, that Zeno, Parmenides' fellow citizen, was his darling » (*ibid.*). [79]

This critic has put his finger on the respects in which the Socratic writers are most problematic to the historian.

How did the ancient biographers react to the glorification of leading philosophers, anachronisms, and gossip, presented by the philosophical writers ? In view of the important part played by the Academy and the Peripatos in the rise of Greek biography and literary research, it is only to be expected that the early biographers were unlikely to reject the approach to history found in Socratic dialogues. Rather, they continue along the same lines [80]. A rebellious scholar might

[76] D.L. III 37.

[77] A.D. Momigliano, *Development*, p. 46.

[78] Ath. 215c ff.; 504e ff.

[79] Cf. Plato, *Parm.* 127b.

[80] That does not mean that the philosophical schools are alone to blame for the glorification of men of genius and the inventing of associations between famous men. These are features of popular historical tradition everywhere and in all periods.

reject the view of a philosopher promoted by his admiring pupils — Aristoxenus [81], who launched an attack on Socrates, is a well-known example — but this would only mean that eulogy was replaced by scurrility. Meetings between great men which are historically unlikely or impossible continue to figure in the *Lives*, and so do gossipy anecdotes of all kinds, includings stories like the one quoted, making one philosopher the loved-one of another.

III

The biographers did not necessarily go to the primary sources for their information, but might rely instead on the material provided by other types of historical writers.

Even before the time when prose became the normal vehicle for history, it appears that tales about the most famous early poets, perhaps virtual biographies of them, were circulating in poetic form. Some of the legends the biographers have preserved in the *Lives* of Homer are evidently very old [82]. In an early elegiac poem, ascribed in antiquity to Simonides, the poet of the *Iliad* is identified with the man of Chios who appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* [83]; Heraclitus knew the story of the riddle which brought about Homer's death [84]; Pindar seems to have known a legend in which Homer gave away the *Cypria* as his daughter's dowry [85].

With the advent of prose history, a vast mass of research, scholarly and unscholarly, started to build up, some of which would be of use to the biographers [86]. Alongside large-scale works of political history there were genealogical studies and local histories, and, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there came in addition a proliferation of guidebooks describing temples and monuments and the legends connected

[81] Fragments : F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* 2, Basel 1945.

[82] Cf. O. Crusius, *Zur Kritik der antiken Ansichten über die Echtheit homerischer Dichtung*, *Philologus* 54 (1895), p. 710 ff.; W. Schadewaldt, *Legende von Homer dem fahrenden Sänger*, Zürich 1959; A.D. Momigliano, *Development*, p. 25 ff.

[83] Cf. note 17. On the authorship and dating of the elegiac poem, see J.A. Davison, *Quotations and allusions in early Greek literature*, *Eranos* 53 (1955), p. 125 ff. = *From Archilochus to Pindar*, London 1968, p. 70 ff.; M.L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* II 114.

[84] fr. 21 Marcovich = B56 Diels/Kranz.

[85] fr. 265 Snell = Aelian *V.H.* IX 15.

[86] Cf. W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur*, Stuttgart 1924 (repr. Darmstadt 1964), chapters 12, 13 : A.D. Momigliano, *Development*, p. 72.

with them, researches on cults and festivals, studies of inscriptions, monographs on particular virtues and vices, lists of miraculous occurrences and of the innovations of famous men, historical miscellanies, and collections of commonplaces for use of students of rhetoric. Besides these there were books on the history of the various literary genres, and studies and commentaries on the works of important writers, which, without necessarily being designed to present full accounts of the lives of the writers concerned, might include much biographical speculation. It may be assumed (especially as it was usual for a man who wrote *Lives* to write historical works of other kinds as well) that the relationship of this mass of scholarship with the biographies must have been extremely complicated. Sometimes the biographers will have drawn information from other parts of the historical tradition, at other times contributed new material to the repertoire. The noble art of inscription-forging seems to stand in a relationship of mutual aid with historical scholarship. So, presumably, did rhetorical exercises on historical themes, and spurious letters.

The writers of authors' *Lives* might sometimes derive material from the large-scale political histories, especially in cases where an author played an important part in public life. For instance, Plutarch cites Theopompus and Marsyas of Pella in his *Life of Demosthenes* [87]. Non-political men too might be mentioned in historical works. Even Thucydides (III 96) mentions in passing the tradition about the death of Hesiod. The biographers were liable, of course, to be infected by any bias or lack of critical approach in their historical sources. Not all ancient scholars were as discriminating as Marcellinus, who, in his *Life of Thucydides* rejects Timaeus' patriotic claim that Thucydides, when exiled, went to live (and work) in Italy [88], and dismisses as an example of Herodotean fiction the story of Arion and the music-loving dolphin [89]. Timaeus' story that Thucydides died in Italy was adopted, according to Marcellinus, by 'others' [90]. The legend of Arion's ride on the dolphin remained popular throughout antiquity [91].

Genealogical works were obviously of great interest to the biographers. Lengthy pedigrees going back to the gods and heroes were

[87] Plut. *Dem.* 4.1; 13.1; 14.3; 18.4; 21.2; 25.6 (Theopompus); 18.2 (Marsyas).
[88] Marcellinus, *Life of Thucydides* 25 Jones = *BGM* 191.127 ff.
[89] *Ibid.* 49 = *BGM* 196.277 ff.
[90] *Ibid.* 33 = *BGM* 193.172 f.
[91] Cf. O. Crusius, art. *Arion* 5, *RE* 2 (1896), col. 836 ff.

available for three main classes of people : members of noble families, holders of hereditary priesthoods, and people who followed a profession which was regarded as in some sense heriditary. Where such genealogies existed the biographers naturally used them. Andocides, we read in his *Life* [92], came from a noble family whose lineage Hellanicus had traced back to Hermes; Plato, we learn, could claim descent from Codrus, King of Athens, on his mother's side [93]; Lycurgus the orator was provided with divine ancestors by virtue of holding a hereditary priesthood of Poseidon [94]. All physicians were regarded as members of the family of Asclepius. Thus Hippocrates, as well as being supposed to be a descendant of Herakles, was said to trace his ancestry back to Asclepius [95]. Another family tree made Homer and Hesiod descendants of the patrons of their art, Orpheus and Apollo [96].

Local histories and guide-books were also used, on occasion, by the biographers. Pseudo-Plutarch, for example, cites a minor work by Ephorus of Kyme for an account of Homer's ancestry and birth, in which he is made out to have come from a Kymaean family [97]. The *Lives* are full of references to places and works of art which are 'pointed out' and said to be associated with famous men : the Kolophonians point out the place where Homer worked as a schoolmaster and wrote the *Margites* [98]; the Prytaneion at Thebes is made out to have been originally the house of Pindar [99]; draped statues of the Charites on the Athenian acropolis are claimed to have been the work of Socrates in his early capacity as sculptor [100]; pictures are attributed to Euripides,

[92] Ps.-Plut. *Vitae X Oratorum* 834b = *BGM* 237.1 ff. Odysseus was also among his his ancestors, Plut. *Alcib.* 21.1.
[93] *BGM* 382.8 f.
[94] Ps.-Plut. *Vitae X Oratorum* 843e = *BGM* 277.145 ff.
[95] *BGM* 449.2 ff.
[96] E.g. *Certamen* B 227.44 ff. Allen = *BGM* 35.41 ff.
[97] *FGrHist* 70 F1, Ps.-Plut. *Life of Homer* II Allen = *BGM* 21.7 ff. Contrary to what one might expect, this tradition is probably not the invention of Ephorus; cf. Jacoby's commentary on *FGrHist* 70F 1,100.
[98] *Certamen* B 226.15 Allen = *BGM* 34.15 ff.
[99] Eustath. *Prooem.* 28 (in *Scholia Vetera in Pindari Carmina* III ed. Drachmann, Teubner 1964) = *BGM* 93.91 ff. cf. Slater, *GRBS* 1971, 141 ff.
[100] *BGM* 440.852 f.; cf. D.L. II 18 for Socrates' career as stonemason; Pliny *N.H.* XXXVI 32 (a passage where there is no implication that the sculptor Socrates is to be identified with the philosopher) and, for discussion, K. Jex Blake - E. Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, London 1896, Introd., p. 1.

who was supposed to have been a painter in his youth [101]. What is one to make of these stories? A deduction from the writers' works may lie behind some. The tradition that the *Margites* was written in Kolophon was clearly derived from a line of that poem, probably the opening line, which went : *ἦλθέ τις εἰς Κολοφῶνα γέρων καὶ θεῖος ἀοιδός* [102]. Some of the stories, it must not be denied, may have some truth in them. However, one has only to think of the number of places which claimed to have been the birthplace of Homer [103], to realize how any association of one's home town with a famous man was thought to bring prestige. The origin of the associations in many cases may have been in the patter of naïve travellers' guides [104], or in the hopeful yarn-spinning of local characters.

References to the portraits of great men were sometimes brought into their *Lives*. Plato's many portraits were used as evidence by people who asserted that he was given the name Plato on account of the exceptional breadth of his chest and forehead: *διὰ τὸ δύο μόρια τοῦ σώματος ἔχειν πλατύτατα, τό τε στέρνον καὶ τὸ μέτωπον* [105] In the *Life* of *Sophocles* we are told that it was because of one occasion when the tragedian featured as a lyre-player in the *Thamyris* that he was represented holding a lyre in a painting in the Stoa Poikile [106]. It seems it was unusual for a tragedian, as opposed to a lyric poet, to be shown holding a lyre in classical art, the standard attributes of a dramatist being the scroll and the mask [107], but even so we ought to ask ourselves whether the *Thamyris* anecdote in the *Life of Sophocles* could not have originated as a piece of impressive bluffing on the part

[100] *BGM* 134.15; 139.22.

[101] *Margites* 1.1. Allen. Similarly, a tradition that Aristophanes was an Egyptian, found in a guide-book by one Heliodorus (*FGrHist* 373 F4) and incorporated in the Suda's account of Aristophanes' life (*BGM* 160.1) seems to have arisen from speculation on Ar. *Nub.* 272 (cf. Jacoby's commentary).

[102] For a long list including the names of authorities (among them one who showed that Homer was a Roman *ἔκ τινων ἠθῶν παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις μόνον γινομένων*), see *PMLA* VI 250.5 ff. Allen; *BGM* 31.3 ff. Homer is evidently still sometimes reckoned as a status symbol. At any rate, the Old Spaghetti Factory restaurant in Vancouver (surely the last outpost of the Greek biographical tradition) advertises its Spaghetti with Browned Butter and Mixithra Cheese with the words : 'legend has it that Homer lived on this while composing the Iliad'.

[104] Cf. Lucian, *Philopseudes* 4.

[105] *BGM* 383.28 ff. (Olympiodorus).

[106] *Life of Sophocles* 5 Pearson = *BGM* 127.26 ff.

[107] Cf. G.M.A. Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, London 1965, Vol. 1.

of an imaginative art-gallery guide. Thamyris was a mythical poet who challenged the Muses. If any Muse were represented in the same picture as the lyre-playing Sophocles, the identification with Thamyris might easily have suggested itself to a later observer who had no more certain knowledge of the artist's original intentions than we have. Perhaps we should give the biographer the benefit of the doubt in this case, but how much pseudo-scholarship accumulated around portraiture may be seen from a hilarious list of ancient explanations for the fact that Hippocrates was represented in art with his head covered :

« In his numerous portraits he is depicted with his head covered, some say with a felt cap — a sign of nobility, as in the case of Odysseus — or, as others say, with a cloak, either, according to some people, to improve his appearance, because he was bald, or, according to others, because of a weakness of the head, or else to point out the necessity of looking after the authoritative part of the soul (i.e. reason), or as a sign of his love of travel, or as a sign of the obscurity of his writings, or to demonstrate that one ought to ward off harmful things even when one is healthy, or because, when he was operating, in order to have his hands free, he would gather up the part of his cloak which covered them, and would drape it over his head [108] ».

Notice that the biographer has not done any independent research in this case. He does not know whether it was a felt cap or a cloak that Hippocrates wore.

The biographers probably gained their knowledge of inscriptions too in the library rather than in the field. Snooping around overgrown tombstones and getting the nickname *Στηλοκόπας* [109] for one's pains were not the sort of things which appealed to the average literary gentleman in antiquity. Most scholars will have been more inclined to reuse the material to be found in the works of a few pioneer epigraphists.

Sometimes, of course, reliable information about famous writers would be preserved in inscriptions, and sometimes it would be a reliable scholar who took on the task of studying such evidence. The achievements of poets, for instance, were to be found recorded in accounts of festivals and victory lists, and it is known that Aristotle wrote treatises based on the records of victories in all the major Greek festivals [110]. This means that the data we have on the victories of the

[108] *BGM* 451.59 ff. (Soranus).

[109] This was the nickname given to the epigraphist Polemon, Ath. 234d. Cf. W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur*, p. 311 f.

[110] Diogenes Laertius' catalogue of Aristotle's works includes the following group of references (D.L. V 26) : *Ὀλυμπιονῖκαι ά Πυθιονῖκαι <ά περί> μουσικῆς ά Πυθικὸς ά*

Athenian tragedians are in all probablity reliable. When a writer was active in political life, he is likely to have been mentioned quite often in public records. Appended to Pseudo-Plutarch's biographies of Lycurgus and Demosthenes we find the full text of honorary decrees, and are able to see the extent of the author's dependence on them [111].

Unfortunately, not all ancient inscriptions, particularly not all those concerning famous men, contained equally reliable information. Apart from the fact that honorary decrees would give the same kind of rose-coloured view of a man's achievements that we get in passages of rhetorical eulogy and self-justification, downright forgery of inscriptions was not unknown in antiquity, and neither was the engraving in stone of the dubious products of research by third-rate antiquarians [112]. A clear case of the use in biography of an inscription giving highly suspect information comes in Pseudo-Plutarch's *Life* of the orator Lycurgus. This inscription presents the genealogy of the priests of Poseidon, mentioned earlier, which provides Lycurgus with such illustrious ancestors as Erechtheus, Ge and Hephaestus [113].

The epitaph is the type of inscription most frequently found in the *Lives*. To quote an epitaph after one's account of a man's death was a neat way of rounding off a biography and this became standard practice among Greek biographers. There had to be an epitaph for everyone, even worthies like Homer and Hesiod [114], and many are, consequently, to be taken with a large pinch of salt. It is not even necessary to suppose that all the extant epitaphs of famous writers were ever inscribed on alleged tombs. Book 7 of the *Palatine Anthology* is too full of examples of this genre to allow us to believe that likely.

Writers of commentaries, histories of literary genres, and the like, will have used techniques so like those of the biographers that one cannot single out ways in which they were responsible for deflecting the biographers from the truth. Writers of the various types of *exempla*

Πυθιονικῶν Δυγχος ὁ Νίκαι Διονυσιακαὶ ὁ περὶ τραγωδιῶν ὁ Διδασκαλίας ὁ; cf. H. Peter, *Wahrheit und Kunst*, Berlin 1911, p. 185 f.

[111] *Vitae X Oratorum* 850 f. ff. = *BGM* 278.165 ff.; 290.844 ff.

[112] Cf. W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur*, p. 281 (for the inscription listing offerings by mythical figures at the temple of Athena at Lindos, see now *FGrHist* 532); R. Syme, *Fraud and Imposture, Fondation Hardt: Entretiens* XVIII, Vandœuvres-Genève 1972, p. 7 f.

[113] *Vitae X Oratorum* 843e = *BGM* 277.145 ff.

[114] Homer's epitaph: Ps.-Hdt. *Life of Homer* 216.515 f. Allen = *BGM* 19.497 f.; Hesiod's epitaph: *BGM* 49.107 ff.

lists probably owed more to the biographers than the biographers did to them. However, they may, on occasion, have been tempted to fabricate anecdotes in order to make their books seem more comprehensive, and so contributed to the biographical tradition. We shall see later how writers of one type of *exempla* list, the monograph on the innovations of famous men, helped to stereotype literary history.

Earlier, it was suggested that biography may stand in a relation of inter-dependence with rhetorical exercises and spurious letters. It is not easy, however, to find any firm evidence that rhetorical exercises influenced the biographers. Hermippus, known to us as a purveyor of much amazing biographical material, took the speech of Polycrates the sophist against Socrates to be the actual prosecution speech [115], but how far this assumption affected his account of the end of Socrates cannot be known now. The relationship between the startling versions of history presented in *controversia* and *suasoria* themes and the sensationalism of the biographers is also unclear. (These themes, though known to us only from the Roman period, were very probably used in some of the earlier Greek schools of rhetoric [116].) Did any biographer ever introduce into a *Life* an anecdote, remembered by him from his school-days, which owed its origins to the feverish search by an inventor of declamation themes for poignant irony and a difficult case to plead? It seems possible, but we cannot prove this ever happened, and it is probably best to regard the themes — Euripides tried for impiety, having represented Herakles going mad on stage [117]; Cicero faced with a choice of death or the destruction of his writings [118], and so on — as direct offshoots of the historiographical tradition, even where we have no extant parallel in formal history or biography [119].

[115] D.L. II 38 cf. K. Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze*, p. 404.

[116] For one thing, the remoteness of the 'laws' used in conjunction with *controversia* themes from the Roman legal system makes it difficult to believe that the themes sprang up out of nowhere in Augustan Rome.

[117] *P. Oxy.* 2400 (3rd C. A.D.) N.b. Euripides was evidently tried on a charge of impiety in a part of Satyrus' *Life* now lost: see *P. Oxy.* 1176 fr. 39x.

[118] Sen. *Suas.* 7. Seneca tells us (*Suas.* 6.14) that this theme was derived from an attack on Cicero in Asinius Pollio's speech, *Pro Lamia*.

[119] Cf. S. Trenkner, *The Greek Novella*, Cambridge 1958, p. 182 ff. for arguments against the hypothesis that the romance (a type of writing not unrelated to biography) was derived from rhetorical exercises. But n.b. *controversia* themes clearly underlie some of the stories in the *Gesta Romanorum*, cf. *L. Annaei Senecae patris scripta quae manserunt* ed. H.J. Müller (1887, repr. Olms, Hildesheim 1963), p. vii-viii n. 1.

On the other hand, spurious letters can be seen to have been used by the biographers. Diogenes Laertius includes in his *Lives* of various early philosophers compositions in letter form, a letter supposed to have been written by Thales to Pherecydes (I 43 f.), for example, and another (I 53 f.) from Pisistratus to Solon, which, to judge from their unsophisticated expression, may have originated as school exercices.

IV

It is time now to consider some of the most common ways in which the biographers and their sources tended to stereotype literary history. We shall be looking at the artificial devices by means of which they stressed affinities between the great writers, the chronological relationships between them, and the place of each man in the development of his chosen genre, so as to replace the complications of historical reality with a semblance of order. It may seem strange that traditions based on the more naïve of these devices survived the centuries. We must bear in mind the fact that the biographers' source for many of the forced associations we shall be considering was probably long-standing popular tradition, and also that there does not seem to have been much of a demand for dry historical exactitude in any period of antiquity [120]. It would only be fair to say that ancient biographers quite often cast doubt on these associations. However, a certain excessive respect for earlier authorities, combined with the desire to appear erudite, was usually sufficient to prevent them from going as far as to omit all mention of an old tradition, however much they might doubt it [121].

Literary affinities could be stressed by making out that two writers were actually kinsmen. Significant family relationships are something we ought to be on the look-out for in ancient biography. We sometimes find assertions, for instance, that a writer was related to a person, or a member of some class of people, praised in his works : thus, Homer was sometimes said to be the son of Telemachus [122], and Virgil to be the

[120] Cf. H. Peter, *Wahrheit und Kunst*, passim ; W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im Altertum* (*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* I 2), München 1971 ; R. Syme, *Fondation Hardt : Entretiens* XVIII, p. 3 ff.

[121] We rarely find a criticism of tradition as scathing as 'Proclus'' comment on the supposed relationship of Homer with Hesiod, *BGM* 26.45 ff. = IV.50 ff. Severyns : τοσοῦτον γὰρ διέχουσι τοῦ γένει προσήκειν, ὅσον ἡ πολῖτις διέστηκεν αὐτῶν.

[122] *Certamen* B 226.23 ff., 227.39 f. Allen = *BGM* 34.22 ff., 35.37 f.

son of a man who made a success of forestry and bee-keeping [123]. (Is it a coincidence that both Pindar and Bacchylides are said to have been related to athletes ?) [124] A writer was also liable to be given blood-ties with anyone at all famous who came from the same city : thus Ibycus of Rhegium was said by some, though not all, authorities to have been the son of Phytius, a Rhegian law-giver [125]. It is not surprising, then, that family relationships between exponents of related types of writing were sometimes attested by the biographers where none are likely to have existed. Complicated genealogies were contrived showing how Homer was descended from such figures as Orpheus, Musaeus and Eumolpus [126]. It was also commonly asserted that Homer and Hesiod were related, though there was no unanimity as to the precise relationship : generally they were thought of as cousins of some kind [127], but a rival view was that Hesiod was the great-great uncle of Homer [128]. Homer and Hesiod were by no means 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 Oechalia*, as a gift [129] ; in another story it is the *Cypria* that he gives as his daughter's dowry, and Stasinus is the recipient [130]. Other tales made Stesichorus the son of Hesiod [131], and Terpander the descendant of either Homer or Hesiod [132].

This delight in linking together great men in family trees obviously causes problems for the historian of ancient literature. Everyone knows of the phenomenon of the literary family, and it existed in antiquity : the example of the two Senecas and Lucan comes to mind ;

[123] Donatus, *Life of Virgil* init.

[124] Pindar's twin brother : Hexameter poem quoted in Eustath. *Prooem.* 30 Drachmann = *BGM* 94.18 ff. Bacchylides' grandfather : *Suda* s.v. *Βακχυλίδης* = *BGM* 105.38 ff.

[125] *Suda* s.v. *Ἴβυκος* = *BGM* 106.59 f. Cf. Iamblichus, *de Vita Pythagorica* 30.172.

[126] Damastes *FGrHist* 5F11 = *BGM* 30.2 f. ; *Certamen* B 227.44 ff. Allen = *BGM* 35.43 ff. ; 'Proclus', *On Homer* III 19 ff. Severyns = *BGM* 25.17 ff.

[127] Ephorus *FGrHist* 70F1 cited in Ps.-Plut *Life of Homer* 240.8 ff. Allen = *BGM* 21.7 ff. ; 'Proclus', *On Homer* III 19 ff. Severyns = *BGM* 25.17 ff.

[128] *Certamen* B 227.51 ff. Allen = *BGM* 35.47 ff.

[129] *Suda* s.v. *Κρεώφυλος* = *BGM* 75.115 ff.

[130] Pindar fr. 265 = Aelian *V.H.* IX 15 ; Tzetzes *Chil.* 13.638. Stories of this type are probably to be regarded as attempts to explain alternative attributions of the poems in question.

[131] *BGM* 48.80 ff.

[132] *Suda* s.v. *Τέρπανδρος* = *BGM* 114.242 ff.

the complex network of evidence for the genealogy of Plato suggests that he actually was, as his biographers assert, related to Solon [133], though the relationship was not so close as some of them made out [134].

How much trust, though, are we to put in the tradition that Simonides and Bacchylides, both natives of Ceos, were uncle and nephew ? [135] Can we rely on the ancient assertions that Herodotus and the poet Panyassis, both of Halicarnassus, were related ? [136] In this case there is a discrepancy over the precise relationship : according to one account they were cousins, the sons of two brothers, Polyarchus and Luxus; another version was that Panyassis was Herodotus' uncle, the brother of his mother, Rhoio. In spite of this disagreement, the relationship is now generally regarded as fact, the assumption being that it was traced by reliable Halicarnassian local historians [137]. However, one might expect agreement on the relationship, if this were the case. Besides, according to one view current in antiquity, history was a genre closely related to poetry, *proxima poetis*, as Quintilian puts it [138]. Panyassis was, furthermore, a writer of historical poetry : his poem *Ionika* was about the settlement of Ionia by the Greeks [139]. It is surely not impossible that some uncritical historian, noticing that the two eminent Halicarnassians lived around the same time and wrote about the same kind of subject, could have quite arbitrarily made them cousins, or uncle and nephew. It may not be relevant to compare the

[133] Cf. H. Leisegang, art. *Platon*, *RE* 20 (1950), col. 2347; J.K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families*, Oxford 1971, p. 322 ff.

[134] Diogenes Laertius (III 1) is probably stretching things when he maintains that Dropides, Critias' grandfather, was the brother of Solon, cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 20e; the biographers who make Plato a direct descendant of Solon (*BGM* 382.4 ff.; 388.15 f.; 396.1 ff.) are certainly over-simplifying the matter.

[135] Strabo 486; *Suda* s.v. *Βακχυλίδης* = *BGM* 105.41.

[136] *Suda* s.v. *Πανύασις* = *BGM* 81.215 ff.

[137] On the authority of F. Jacoby, art. Herodotos, *RE* Suppl. 2 (1913), col. 206 ff., who dismisses earlier suggestions that this was a contrived significant relationship. But he gives too much weight (col. 207 f., col. 217 f.) to the hypothesis that Duris of Samos mentioned Panyassis and Herodotus together as Samians, which rests on an emendation by Krausse of *Suda* s.v. *Πανύασις* init. which is far from certain. Even if Duris did say the two men were Samians, that hardly rules out the possibility that earlier tradition made them out to be kinsmen because they were both known to be Halicarnassians.

[138] Quint. X 1.31.

[139] *Suda* s.v. *Πανύασις* = *BGM* 81.224 ff. cf. G.L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry*, London 1969, p. 186.

case of Ibycus, who, according to some people, was the son of a certain Polyzelus, a Messenian historian [140]. This association is so bizarre that the most natural explanation for it would seem to be that it resulted from textual corruption in one of the biographies [141]. It is certainly relevant to observe, though, that Choerilus, a later writer of historical epic, was said to be the beloved of Herodotus [142].

Another feature to note in ancient biography is the way that similar circumstances attend the lives of different exponents of the same genre, and different members of the same philosophical school. Bion of Borysthenes, the celebrated writer of Cynic diatribes, was supposed to have said that his father had been a freedman who wiped his nose on his sleeve. Diogenes Laertius takes his to mean that he had been a seller of salt fish [143]. Horace, an imitator of Bion's satirical manner, was also given a salt-food dealer as a father by some authorities, despite his own testimony that his father was some kind of collector of money :

« Q. Horatius Flaccus of Venusia had for a father, as he himself writes, a freedman who was a collector of money at auctions; but it is believed that he was a dealer in salted provisions, for a certain man in a quarrel taunted Horace, 'How often have I seen your father wiping his nose with his arm' » [144].

The certainty that attempts like this to cast the lives of Roman authors into the mould of their Greek predecessors were made allows us to suspect similar processes in cases which are not quite so clear. We can see, for example, one clear occasion when Donatus draws a parallel between Virgil and Homer : « Virgil never lacked detractors, which is not strange, for neither did Homer » [145]. This makes it possible to suggest that one reason why Donatus and other biographers of Virgil [146] are so confident in grouping together and attributing to Virgil the poems of the *Appendix Vergiliana* could be simply that there was what

[140] *Suda* s.v. *Ἴβυκος* = *BGM* 106.59 f.

[141] Polyzelus may have been really one of the authorities for Ibycus' parentage, and only by mistake have been put forward as a candidate for the position of Ibycus' father.

[142] *Suda* s.v. *Χοιρίλος* = *BGM* 88.66 f.

[143] D.L. IV 46, cf. Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 146 and note; E. Fraenkel, *Horace*, Oxford 1957, p. 6 f.

[144] *Vita Horati* init., trans. J.C. Rolfe in *Suetonius* II (Loeb).

[145] Donatus, *Vita Vergilii* 43 transl. Rolfe.

[146] For the text of a number of *Lives* see *Vitae Vergilianae Antiquae*, ed. C. Hardie (O.C.T. 1966). On the *Appendix*, see especially *Vita Donati* 53 ff., *Vita Servii* 10 ff.

we may call an *Appendix Homerica* mentioned in the biographies of Homer. A number of light-weight works, the *Margites*, *Kerkopes*, *Battle of Frogs and Mice*, *Battle of the Starlings*, the *Heptapaktike*, *Epikichlidai*, and others, were ascribed to the young Homer [147]; therefore Rome's leading epic poet would have to be similarly equipped, whether any genuine juvenilia of his were extant or not.

One fairly blatant instance where several members of a philosophical school are given a similar life history is the case of the Cynic moneylenders. In a book ascribed to Diogenes the Cynic there was an admission by the philosopher that he had once adulterated the coinage (D.L. VI 20). Diogenes' biographers maintained either that he was the son of a dishonest banker or that he was himself responsible for the fraud. What truth there was in this story is uncertain. The credibility gap widens when we read that :

« Monimus of Syracuse was a pupil of Diogenes; and, according to Sosicrates, he was in the service of a certain Corinthian banker ... » (D.L. VI 82) [148],

that Menippus, another Cynic,

« lent out money by the day and got a nickname from doing so. For he used to make loans on bottomry and take security, thus accumulating a large fortune » (D.L. VI 99)

and that Bion declared that his father, « who had cheated the revenue in some way, was sold with all his family » (D.L. IV 46).

It will be appropriate to add a caveat here. When one considers repetitions like these of similar occurrences in the *Lives* of different writers, one has to distinguish events which are necessarily accidental, things which nobody could choose to have happen to him (such as to have a fishmonger father), from things which a man might choose deliberately to do, (such as to commit suicide by starving to death, as a large number of philosophers are said to have done) [149]. In the case of this second class of events, we have to take into account the possibility

[147] Ps.-Hdt. *Life of Homer* 207.332 ff. Allen = *BGM* 12.319 ff.; cf. Ps.-Plut. 244.99 f. Allen = *BGM* 24.93 ff.; 'Proclus' *On Homer* V 76 f Severyns = *BGM* 27.68 ff.; *Suda* s.v. *"Ομηρος* 258.43 ff. Allen = *BGM* 33.40 ff. Cf. E. Fraenkel, *The Culex*, *JRS* 42 (1952), p. 1 ff.

[148] Transl. R.D. Hicks (Loeb 1925).

[149] E.g. Pythagoras (D.L. VIII 40); Aristarchus (*Suda* s.v. = *BGM* 361.71 ff.); Eratosthenes (*Suda* s.v. = *BGM* 368.215 ff.); Zeno (*Suda* s.v. = *BGM* 421.383 f.); Cleanthes (D.L. VII 176); Democritus (Ath. 46e-f); Menedemus (D.L. II 143); Polemon (*Suda* s.v. = *BGM* 349.510).

that a man could have consciously imitated a famous predecessor [150].

Much ancient scholarship, some of it very painstaking, was devoted to the establishing of the chronology of literary history. One approach was to find out which authors were contemporaries of each other, and to present literary history in terms of clusters of writers. Such an approach provided the student of literature with a useful approximate relative chronology. We find traces of it in the biographies, in summaries like this one in Marcellinus' *Life of Thucydides* :

« According to Praxiphanes, in his work *On History*, he was a contemporary of Plato the comic poet, Agathon the tragedian, Niceratus the epic poet, Choerilus and Melanippides » [151].

There were also efforts to tie literary history in with fixed points in political history [152]. It has been noticed that we are told, for example, what each of the three canonical Greek tragedians was doing at the time of the battle of Salamis : that Aeschylus fought in it; that Sophocles, still a boy, took a leading part in the victory celebrations; that it was then that Euripides was born [153]. These statements taken together present a guide to the chronology of tragic writing which is immediately memorable. Whether one is prepared to believe that Euripides was born on the island of Salamis in the very year of the battle is another matter. The temptation to claim that near-simultaneous events were absolutely simultaneous, and to elaborate legends around a synchronism, was a very strong one.

Chronological relationships between writers could be stressed by an account of a meeting between two leading representatives of the same genre, when one was well on his career and the other still young. We read that Choerilus gained his enthusiasm for literature from listening to Herodotus [154]. Thucydides, too, we are told, attended one of Herodotus' readings :

[150] Of course, that does not mean that all stories in this class are true. It should be noted, for instance, that in several cases 'starving to death deliberately' is given as only one of several alternative death stories.

[151] Marcellinus, *Life of Thucydides* 29 Jones = *BGM* 192.148 ff.

[152] Cf. H. Diels, *Chronologische Untersuchungen über Apollodors Chronika*, *Rhein. Mus.* N.F. 31 (1876), p. 13 ff.

[153] Aeschylus : Ion of Chios *FGrHist* 392 F7; *Life of Aeschylus* 331.11f. Page (O.C.T. 1972) = *BGM* 127.19 ff.; Sophocles : *Life of Sophocles* 3 Pearson = *BGM* 127.19 ff.; Euripides : *BGM* 133.3, 139.2 ff., 141.5 ff.

[154] *Suda* s.v. *Χοιρίλος* = *BGM* 88.65 f.

« There is also a story to the effect that once, when Herodotus was giving a public reading of his *Histories*, Thucydides was present and wept on hearing him. They say that afterwards Herodotus, amazed at this, said to Olorus, Thucydides' father, 'Olorus, your son has a natural lust for learning' »[155].

Similarly, Demosthenes is said to have been known by Lysias, athough, according to the chronology now accepted, he cannot have been more than four years old when Lysias died [156].

One might go a step further than this, and make the younger of a pair of famous men the pupil of the elder. Obviously, there must have been cases in antiquity where a famous man really did receive some instruction from the leading exponent of his art of the previous generation. One can imagine this happening often in the schools of rhetoric and philosophy. However, when one reads solemn assertions about the master/pupil relationships between epic poets before Homer, one realizes to what an extent ancient scholarship was beset with a desire to pigeon-hole everyone into succession lists. We learn that Eumolpus was, according to some people, the pupil of Orpheus [157]; that Orpheus was the pupil of Linus [158], and so it goes on. How seriously, then, are we to take the assertion that Sophocles 'studied tragedy under Aeschylus' [159]? Is it any more reliable than the statement that Phrynichus was the pupil of Thespis, the first tragedian? [160] Again, practically every writer of any importance in the 4th century B.C. was said by someone or other to have been the pupil either of Plato or of Isocrates [161]. In a few instances the association of a man with one of these two great masters was doubted even in antiquity. Thus, one biographer writes of Aeschines : « Some people say that he was a pupil of Plato and Socrates, but they are lying » [162]; and, although some people declared that Demosthenes had studied under Isocrates, the usual view was

[155] Marcellinus, *Life of Thucydides* 54 Jones = *BGM* 198.328 ff. cf. *Suda* s.v. *Θουκυδίδης* = *BGM* 203.6 ff.

[156] *BGM* 242.37 f.; 290.237 f. cf. K. Jex Blake - E. Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, Introd. p. xvii for similar anecdotes in art history

[157] *Suda* s.v. *Εὔμολπος* = *BGM* 72.53.

[158] *Suda* s.v. *Ὀρφεύς* = *BGM* 78.160.

[159] *Life of Sophocles* 4 Pearson = *BGM* 127.22.

[160] *Suda* s.v. *Φρύνιχος* = *BGM* 153.88.

[161] Plato : standard list of pupils, together with less widely accepted variants in D.L. III 46. Isocrates : influence of school : *BGM* 246.30 ff.; lists of pupils : *Ibid.* 248.36 ff.; 256.91 ff.

[162] *BGM* 266.33 f.

that he was the pupil of Isaeus [163]. We may suspect that the truth in a number of cases was that the man in question was subject, in the widest sense, to the influence of one or other of the two great masters, or merely that he had inclinations towards philosophy, or rhetoric.

In fairness, it should be said that we are probably dealing with a confusion of terminology here. Perhaps the scholar who had first called Demosthenes a pupil of Isocrates meant nothing more than that he belonged to the Isocratean tradition. (Isaeus was said to be a pupil of Isocrates.) [164] After all, we find Sophocles described as the sole pupil of Homer, *μόνον Σοφοκλέα τυγχάνειν Ὁμήρου μαθητήν* [165], and we do not write this statement off as a gross anachronism. Some ancient writers, then, might describe a man as the pupil of another without meaning anything more than that he was an imitator of his. This could lead to confusion if other scholars took the master/pupil relationship literally.

Associated with statements that x was the pupil of y, we frequently find, in Greek biography, the aside, 'whose beloved he is said to have been'. We have seen that this was a type of statement that the critic of the Socratics quoted by Athenaeus objected to. Whether such gossip is always to be thought of as malicious in intent is another matter. Clearly, invective is one possible source for it [166]. However, we do have to remember the strong evidence, from the popularity of *κάλος* names on 5th century pottery, for instance, and from the dialogues of Plato, that the love of men for youths was thought a perfectly honorable thing in classical Greece, at least in some circles [167]. How long it was before this attitude died out completely it is difficult to say, and it is possible that it was shared by some of the writers who were responsible for what has been called the *erastes-paidika* motif [168]

[163] *BGM* 281.4 ff.

[164] *Ibid.* Note also the disagreement as to whether Demosthenes was the pupil, or just the emulator of Plato : *BGM* 281.6 ff. : *ζηλῶν ... Πλάτωνα τὸν φιλόσοφον, ᾧ τινες εἶπον προηγουμένως αὐτὸν σχολάσαι*

[165] *Life of Sophocles* 20 Pearson = *BGM* 96 f. This saying is ascribed in our text to one 'Ionikos', but Meineke has suggested that this name conceals that of Ion of Chios, cf. *FGrHist* 392 F23.

[166] See *BGM* 255.50 f.; *Ibid.* 243.49 ff.; Donatus, *Comm. in Terent.* init.; cf. L.E. Woodbury, *Socrates and Archelaus*, *Phoenix* 25 (1971), p. 299 ff.

[167] Cf. H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (transl. Lamb), New York 1964[3], chap. 3, p. 50 ff.

[168] D.R. Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 149.

in Greek biography. The biographers responsible may have derived their information from a number of different types of source. They might have contemporary evidence : the biographical miscellany of Ion of Chios was the source of an anecdote about Sophocles and a beautiful youth [169]. Then there were the writer's own works. As one might expect, the biographers had a field-day drawing inferences from the poems of Anacreon [170] and Pindar [171]. Plato's name could, on the basis of poems ascribed to him, be linked with Aster, Dion, Phaedrus, Alexis, and Agathon [172]. Biographers might choose to see hidden significance is some of those declarations of friendship to which ancient philosophers in particular were prone. Thus Satyrus, who made out that that Empedocles was the lover of the physician Pausanias, may have just been reading a lot into the fact that Empedocles' *περὶ φυσέως* was addressed to the physician [173]. Once again, though, we must ask ourselves whether the desire of ancient scholars to link great men together in significant relationships is all that prompted some of the associations. We have, once more, a tell-tale sign that this may be the case, in references to the relationships of pre-Homeric poets : Olympus, 'a flute-player and composer of lyric and elegiac poetry' was 'the pupil and beloved of Marsyas, a Satyr by birth'. He lived 'before the Trojan Wars' [174]. Gratuitous assertions of this kind make one wonder if some bright spark has simply worked through the standard succession lists, spicing them up indiscriminately.

Besides wishing to clarify the chronology of literary history, ancient scholars wished to set out systematically the stages in development of every art-form. Books on the history of each genre [175], and books on discoveries in general [176], were available to the biographers. Unfortunately, it is quite clear that some of the scholars who compiled such works were not above fabricating recondite information in cases

[169] Ath. 603e-604d = *FGrHist* 392F6.

[170] Ath. 540e.

[171] *Ibid.* 601c-d.

[172] D.L. III 29 ff.

[173] *Ibid.* VIII 60 = *FHG* III 163 fr. 12.

[174] *Suda* s.v. *Ὄλυμπος* = *BGM* 110.41 ff.; cf. Plut. *Mus.* 1133e.

[175] For an example of this type of work, see the *περὶ κωμῳδίας* in *BGM* 161-4. (Theophrastus had written a monograph with this title, D.L. 5.47.)

[176] On this literature, see K. Thraede, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* V, s.v. *Erfinder* II; also F. Leo, *Griechisch-römische Biographie*, p. 100; D.R. Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 172.

where they cannot have known the truth. If people wanted to know who invented the potter's wheel, very well, they should have an answer : it was Anacharsis; he also invented the anchor [177]. There also seems to have been a tendency in these writings to assign all the major innovations to the leading writers of each genre. It was rare for an ancient scholar to take into account the possibility that a minor figure could have originated something important. For instance, Aristotle had attributed the invention of the dialogue form to a virtually unknown man, but the standard opinion in the time of Diogenes Laertius was that Zeno the Eleatic, a much more notable person, was the inventor. Diogenes Laertius can even argue that Plato was in a sense its inventor :

« They say that Zeno the Eleatic was the first to write dialogues. But, according to Favorinus in his *Memorabilia*, Aristotle in the first book of his dialogue *On Poets* asserts that it was Alexamenus of Styra or Teos. In my opinion Plato, who brought this form of writing to perfection, ought to be adjudged the prize for its invention (*εὑρήσεως*) as well as for its embellishment (*κάλλους*) » [178].

Diogenes' willingness here to regard the man who first brought a form to perfection as practically its inventor, gives us a clue to an attitude which may underlie many ancient statements on inventors [179].

Consider, for example, a statement by the elder Seneca about Asinius Pollio and the institution of public recitation in Rome :

Pollio Asinius numquam admissa multitudine declamavit, nec illi ambitio in studiis defuit; primus enim omnium Romanorum advocatis hominibus scripta sua recitavit (*Contr.* 4 *Praef.* 2).

Evidence has been assembled to show that recitations were known in Rome before Pollio's time [180]. This need not mean that Seneca was an ignorant fool. Rather, one ancient view of artistic evolution allowed one to regard the earliest person to exploit any device with resounding success as the man who truly invented or introduced it. Diogenes Laertius, as we have seen, saw no clear distinction between first and foremost, and so it may have been with Seneca the Elder.

[177] *Suda* s.v. *Ἀνάχαρσις* = *BGM* 407.51 f.

[178] D.L. III 48 transl. Hicks; cf. Ath. 505b-c.

[179] Cf. the discussion by D.R. Stuart (*Epochs*, p. 93 ff.) of Isocrates' claim that his *Evagoras* was a new type of work.

[180] A. Dalzell, *C. Asinius Pollio and the early history of public recitation at Rome*, *Hermathena* 86 (Nov. 1955), p. 20 ff.

A more famous problem arising from an ancient assertion of priority, the question of who introduced the third actor in Greek tragedy, may also be considered in the light of the Diogenes Laertius passage quoted above. It is well known that Aristotle, in the *Poetics* states that :

« The number of actors was first increased to two by Aeschylus, who curtailed the business of the chorus and made the dialogue, or spoken portion, take a leading part in the play. A third actor and scenery were due to Sophocles »,

and that the last sentence here is problematic [181]. Did Aristotle know for sure that Sophocles introduced the third actor and scenery and that Aeschylus did not use them, or at least not till after the younger tragedian ? If this somewhat meagre account of the development of tragic production had been written by anyone but Aristotle, one would not have to hesitate before dismissing it as an instance of the pigeon-holing approach to literary history : Aeschylus, the prime exploiter of the two actor system is its 'inventor' ; Sophocles, who used to the full the potential of three actors, as it were, 'introduced' them. We do have to hesitate, though, before jumping to this conclusion, seeing that Aristotle knew more about the records of the Athenian dramatic festivals than anyone else, and can be seen to have adopted, in the case of the history of the philosophical dialogue, and also on the question of the origin of the encomium [182], an approach untypical of ancient scholarship towards 'inventions'.

V

We have now looked at the main types of source available to the biographers : the works of the writer who is the subject of the *Life*, the writings of his contemporaries, and references to him by later scholars, and it is time to ask another question : how firmly were pieces of biographical data tied to the individual in whose *Life* they were originally found ? That is to say : are there any occasions when we must think in terms of floating biographical *topoi*, of motifs which are freely transferable from one person's *Life* to another ?

It appears that most of the biographical material clustered round

[181] Arist. *Poet.* 1449 a 15 ff., transl. I. Bywater in *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*, Oxford 1909 ; cf. discussion by B.M.W. Knox, *Aeschylus and the third actor*, *AJPh* 93 (1972), p. 104 ff.

[182] Arist. *Rhet.* I 9.38, cf. D.R. Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 93 ff.

each author is pretty firmly bound to him. This is to be expected, when one considers that the *Lives* were largely composed by a process of deduction from the writer's own works and from allusions to him by contemporaries. However, we have already observed certain standard patterns of invention within the biographers' sources : clichés of invective — allegations about disreputable origins, disgraceful morals, plagiarism, and so on, made over and over again by comic poets and orators ; popularizing devices aimed to stress the relationships between great men, used by historians of literature. One can imagine that the biographers would sometimes slide into using these same devices of invective and historical simplification on their own account.

There are, in addition, many clear cases of simple transference of anecdotes in the *Lives* : we find certain wise or witty sayings and actions attributed to a variety of people. Diogenes Laertius has the endearing habit of being quite candid about the phenomenon, but continuing to record the same sayings and anecdotes in the *Lives* of different philosophers. From his *Life of Thales* we learn that :

« Hermippus in his *Lives* refers (*ἀναφέρει*) to Thales the story which is told by some of Socrates, namely, that he used to say 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' » [183].

Whole anecdotes may be transferred in the same way. A delightful story about the retort of a philosopher who keeps his independence by washing his own vegetables, to another who needs pupils or patronage, is told, with minor variations, of Diogenes the Cynic and Aristippus ; Metrocles the Cynic and Theodorus ; Diogenes again and Plato [184].

Obviously this phenomenon of transference provides great opportunities for destructive criticism of the biographies. That is not to say that everything that recurs can be assumed to be untrue. We have to take into account, as we have already noted, the possibility that a man have imitated a famous predecessor. Thus Horace in his *Ars Poetica* imitates a saying about the properties of the whetstone which is ascribed to Isocrates in one of his *Lives* and to 'a certain sophist' by a biographer of Pindar [185]. Yet the saying can unquestionably be

[183] D.L. I 33 transl. Hicks.

[184] D.L. II 68 ; II 102 ; VI 58.

[185] Hor. *Ars Poet.* 304 ff. ; Ps.-Plut. *Vitae X Oratorum* 838e = *BGM* 251.115 ff. Eustath. *Prooem.* 31 Drachmann = *BGM* 96.158 ff.

called Horace's own. To take another case : did Oppian's patron really reward him, as his biographer declares, 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 anecdote? Both explanations seem about equally possible [186].

Besides the transference of minor anecdotes, we find in the *Lives* certain wider recurring themes. For example, numerous Greek philosophers are said to have left their native land in their youth to visit the Egyptian priests, the Magi, or even the Gymnosophists of India. Without wishing to deny that certain of the Greek philosphers may have been strongly influenced by oriental thought, one has to admit that these biographical notices about the philosophers' *Wanderjahre* are more confusing than informative, simply because there are far too many of them for us to believe them all factual [187]. Similarly, people were so given to ascribing ascetic diets to philosophers that it is now probably quite impossible to sift fact from fiction where the history of vegetarianism and temperance in antiquity is concerned [188].

Assertions that a man was of humble birth are a common feature of the *Lives* of all sorts of men. They might, of course, be true, for everyone knows that men of genius do not necessarily come from high-born families; or, as we have seen, the statements might originate in malicious sources. We ought not, perhaps, to assume that the biographers always shared the malice of their sources when they recorded their information. Against the aristocratic assumption that low birth was a bad thing,

[186] Oppian's reward : *BGM* 64.15 ff.; 66.22 f.; Choerilus' reward : *Suda* s.v. *Χοιρίλος* = *BGM* 88.368 ff.

[187] E.g. D.L. I 27 (Thales visits Egyptian priests); I 89 (Cleobulus is acquainted with Egyptian philosophy); III 6. (Plato goes with Euripides (!) to Egypt *παρὰ τοὺς προφήτας*); VIII 3 (Pythagoras visits Egypt, associates with Chaldaeans and Magi); VIII 87 (Eudoxus visits Egypt); IX 34 f. (Democritus visits Egypt, Chaldaeans, Persia, perhaps India and Ethiopia); IX 61 (Pyrrho visits Indian gymnosophists and Magi.) Cf. G.S. KIRK - J.E. RAVEN, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Cambridge 1957, p. 77; M.L. WEST, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, Oxford 1971, p. 3.

[188] Vegetarianism : Ath. 418e-419a, cf. D.L. II 68; II 102; VI 58, 94, 104; VIII 13; IX 3. Water drinking : Ath. 44b ff.; cf. D.L. VI 90, 104; VII 27. Cf. M.L. WEST, *op. cit.*, p. 198 and n. 1. The standard view comic poets took of philosophers is concisely stated in some lines from Philemon's *Philosophers* quoted by Diogenes Laertius VII 27, in Hicks' translation : 'This man adopts a new philosophy./He teaches to go hungry : yet he gets/Disciples. One sole loaf of bread his food;/His best dessert dried figs; water his drink'.

there was a counter-current of thought in antiquity which may be illustrated by some words from Euripides' *Electra* :

> « I have seen ere now a noble father's son
> Proved nothing-worth, seen good sons of ill sires » [189].

This idea evidently had a wide appeal. It was not without some reason that Valerius Maximus, and, doubtless others before him, provided anyone who wanted to muse on the nobility of the poor with lists of men *qui humili loco nati clari evaserunt* and *qui a parentibus claris degeneraverunt* [190]. Some of the biographers, then, may have presented humble origins as something which made a man's later achievements all the more glorious rather than as a blot on his career [191].

Amazing death stories are an even more common feature of the biographies [192]. In order to try to understand them it will perhaps be relevant to remember the old Greek adage that warned one to 'call no man happy until he is dead' [193], and the expansion of this idea which we find in Herodotus' account of the meeting of Croesus and Solon. (I 29 ff) One of the examples of an ideally happy life which Solon is supposed to have given to Croesus was the case of Cleobis and Biton. It is interesting to find that 'happy' deaths similar to the one that Cleobis and Biton are said to have been granted in answer to their mother's prayer, are also to be found in the *Lives* of certain writers who were regarded by the biographers as particularly favoured by the gods [194]. Eustathius, in the preface to his commentary on Pindar, actually points out the similarity between Pindar's death (which comes

[189] Eur. *Electra* 369 f. transl. A.S. Way (Loeb 1912). Aristotle (*Rhet.* I 7.32 f.) gives us some early examples of the theme : an epigram on an Olympic victor who had been a fish-porter, and the boasts of the self-made Iphicrates, and of Phemius, the self-taught minstrel in the *Odyssey*.

[190] Val. Max. III 4 f. (Valerius Maximus' work provides, incidentally, the nearest thing available to a systematic motif-index to Greco-Roman biographical writing.) Cf. Sen. *Contr.* I 6.4. for the use of such *exempla*.

[191] Cf. K. Jex BLAKE - E. SELLERS, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, Introd., p. xlix, but n.b. the interest in rags to riches stories was not confined to the Peripatetic school; rather, it was, and is, a commonplace of folk-tradition.

[192] Cf. Cic. *Brut.* 42 f.; Val. Max. IX 12; A. RONCONI, *Reallexikon für Antike u. Christentum* VI, s.v. *Exitus illustrium virorum*.

[193] Hdt. I 132, cf. Soph. *O.C.* 1225 f.

[194] For the gods' favour towards Pindar see *BGM* 91.43 ff. (Eustathius); towards Sophocles : *Life of Sophocles* 12 Pearson = *BGM* 129.44 ff.; towards Plato : D.L. III 2., *BGM* 382.9 ff. (Olympiodorus).

within a year of the time when some worshippers of Zeus Ammon have prayed that he should enjoy the best thing that men can have) and the stories told of Cleobis and Biton, and of the founders of the Delphic shrine [195]. The manner of Pindar's death is also comparable : he dies, we learn elsewhere, in the gymnasium, while sleeping with his head in the lap of his beloved [196]. Similarly blessed deaths are recorded of Sophocles, who in one story dies of joy at a victory [197]; Plato, who dies peacefully after a banquet at a festival [198]; and two of the seven sages, Chilon and Bias [199]. Most of the death stories, however, can be said to reflect the darker side of the old proverb : it is rare for a man, however successful his life may have been, to meet with a happy end [200]. Often, the death anecdotes contain a strong hint of the view that the punishment should fit the crime. Thus, Anacreon, that incorrigible writer of drinking-songs, dies as a result of choking on a grape-pip [201]; Diogenes the Cynic dies from a dog-bite [202]; Theophrastus dies from exhaustion after writing too many books [203]! A particularly nasty end, tearing to pieces by dogs, was regarded as appropriate for those thought to have been contemptuous of orthodox religious beliefs [204].

This brings us to a further, very important, point. We quite often find in the *Lives* stories for which there are close parallels in heroic mythology and romantic fiction. There are some good examples among the death stories. We have seen that the 'happy death' of Pindar had parallels in ancient legends. The 'tearing to pieces by dogs' stories told of Heraclitus, Euripides and Lucian [205] are comparable with the

[195] *BGM* 93.97 ff.

[196] Val. Max. IX 12 *ext.* 7.

[197] *Life of Sophocles* 14 Pearson = *BGM* 130.69 ff.

[198] *Suda* s.v. *Πλάτων* = *BGM* 396.13.

[199] D.L. I 72; I 84.

[200] This gloomy reflection was borne out by the fall of Croesus (I 86) in Herodotus' account. N.b. according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*de Thuc.* 5) *Θεατρικαὶ... περιπέτειαι* were frequent in the works of the 5th century logographers.

[201] Val. Max. IX 12 *ext.* 8. An identical story was told of Sophocles by Istros (*FGrHist* 334F37) and Neanthes (84F18), *Life of Sophocles* 14 = *BGM* 129.60 ff., but then Sophocles liked his wine too, if we can trust Ion of Chios 392F4.

[202] D.L. VI 77; *Suda* s.v. *Διογένης* = *BGM* 416.269.

[203] *Suda* s.v. *Θεόφραστος* = *BGM* 425.478.

[204] Cf. D.R. Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 147; W. Nestle, *Griechische Studien*, p. 585 f.

[205] Heraclitus : D.L. IX 3-4: *Suda* s.v. *Ἡράκλειτος* = *BGM* 422.423 f.; Euripides : Satyrus, *Life of Euripides* fr. 39xxi; *BGM* 135.46 ff.; 140.34 ff.; 141.18 ff. Lucian : *Suda* s.v. *Λουκιανός* = *BGM* 345.408 ff.

myth of the punishment of Actaeon [206]; there is a parallel for the story of Aeschylus, killed when a bird dropped a tortoise on his head, in fulfilment of an oracle : *οὐράνιόν σε βέλος κατακτενεῖ* [207], in a legend about Odysseus, killed when a bird dropped a fish on his head [208], thereby proving Teiresias right in his prophesy in *Odyssey* 23.281 f. that his death would come from the sea. The long story about the murder of Hesiod [209] is full of the stuff of romance : Hesiod receives an oracle predicting that the place of his death will be *Νεμείου κάλλιμον ἄλσος* ; he flees from the Peloponnese, thinking that the oracle referred to Nemea there, but there is no escaping destiny and he is murdered in a place called *Διὸς Νεμείου ἱερόν* by the brothers of a girl they claim he has seduced; his body is thrown into the sea, but dolphins bring it to the shore and the murder is exposed; the murderers try to escape to Crete, but they meet a sticky end, struck by Zeus' thunderbolt [210], or executed for murdering their guest [211]. There are several themes in this legend for which it is not hard to think of parallels, not just in Greek mythology, but in the folk-lore of any nation : the futility of attempts to escape one's destiny; the inevitability of punishment for wrong-doers; the helpfulness of animals towards favoured men.

This is, for instance, not the only story in which we find helpful animals acting in favour of an ancient poet : Arion is rescued by a dolphin [212]; cranes ensure that vengeance is taken on the murderers of Ibycus [213]. Observing this, Karl Lehrs was led to the conclusion, revolutionary in his time, that we are dealing here with a floating motif of the popular imagination [214]. He saw these stories as the product

[206] Stesichorus fr. 59 Page; Ovid *Met.* III 138 ff.

[207] *Life of Aeschylus* 322.17 ff. Page = *BGM* 120.56 ff.; Val. Max. IX 12. *ext.* 2; Aelian, *De Nat. An.* VII 16.

[208] Sext. Emp. *Adv. Gramm.* 267.

[209] *Certamen* B 233.215 ff. Allen = *BGM* 41.214 ff. cf. Thuc. III 96. *Conv. Sept. Sap.* 162d; *BGM* 48.88 ff.; 50.9 ff.

[210] *Certamen* B 234.238 ff. Allen = *BGM* 42.37 ff. — Alcidamas' version.

[211] *Ibid.* 240 ff. = *BGM* 42.39 ff. — Eratosthenes' version.

[212] See especially Hdt. I 24; Plut. *Conv. Sept. Sap.* 160d ff.

[213] *Anth. Pal.* VII 745 = A.S.F. Gow - D.L. Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams*, Cambridge 1965, p. 17, xix; Plut. *De Garr.* 509 f; *Suda* s.v. *Ἴβυκος* = *BGM* 106.66 ff.

[214] *Populäre Aufsätze*, p. 385 ff.

of a popular belief in the protection of poets by the gods. In addition, since his day an enormous amount of research has been done on popular legends, ancient and modern, and it has been shown that the motif of 'helpful animals' is found in the folk-lore of a great many lands [215].

In Lehrs' time the standard approach to marvellous tales was to strip away, or rationalize, the miraculous elements in them, and to try to find an underlying kernel of truth. This approach is far from having fallen into disuse since then, and not without some justification, for it is unquestionably true that some legends do arise from the accretion of fanciful material around a real historical event. What Lehrs pointed out [216] was that not all need originate in this way. Certain types of story, taken from a common stock of folk-tradition which knows no national barriers, can become attached to any great man. In the case of such legends it is a hopeless task to try to find any kernel of historical truth beneath the *mirabilia*. There may be none; or it may be that something the man in question said or wrote has been taken in an over-literal sense by his public, and so has given rise to the story.

Popular legend, throughout the Hellenistic period and right into the time of the Roman Empire, liked to surround the lives of men of genius with marvels [217]. We find, for example, in the biographies, reflections of the typical hero's birth of folk-lore, which has been outlined in the following terms :

« 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 » [218].

[215] Cf. A. Marx, *Griechische Märchen von dankbaren Tieren*, Stuttgart 1889; A. Aarne-S. Thompson, *The types of the Folktale* (*FF Communications* 184), Helsinki 1964, p. 188 ff.

[216] K. Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze* 393; cf. W.J. Slater, *GRBS* 12 (1971), p. 141 ff.; L.E. Woodbury, *Helen and the Palinode*, *Phoenix* 21 (1967), p. 172 ff.

[217] Cf. D.R. Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 145 f.; *Authors' Lives*, passim; *On Virgil Eclogue IV*, *Class. Phil.* 16 (1921), p. 209 ff.; R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*, Leipzig 1906.

[218] J. de Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend* (transl. Timmer), Oxford 1963, p. 210 f. N.b. certain military and political leaders in antiquity, as well as the great literary figures mentioned here, were said to be sons of gods : Alexander : Plut. *Alex.* 2.1 ff.; Scipio Africanus : Gell. *N.A.* VI 1; citing C. Oppius and Julius Hyginus; Augustus : Suet. *Aug.* 94, citing Asclepiades of Mendes (*FGrHist* 617F2). The Alexander legend was clearly the model for the other two.

There were stories that Homer was the son of Apollo and Kalliope, the Muse; [219] or of the river Meles and Kritheis, a nymph [220]; or of some divinity who danced with the Muses and Kritheis, in this case a mortal girl [221]. Pythagoras was said to have been the son of Apollo [222], or to have been in a previous incarnation Aethalides, the son of Hermes [223]. More surprising is the fact that a legend of divine parentage came to be told of Plato, who lived in the full glare of 4 th century publicity, either very soon after his death, or perhaps even within his life-time :

« Speusippus in the work entitled *Plato's Funeral Feast*, Clearchus in his *Encomium on Plato*, and Anaxilaides in his second book *On Philosophers*, tell us that there was a story at Athens that Ariston made violent love to Perictione, then in her bloom, and failed to win her; and that, when he ceased to offer violence, Apollo appeared to him in a dream, whereupon he left her unmolested until her child was born » (D.L. III 2.).

Another account is rather more explicit about the part played by Apollo :

φασὶν οὖν ὅτι φάσμα Ἀπολλωνιακὸν συνεγένετο τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ τῇ Περικτιόνῃ καὶ ἐν νυκτὶ φανὲν τῷ Ἀρίστωνι ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῷ μή μιγνύναι τῇ Περικτιόνῃ μέχρι τοῦ χρόνου τῆς ἀποτέξεως [224].

There does not seem to be any sign that Hellenistic rationalizing critics did much to put this story out of circulation. Indeed, later biographers seem to have lapped it up and to have taken pleasure in adducing all kinds of weird and wonderful 'proofs' that Plato was Apollonian [225]. We find, for example, in one *Life* this delightful piece of reasoning : Plato lived to the age of eighty-one; 81 = 9^2; there are nine Muses; the Muses are the attendants of Apollo; therefore Plato was Apollonian [226].

Ancient de-mythologizers can be seen in action, though, in the case

[219] Charax *FGrHist* 103 F62 cited in *Suda* s.v. *Ὅμηρος* 256.3 Allen = *BGM* 31.2 f.

[220] *Vita* 1V 245.2 Allen = *BGM* 27.2 f.; *Suda* s.v. *Ὅμηρος* 256.1 Allen = *BGM* 31.1 f.

[221] Ps.-Plut. *Life of Homer* 240.25 Allen = *BGM* 21.23 ff. citing 'Aristotle in the third book of the *Poetics*'.

[222] Iamblichus, *de Vita Pythagorica* 2.7, citing Epimenides (*FGrHist* 457F16) Euxodus and Xenocrates (fr. 22 Heinze). Other authorities actually identified Pythagoras with Apollo or one of the other gods, *ibid.* 6.30.

[223] D.L. VIII 4.

[224] Olympiodorus, *Life of Plato* = *BGM* 382.9 ff. Cf. Philostr. *Ap. of Tyana* 4.

[225] E.g. *BGM* 389.44 ff.

[226] *Ibid.* 396.210 ff.

of the Homer and Pythagoras legends : Kritheis, the mother of Homer, is transformed into an unmarried mother who just happens to give birth to her son on the banks of the river Meles [227]; Iamblichus, the biographer of Pythagoras, cannot believe that the philosopher was the son of Apollo, but he can envisage him as in some sense the servant of Apollo, sent by him to mankind [228].

Stories of the apotheosis of certain mystically-inclined philosophers also circulated, though in the extant *Lives* they tend to be swamped with hostile criticism. Hermippus, for instance, regarded the descent to Hades by which Pythagoras had convinced people he was divine, as an elaborate hoax. He declared that Pythagoras had merely spent a long time in an underground dwelling, and had been kept informed about news of the world above by means of letters from his mother (D.L. VIII 41). Then there was the case of Empedocles. As this philosopher had once written a poem which contained the claim : « I go about among you an immortal god, no more a mortal » [229], it is not exactly surprising that a legend arose in which he was said to have transcended ordinary mortality. Heraclides Ponticus related that Empedocles was found to be missing the morning after a sacrifice :

« A search was made, and they questioned the servants, who said that 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 behold a light in the heavens and a glitter of lamps, but nothing else » [230].

Other historians, however, heaped scepticism on the stories of the foundation of Empedocles' cult, relating what had really happened was that he had jumped into the crater of Aetna, hoping that his followers, on not finding his body, would believe him immortal, but that one of his shoes happened to be thrown out of the volcano, so that the fraud was exposed [231]. Timaeus went further, arguing that

[227] Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F1 = Ps.-Plut. *Life of Homer* 240.25 ff. Allen, *BGM* 21.7 ff. Ps.-Hdt. *Life of Homer* 193.3 ff. Allen = *BGM* 21.7 ff. For similar rationalising processes cf. Hdt. I 122 (2 versions of the infancy of Cyrus); Livy I 4 (2 versions of the birth of Romulus and Remus.)

[228] Iambl. *de Vita Pythagorica* 2.8.

[229] Emped. B 112.4f. Diels/Kranz = D.L. VIII 66. transl. Hicks.

[230] Heracleides fr. 83 Wehrli = D.L. VIII 68 transl. Hicks. For a similar tradition, see Philostr. *Ap. of Tyana* 8.30.

[231] D.L. VIII 69 quoting Hippobotus.

the reason why it was not known where Empedocles was buried was simply that he had left Sicily [232].

We see, then, in the biographies of pagan antiquity, evidence of the survival, never far below the surface, of very ancient beliefs in the close relationship of men of genius with the gods. We also find rationalistic speculations designed to explain away supernatural elements in the legends about great men, but the rationalists were rather prone to let their own mythopoeic instincts get the better of them, so that some of their explanations are just as fanciful as the stories they wished to discredit.

***

The ancient *Lives* of literary men, Greek and Roman, present a curious mixture of fact and fiction. They contain fact, because, by the process of drawing inferences from a man's works and the writings of his contemporaries, the biographers were bound often to arrive at the truth. The fiction is there because of a lack of good sense on the part of many biographers over the use of this deductive method; because of their assumption that history should fall into neat patterns; and because certain powerful motifs derived from folk-tradition, together with vigorous story-telling instincts, remained very much alive in the minds of many people throughout antiquity, and found an outlet, not only in the elaborating of myths about the gods and heroes, and in the invention of purely fictional romances, but in the weaving of legends around historical figures.

Girton College, Cambridge Janet FAIRWEATHER

[232] D.L. VIII 71 = *FGrHist* 566F6.