heroic effects' (*gennikōtatois pathesi* 3.6) summarises Aeschylus' description in the *Frogs* of how his dramas the *Seven* and the *Persae* made the citizens 'heroic' (*gennaious*, 1017). Chamaeleon's claim (fr. 41 Wehrli) that Aeschylus first created choreography (*prōton schēmatisai*) is based directly on the lines given the poet in a lost play (fr. 677) of Aristophanes: 'I myself made the arrangements [*schēmata epoioun*] for choruses' (T38 Wil). Special stage effects and scenery listed in the *Vita*, 'altars, tombs, trumpets, images and Furies' are mentioned in the text of his dramas (altars and tombs, *Cho.* 160, trumpets,[21] *Eum.* 568 and *Ran.* 1041; Furies, *Eum.*). Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1449a) says he was the first to use two actors; the *Vita* (3.11) gives their names, Cleandrus and Mynniscus, but then adds that he 'invented the third actor, though Dicaearchus of Messene says it was Sophocles'. Dicaearchus got this information from his teacher Aristotle, who claimed that Sophocles added the third actor and scenery; but all of this 'data' can be deduced from the texts of their plays.[22] In the *Persae* and *Septem* Aeschylus uses two actors, but in the *Oresteia* he uses three. Aristotle's scheme makes a neat progression out of a continuing process of experimentation.[23] Aeschylus may have been the first to equip the actors with gloves and robes and higher buskins; but it is likely that these discoveries were imputed to him by later critics primarily because he was considered the first major dramatist.

[21] Taplin 1977, 393n.2.
[22] Knox 1979, 40–1.
[23] Cf. also TT36–40 Wil.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sophocles

The compiler of the Life of Sophocles[1] evidently had before him several biographies of the poet from which to draw his information. He selects data with some discrimination, discarding information that runs contrary to common sense. He declares that Aristoxenus was wrong to call Sophocles' father Sophillus a carpenter (fr. 115 W), and Ister to say that he was a bronze-smith or sword-maker (*FGrHist* 334F33) because a man descended from a tradesman would not have held generalship 'along with Pericles and Thucydides, who were the most important men in the city'. He also says that Ister is not to be believed when he said that Sophocles was a Phliasian by birth,[2] because the information is to be found only in Ister. So he concludes that Sophocles was an Athenian by birth, from a good family, though he does not cite Ion of Chios, Sophocles' contemporary, who says Sophocles behaved like 'any other Athenian aristocrat' (T75.32/35 W) nor does he observe that Sophocles must have come from a leading family since he participated (as he says later) in Athenian cult.

But even though the compiler distinguishes between sensible and fanciful (or likely and less likely) information, he does not inquire into the nature of the source material on which Aristoxenus and Ister drew. He observes that 'indeed if his father had been a tradesman, he would not have got off without abuse from the comic poets';[3] but he does not note

[1] See Appendix 4.
[2] The satyr plays on which tragedy was thought to have been based were invented by Pratinas of Phlius, cf. Dioscorides *EG* 2860 (T179); Gow-Page 1965, on 1599; did Ister misunderstand his source?
[3] The joke would only make sense if Euripides' parents were well-born; apparently no one made fun of Socrates because his mother Phaenarete was a midwife, *Theaet.* 149a; Herodicus apud Ath. v.219b; pp. 127–8 below.

that the comic poets were the most ready source of Aristoxenus' and Ister's information. The fourth-century historian Philochorus denied the comic poets' allegations that Euripides' mother was a vegetable seller; 'actually both his parents were well-born' (*FGrHist* 328F218).[4] But he might simply have deduced this information from accounts of Euripides' participation in Attic cult.[5]

Sophocles' biographer does not question Ister or his other sources when they provide plausible information: 'He trained with the other boys both in wrestling and in music, and won crowns for both, as Ister says' (*FGrHist* 334F35); 'Satyrus says that Sophocles invented the crooked staff himself' (*FHG* 3.161ff.); 'Ister also says [*FGrHist* 334F36] that he discovered the white half-boots that actors and chorus members wear, etc.' 'He won twenty victories, according to Carystius' (*FHG* 4.359). 'Sophocles was more pious than anyone else, according to what Hieronymus says' (fr. 31 Wehrli). But in Aeschylus' case the biographers' sources for plausible information were the same as for implausible: comedy and anecdotes based on the poet's own dramas.

Sophocles' biographer concludes his discussion of the poet's birth by reaffirming that he was an Athenian from the deme of Colonus: 'He was distinguished both because of his life and his poetry. He was well-educated and raised in comfortable circumstances, and he was involved in government and in embassies abroad.' Some of this information could easily be deduced from the very existence of his poetry; but there is independent confirmation that he came from Colonus and held public office. An inscription records that '[S]ophocles [from] Colo[nus]' was state treasurer in 443/2 B.C. (T18/*ATL* 2.18); according to the fourth-century historian Androtion he was one of the ten generals in the Samian war of 441/0 (*FGrHist* 324F38/T19). But this true information ironically became the source of influential false deductions: that the *Oedipus at Colonus* was in certain ways autobiographical, and that Sophocles' generalship had direct bearing on the date of his *Antigone* (T25 Radt = *Ant. Arg.* 1.15 Pearson).

[4] Jacoby on *FGrHist* 328F218. [5] See below, p. 92.

After the long opening statement about Sophocles' birth, his biographer gives his birth date (495/4) and his age in relation to Aeschylus (seven years younger) and Euripides (twenty-four years older). He then records evidence of the poet's talents: according to Ister 'he trained with the other boys both in wrestling and in music and won crowns for both' (*FGrHist* 334F35); 'he studied music with Lamprus, and after the naval battle at Salamis [in 480, when Sophocles was fifteen], when the Athenians were standing round the victory monument, Sophocles with his lyre, naked and anointed with oil, led the chorus which sang the paean at the victory sacrifice'. An anecdote preserved by Athenaeus and the scholia on Homer says that he played ball excellently when he acted the part of Nausicaa (T25–30). These anecdotes, like Ister's information that Sophocles' father was a bronze-smith or sword maker, are meant as representations of the poet's heroic stature, not as statements of literal fact; the same impulse emphasises the importance of Aeschylus' military service in his biography. They also show that the poet's talent was evident when he was very young. As in Pindar's case, early recognition helps account for extraordinary productivity over a long period of time—in both cases, ancient dating suggests almost half a century. 'He learned about tragedy from Aeschylus' is another representative statement, meant to indicate his place in the succession; it accounts for a different 'fact' from the contradictory information in the Aeschylus *Vita*, which claims that Aeschylus was defeated by Sophocles as a young man, and so left Athens for Sicily (II.61 Soph. T36–7).

Aristotle said that Sophocles invented the third actor (*Poet.* 1449a15/T95). Sophocles' biographer reports this 'fact' without adumbration. But since Aeschylus also used three actors (T96 Radt = Aesch. *Vit.* 3.12), the notion[6] that Sophocles invented the practice is simply representative, an indication that with Sophocles tragedy attained what Aristotle regarded as 'its natural form' (1449a15); the statement that he increased the size of the chorus from twelve to fifteen belongs in the same category. Sophocles' biographer 'confirms' that Sophocles

[6] P. 74 above.

discovered the third actor by an explanatory anecdote: Sophocles 'broke the tradition of the poet's acting because his own voice was weak—in the old days the poet himself served as one of the actors' (4). The idea that the poet himself led the chorus is inherent in Aristotle's derivation of tragedy from 'those who led dithyrambs' (*Poet.* 1449a11). Poets speak of 'leading' choral song; for example, Archilochus' verses 'I know how to lead a beautiful song to lord Dionysus, a dithyramb' (fr. 120 W). It seems unlikely that Sophocles' biographer, writing centuries after tragedy had ceased to be performed, had access to any other source of information about the poet's acting. The notion that Sophocles' voice was weak was apparently intended to explain only his use of three actors, since it is contradicted by three other anecdotes: (1) a picture of Sophocles playing a lyre in the Stoa Poikile painting (*Vita* 5), (2) the story that he choked to death while reading the *Antigone* (*Vita* 14), (3) the story that he played the part of Nausicaa in the *Washerwomen* (T28–30).[7] Sophocles' biographer is aware of the inconsistency because he explains 'only in the Thamyris did he ever sing'. Did the Thamyris seem particularly suitable because it told the story of a bard who competed with the Muses (*Il.* 2.549ff.)?[8] When Pindar tells Aeneas in *Ol.* 6.87ff. to rouse his comrades to sing, the scholia explain: 'Aeneas was the chorus-leader. He used him because of his weak voice and because of not being able to recite to choruses himself, as most poets did for themselves when they competed' (Schol. *Ol.* 6.149a 188).[9]

Aeschylus is said to have 'equipped the actors with gloves and dignified them with long robes and elevated their stance with higher buskins' (3.9ff.); Sophocles, according to Satyrus (*FHG* 3.161ff.) 'invented the crooked staff himself; according to Ister (*FGrHist* 334F36), he 'discovered the white half-boots that actors and chorus members wear, wrote his dramas to suit their characters, and organised a thiasos to the Muses'. At the end of the *Vita*, Sophocles' biographer records that Aristoxenus in his *History of Music* said Sophocles was the first Athenian to

[7] P. 77 above.
[8] Pp. 12, 33 above; cf. Soph. T99b.
[9] Bell 1978, 62.

use Phrygian music and to mix in the dithyrambic style (fr. 79 Wehrli). The source of virtually all of Aeschylus' biographer's information about Aeschylus' scenic innovations was Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[10] The fragments of Satyrus' *Life of Euripides* indicate that his principal source material also consisted of comedy and Euripides' own plays.[11]

The notion that Sophocles wrote his dramas to suit his actors' characters cannot reflect fifth-century practice, since the archons assigned protagonists to the dramatists by lot (Suda s.v. *nemesis hypokritōn*).[12] Though the idea may reflect changes in the fourth century, the most likely source of the information is comedy. Aristophanes has Agathon dress in women's clothes and argue that poets ought to adapt their habits to their poetry (*Thesm.* 149–50): poets who write Ionic rhythms like Ibycus, Anacreon, and Alcaeus, ought to wear effeminate Ionic dress (*Thesm.* 159ff.).[13] In context the proposal is meant to sound ridiculous; but there is (as in all good jokes) a basic reality behind it: Anacreon was already represented in vase painting in a woman's Lydian cap.[14] In the third century Satyrus cited Aristophanes to explain Euripides' anti-social behaviour: 'He is like what he makes his characters say' (fr. 59 Austin).[15]

That Sophocles organised a *thiasos* of cultivated people could be based on historical fact; a fifth-century inscription records the seating-plan of a *thiasos* to which the poet Aristophanes belonged, with two men he mentions in his comedies.[16] But since ancient biographers appear rarely to have consulted anything other than literary documents, it seems more likely that the notion of Sophocles' *thiasos* derives from a representation in comedy or in a dialogue which like Plato's *Symposium* describes the gathering (and seating arrangement) of learned friends at the home of the tragic poet Agathon.[17]

The next statement in Sophocles' *Vita* comes directly from comedy: 'In a word his character was so charming that he was loved everywhere and by everyone' (7). Aristophanes in the

[10] Pp. 70, 73–4 above.
[11] P. 99 below.
[12] Owen 1936, 148–9.
[13] Pp. 52–3 above.
[14] Snyder 1974, 243–6.
[15] P. 166 n.7 below.
[16] See p. 88 n.3.
[17] Dover 1980, 10.

Frogs characterised Sophocles as 'easy-going here [i.e. in this world] and easy-going there [in Hades]' (8);[18] one of Hades' servants described Sophocles as readily yielding first place to Aeschylus: 'he kissed Aeschylus, when he came down here, and grasped his right hand, and he stood back from the Chair' (788–90) (T101, 102).[19] According to Phrynichus (T105) 'he lived for many years and died a happy man and clever; after writing many good tragedies he died well, without having suffered any impairment'. Ion of Chios describes how Sophocles contrives without force to get a young boy to kiss him, while carrying on a witty conversation. The characterisation may have some foundation in fact: Sophocles was repeatedly elected to public office; he is said never to have won third prize. But to some extent at least the notion of charm and ease may reflect ancient assessments of his style (T 108ff.). His biographer later paraphrases a fragment of Aristophanes about Sophocles' mouth being anointed with honey (22/cf. T108 = fr. 581 Kock), and claims he was called 'the bee' because 'he culled the best from all his predecessors'.[20] Aristophanes said of Phrynichus (the tragic poet) 'like a bee he sucked the fruit of melodies immortal, ever carrying away sweet song' (*Av.* 748–50). But this traditional characterisation of lyric style was applied by literary critics particularly to Sophocles, because it places him midway in a linear progression between Aeschylus' rough archaism and Euripides' smooth sophistry.

To support the statement that Sophocles was loved by everyone, the biographer supplies two anecdotes testifying to his popularity: (1) the Athenians elected him general when he was sixty-five years old, seven years before the start of the Peloponnesian war (431/0);[21] (2) 'he was so loyal to Athens that when many kings sent for him he did not want to leave his country'. Plutarch knew the story about his second generalship (T26), which sounds as if it were designed to put two famous men, Sophocles and Nicias, together; Plutarch's punch-line

[18] P. 68 above.
[19] Stanford 1963, 139.
[20] P. 59 above.
[21] Woodbury 1970, 214–15; Friis Johansen 1962, 110.

emphasises Sophocles' linguistic skill, like Ion's story about the symposium in Chios.[22] Ion (*FGrHist* 392F6) and Androtion (*FGrHist* 324F38) mention only his service in the Samian war of 441/0. His loyalty to Athens sets him apart from Aeschylus, who went to Sicily, and Euripides, who according to Aristotle went to the court of Archelaus king of Macedon. The patterns of these poets' lives, and Homer's, may have suggested to biographers that foreign kings might have been interested also in Sophocles. In any case the notion of their interest could easily have been pointed out by a comic poet: Aristophanes boasts that the king of Persia wanted to know whom Aristophanes was criticising in his poetry because his advice is so good (*Ach.* 646ff.). The joke was taken seriously by his biographer.[23] The fourth-century poets Menander and Philemon were said to have been invited to Alexandria by Ptolemy Soter; the story (recorded in one of Alciphron's imaginary letters, iv. 8.4–5 = Menander fr. 12 K-Th) may have been based on the actual experience of the Athenian writer and statesman Demetrius of Phaleron, who went in exile to Alexandria and became librarian under Ptolemy Philadelphus.

The relation between Sophocles' generalship and his poetry was of great interest to his biographers. Aristophanes of Byzantium notes in his hypothesis to Sophocles' *Antigone* that 'Sophocles was judged worthy of the generalship in the campaign against Samos, because of the high reputation he had won from having put on the Antigone' (T25). Ion, in his anecdote about Sophocles' visit to Chios, also implies that there is some relationship between his reputation as a poet and his serving as general (T75 = *FGrHist* 392F6). Sophocles uses an elaborate ruse to get a young slave boy to kiss him, and then observes '"I am interested in strategy [*stratēgein*, being a general], gentlemen, although Pericles said I can write poetry, but don't understand strategy; but now didn't that strategy of mine work out perfectly?"' Ion's anecdote gives Sophocles more credit for his wit than for his success in public office: 'He said and did many things cleverly when he was drinking, but in

[22] P. 67 above.
[23] Lefkowitz 1978, 459; p. 111 below.

political matters he was no more clever or persuasive than any other Athenian aristocrat.'[24]

Ion's anecdote, at least in the form we have it, does not say anything specific about the *Antigone*. The only ancient evidence that links the *Antigone* specifically with Sophocles' generalship during the Samian campaign is Aristophanes of Byzantium's hypothesis (T25).[25] Aristophanes could have discovered the date of the play from chronological information in Callimachus' *Catalogues* (*Pinakes*); but a quite different date was suggested by Callimachus' contemporary Satyrus, a generation before Aristophanes. An anecdote is preserved in Sophocles' *Vita* that according to Satyrus Sophocles died while reciting a passage from the *Antigone*, or as 'others' said, he died of joy when he had recited the play and heard that he was proclaimed victor (14), that is, in 406/5 B.C. The co-existence of these stories suggests that in the third century there was no fixed information available about the date of the *Antigone*.[26] Aristophanes, in suggesting a link between Sophocles' term as general and the composition of the play, might only have been making a logical conjecture, the way he claimed that the *Odyssey* ended at 23.296, after Odysseus and Penelope were reunited.[27]

The subject matter of the *Antigone* apparently suggested to biographers that it was performed at the time of a political crisis. The Samian revolt challenged the authority of the Athenian empire;[28] Sophocles died not long before Athens was defeated in the Peloponnesian war. It is conceivable that Sophocles could have written some portion of the *Antigone* as commentary on a particular event; but in practice fifth-century dramas appear to offer general warnings rather than to respond to specific political situations. Aeschylus' *Persians*, produced eight years after the defeat of the Persian navy at Salamis, portrayed the dangers of *hybris*; Herodotus finished his books about the defeat of the Persians as Athens was developing her

[24] Cf. Aeschylus composing while drunk, p. 68 above.
[25] On the evidence, Woodbury 1970, 210–24.
[26] P. 86 below; cf. Woodbury 1970, 223.
[27] Pfeiffer 1968, 1 175; Rossi 1968, 151–63.
[28] Hammond 1959, 314–16.

own empire.[29] Euripides' *Trojan Women* was produced in 415, the year that Athens put down the Melian rebellion and prepared her expedition against Sicily; but the general issue of how to deal with dissident allies had already been raised by the Mytilenean revolt of 427, at the very beginning of the war. Sophocles' service as Hellenotamias in 443/2 and as general in the war against the Anaeans in 438 (?) need not have had any more direct bearing on his poetry than Aeschylus' service as soldier in the Persian wars.[30]

Since Sophocles' biographer wishes to present a favourable picture of the poet he does not include any reference to allegations of misconduct in public office, e.g. Aristophanes' claim in 421 in his comedy *Peace* that Sophocles turned into Simonides, because he was 'old and debauched and ready to go to sea on a raft in order to make money' (697).[31] One of the scholia on the line explains that both poets were guilty of 'loving money' and that Sophocles 'made money out of his generalship in Samos' (T104c). Another scholion denies the story (T104d); charges of corruption were made routinely in comedy against important public figures,[32] and Aristophanes did not hesitate to make fun even of members of his thiasos for 'impiety' and sexual misconduct.[33]

After the anecdotes about Sophocles' political status, his biographer provides two illustrations of his piety: he held the priesthood of the hero Halon (maintained after his death by his son Iophon); according to Hieronymus (fr. 31 Wehrli) he established a shrine to Heracles Informer as a result of a dream in which Heracles told him where to find a golden crown that had been stolen from the Acropolis.[34] Sophocles used the reward for finding the crown to build the shrine. Both stories

[29] Fornara 1971, 89–91.
[30] Cf. Woodbury 1970, 213n.24; pp. 69–70 above.
[31] P. 52 above; cf. p. 108 n.9 below.
[32] A Creon served with Sophocles as one of the ten generals in 441/0, Androtion *FGrHist* 324F38; but cf. Woodbury 1970, 209–24.
[33] P. 89 n.3 below.
[34] Cf. Hieronymus' aetiology of an epigram addressed to Euripides about Sophocles' cloak (fr. 35 Wehrli = T75 Radt = Ath. 604d–f); the epigram is attributed to Sophocles (fr. 4 West = *EG* 462ff.), but its style (e.g. *speirōn* not as a metaphor) and content seem Hellenistic; West 1974, 20–1.

seem plausible enough; but since the other anecdotes in the life appear to be derived from poetry and hypothesis rather than independent sources, there is reason to be suspicious of the origin even of these stories. Halon is unattested elsewhere;[35] the biographer identifies him as 'a hero under Chiron's tutelage along with Asclepius' (11). Other anecdotes, not in the *Vita*, testify that Sophocles 'gave hospitality to Asclepius', that is, received the god in his house (T67), and that because of this act Sophocles himself was later worshipped as the hero Dexion ('Receiver', T69). Like Aristodemus' story of Pindar and the cult of Demeter,[36] the anecdotes about Sophocles appear to represent recognition given to the poet in the Hellenistic period and after. Dexion is mentioned in inscriptions of the second and third centuries A.D. (T70–1),[37] but in actual cult practice adult heroes are worshipped under their own names and do not acquire new identities.[38] Sophocles is said to have written a paean for Asclepius (T73a = *PMG* 737); were stories about his priesthood created to explain references to himself in the ode, like the stories about Pindar's *Hymn to Demeter*? Was the story about the shrine of Heracles Informer also intended to explain the existence of a particular poem, like the stories about Pindar's *Hymns* to Pan and Ammon?[39]

Behind the idea of Sophocles being worshipped as the hero Dexion lies the plot of the *Oedipus at Colonus*. The old Oedipus wants to be buried at Colonus, near Athens, 'to bring gain to the house of those who receive me and destruction to those who sent me away' (92–3). In the play, he curses his son Polynices who tries to make him go back to Thebes. This scene is the source of the next anecdote (13) in the *Vita*, which tells how Sophocles 'at some point' brought a law-suit against his son Iophon because of Iophon's jealousy of Sophocles' favouritism

[35] Friis Johanssen 1962, 110.

[36] Pp. 61–2 above.

[37] The name expresses the kindly aspect of the dead hero; cf. Hypodectes (*IG*² II 1061), Dexamenos; *dechomai* can denote divine protection (e.g. Pind., *Pyth.* 8.5, 19; 9.73).

[38] Change of name signifies a change from child to adult, Brelich 1958, 128; when Melicertes becomes a god he acquires the name Palaemon; schol. Pind., *Isthm.* hypoth., III p. 192.

[39] P. 60 above.

for his other son Ariston's child who was also called Sophocles. 'Once in a drama he portrayed his son Iophon as being envious [of the young Sophocles] and as making accusations to his clansmen that his father had lost his mind in his old age. They censured Iophon. Satyrus says the poet said: "If I am Sophocles I'm not out of my mind; if I am out of my mind, I'm not Sophocles", and then he produced the *Oedipus [at Colonus]*.' The punch line 'if I am Sophocles' expresses the same general sentiment as the epigram 'No one's memory compares with Simonides' at eighty' (fr. 14 W). Biographers needed to account for extraordinary competence in old age.[40]

The source of Satyrus' anecdote about Sophocles and Iophon appears to be a comedy about Sophocles' family:[41] 'In a drama he portrayed his son Iophon as being envious'; 'He made accusations before his clansmen'; 'Sophocles brought a lawsuit' suggests the setting of at least two of its scenes. The anecdote preserves the names of the characters: Sophocles, Iophon, his son by Nicostrate, Ariston, his son by Theoris of Sicyon, her child Sophocles. The subject of the dispute—distribution of attention or affection—is a comic reduction of real-life litigation among step-children over distribution of property. In his *Life of Euripides* Satyrus combines the plot of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae* with a quotation from Euripides' *Melanippe* to create an incident in the poet's life: that the women of Athens threatened him but let him off when he promised never again to say anything bad about them; he even cites the 'decree' against Euripides from *Thesm.* 335ff.[42] Aristophanes has Dionysus joke about Iophon's dependence on Sophocles (*Ran.* 73ff.); but Sophocles' biographer lists Iophon as one of Sophocles' rivals in poetic competitions (19).

After the anecdote about Sophocles as an old man, his biographer provides three different accounts of his death, without judging which is the most likely: (1) Sophocles choked on an unripe grape at the festival of the Choes; (2) he lost his

[40] Pp. 54–5 above.

[41] See Radt ad loc.; Jebb 1900, xxxix–xliii; Ar., *Rhet.* 1416a3 cites Sophocles as saying to an 'accuser' that he trembled not in order to appear old, but from necessity.

[42] Pp. 89–90 below.

voice (and breath) while reading the *Antigone*; (3) after the drama had been recited he died of joy when he was declared victor. Like Aeschylus' death, each of these deaths is particularly appropriate for a poet, but at the same time degrading. The grape he choked on at the festival of the Choes was sent to him by Callippides the actor; the source of this story is Ister (*FGrHist* 334F37), whose account of Sophocles' birth the biographer disregarded; it was also recorded in Neanthes' account of amazing deaths (*FGrHist* 84F18). The original anecdote may have emphasised Sophocles' fondness for drink; 'He used to say and do many things cleverly . . . when he was drinking'.[43] The story that he choked while reading the *Antigone* is attributed to Satyrus (*FHG* 3.162);[44] as in the case of the story of Euripides and the women, and the tale of Sophocles' quarrel with Iophon, Satyrus connects events in the poets' lives with their art. The third story, attributed to no particular author, appears simply to offer a more sentimental form of death as the result of the *Antigone*. It is interesting that two anecdotes select Antigone rather than *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which Aristotle repeatedly uses to illustrate excellence in composition (e.g. *Poet.* 1453a); Dioscorides in his epigram about Sophocles picks *Antigone* or *Electra* as the 'top' (*EG* 2866–7).[45]

Like Aeschylus, Sophocles is recognised as a hero only after his death. Details are given about the location (eleven stades from the city wall) and decoration (a siren or Chelidon) of his tomb. The precise details suggest that in late antiquity a tomb was identified as Sophocles' and pointed out to tourists. An anecdote explains how he came to be buried in wartime. Dionysus twice appeared to the Spartan general Lysander in a dream; as in the story about Sophocles and the shrine of Heracles Informer,[46] divine intervention acknowledges his importance. The biographer appends an epigram provided by the literary forger Lobon, which emphasises Sophocles' piety: 'In this tomb I hide Sophocles who won first prize with his art, a most holy figure.' The account of his recognition concludes with a final anecdote from Ister (*FGrHist* 334F38): 'The

[43] Pp. 81–2 above.
[44] P. 82 above.
[45] P. 75 n.2 above.
[46] P. 83 above.

Athenians voted to sacrifice to him each year because of his excellence.' The original account by Ister may have referred to the cult of Sophocles as Dexion, but the biographer records only the information needed to show that by the Hellenistic age Sophocles had attained heroic status, like Homer in Argos, Archilochus in Paros or Stesichorus in Catana.[47]

As in Aeschylus' biography, the account of the poet's tomb is followed by statistics of his accomplishments: the number of dramas he wrote (123) and the names of some of his more famous competitors. The source of this information is likely to have been Aristotle's *didaskaliai*, which preserved the names (though not always the titles) of the competitors in most years.[48] The *Vita* then concludes with a general assessment of his style. The examples are different from the discussion of his poetry at the beginning of the *Vita*, but no less simple in character. There is a general estimate of his debt to Homer (vocabulary, plots, especially from the *Odyssey*): 'He delineated character, elaborated and used contrivances skilfully reproducing Homer's charm. For this reason a certain Ionian says that only Sophocles is a pupil of Homer.' The biographer rightly understands the 'certain Ionian's' remark as metaphorical statement about Sophocles' *poetry*. This, and his listing all three versions of the poet's death, suggest that he also considered much of his source material to be representative rather than historical.

[47] Pp. 19, 27, 34 above.
[48] Griffith 1977, 228–9.

THE LIVES OF THE GREEK POETS

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