

exhaustion. As he slept a bee landed on his mouth and built a honeycomb there. Others say that he had a dream in which his mouth was full of honey and wax, and that he then decided to write poetry.

[3] Some authorities say that at Athens his teacher was Agathocles, others say Apollodorus. Apollodorus also, when he was in charge of the dithyrambic choruses and had to be out of town, entrusted their direction to Pindar even though he was still a boy. Pindar directed them so well that he became famous.

[4] When he said that Athens was the bulwark of Hellas [fr. 76] he was fined one thousand drachmas by the Thebans, and the Athenians paid the fine on his behalf.

[5] He was not only a beautiful poet, but he was a man dear to the gods. For example, the god Pan was seen between Cithaeron and Helicon singing a paean of Pindar. Accordingly Pindar wrote a song to the god in which he offers his gratitude for the honour, the poem that begins 'O Pan, Pan protector of Arcadia and guard of sacred shrines' [fr. 95]. And Demeter also appeared in a dream and blamed him, because for her alone of all the gods he had written no hymn. So he wrote her the poem that begins 'Queen, lawgiver [?] with golden headband' [fr. 37]. And he also built an altar to both gods outside his house.

[6] When Pausanias the king of the Lacedaemonians was razing Thebes, someone wrote on Pindar's house: 'Don't set fire to the home of the poet Pindar.' As a result his was the only house that remained unburned, and it is now the magistrate's hall in Thebes.

[7] At Delphi also when the priest is getting ready to close the temple he announces each day: 'let Pindar the poet come to join the god at dinner.' For the poet was born during the Pythian festival, as he himself says 'the quadrennial festival with its procession of oxen, in which I first was put to bed in swaddling clothes' [fr. 193].

[8] There is a story that pilgrims went to the temple of Ammon to ask for Pindar what was best for men, and the poet died on that very day.

[9] He lived at the time of Simonides, though he was younger, Simonides older. In fact both of them celebrated the same

events. Simonides wrote about the naval battle at Salamis [fr. 536] and Pindar celebrated the kingdom of [?] [fr. 272]. Both of them were together at the court of Hieron the tyrant of Syracuse.

[10] He married Megacleia the daughter of Lysitheus and Calline and had a son Daiphantus, for whom he wrote a song for the Daphnephoria. He had two daughters, Protomache and Eumetis.

[11] He wrote seventeen books: hymns, paeans, dithyrambs (2), prosodia (2), partheneia (2) and allegedly a third book which has the title of separate partheneia, hyporchemes (2), encomia, lamentations, victory odes (4).

[12] There exists an epigram with the following conclusion:

How Protomache and Eumetis weep for you in shrill voices,
your wise daughters, when they came from Argos bringing home
in an urn your remains which had been gathered from a foreign
funeral pyre.

3. THE LIFE OF AESCHYLUS¹

[p. 1] Aeschylus the tragic poet's nationality was Athenian; his deme Eleusis. He was the son of Euphorion, the brother of Cynegirus. His family was aristocratic. He began writing tragedies when he was a young man and he raised standards far above his predecessors, in writing and in staging, [5] in the splendour of his choral productions, in his actors' costumes and in the serious content of his choral songs. As Aristophanes says:

Oh you who first piled up serious speeches and crowned tragic
talk. [*Ran.* 1004]

He was a contemporary of Pindar's, having been born in the sixty-fourth Olympiad. They say that he was heroic and that he fought in the battle of Marathon [10] along with his brother Cynegirus, and in the naval battle at Salamis along with his

¹ Ed. Page 1972.

younger brother Ameinias, and also in the infantry battle at Plataea.

In the composition of his poetry he strove for a grand style, by using compound words and epithets, [15] and also metaphors and every other device that could lend weight to his diction. The plots of his plays do not abound in reversals and complexities like those of later poets, for he aimed solely at investing his characters with dignity. He thought that heroic grandeur struck the proper archaic note, [20] but that cunning ingenuity and sententiousness were foreign to tragedy. It was for this reason that Aristophanes made fun of him in his comedies, because of his stress on the excessive dignity of his characters. For example, in the *Niobe*, Niobe sits silent by her children's tomb for three scenes with her head covered, and does not utter a word; and in the *Ransom of Hector* [25] Achilles with his head covered similarly does not utter anything except a few words [p.2] at the beginning, in conversation with Hermes. For this reason one could find many outstanding illustrations of his striking dramatic contrivances but few aphorisms or pathetic scenes or other effects calculated to produce tears. He used visual effects and plots [5] more to frighten and amaze than to trick his audience.

He went off to stay with Hieron, according to some authorities, because he was criticised by the Athenians and defeated by Sophocles when the latter was a young man, but according to others because he was defeated by Simonides in an elegy for those who died at Marathon. Elegy in particular needs to have the conciseness necessary to arouse emotion, [10] and Aeschylus' poem (as the story goes) was not suitable. Some say that during the performance of the *Eumenides*, when he brought the chorus on one by one, he so frightened the audience that children fainted and unborn infants were aborted.

Then he went to Sicily at the time that Hieron was founding the city Aetna and put on the *Women of Aetna*, [15] as a favourable portent for a good life for the people living in the city. He was also greatly honoured both by Hieron and by the people of Gela, and after living there for two years he died, an old man, in the following way: an eagle had caught a tortoise, and because it did not have the strength to get control of its prey

threw it down on some rocks in order to break its shell. But the tortoise fell instead [20] on the poet and killed him. For he had received an oracle: 'Something thrown from the sky will kill you.' After his death the people of Gela buried him richly in the city's cemetery and honoured him extravagantly by writing the following epigram:

This tomb in grainbearing Gela covers an Athenian, Aeschylus son of Euphorion, who died here. [25] The famous grove of Marathon could tell of his courage and the longhaired Medea knew it well.

All who made their living in the tragic theatre went to his tomb to offer sacrifices and recited their plays there.

The Athenians [p.3] liked Aeschylus so much that they voted after his death to award a golden crown to whoever was willing to put on one of his dramas. He lived sixty-three years, during which time he wrote seventy dramas and in addition about five satyr plays. [5] He won quite a few victories after his death.

Aeschylus was first to enhance tragedy with highly heroic effects and to decorate the stage and to astound his audience's eyes with splendour, through pictures and devices, with altars and tombs, trumpets, images and Furies. He equipped the actors with gloves and dignified them with long robes and [10] elevated their stance with higher buskins. He used Cleander as first actor; then with him as second actor Mynniscus of Chalcis. It was he who invented the third actor, though Dicaearchus of Messene says it was Sophocles.

If one wanted to compare the simplicity of his dramatic art [15] to dramatists after him, one might think it insignificant and unsophisticated. But if one compared his work to his predecessors, one would be amazed at the poet's intelligence and inventiveness. Anyone who thinks that the most perfect writer of tragedy is Sophocles is correct, but he should remember that it was much harder to bring tragedy to such a height after Thespis, Phrynichus [20] and Choerilus, than it was by speaking after Aeschylus to come to Sophocles' perfection.

There is an inscription on his tomb:

I died, struck on the forehead by a missile from an eagle's claws.

They say that he put on [25] the *Persians* in Sicily at Hieron's request and was highly praised for it.

4. THE LIFE OF SOPHOCLES¹

[1] Sophocles was an Athenian by birth. He was the son of Sophillus who was not a carpenter in spite of what Aristoxenus tells us [fr. 115 Wehrli] nor a bronze-smith, nor a sword-maker by trade in spite of what Ister tells us [*FGrHist* 334F33]. As it happened, his father owned *slaves* who were bronze-smiths and carpenters. For it is not logical that a man descended from a tradesman would be considered worthy of a generalship along with Pericles and Thucydides, who were the most important men in the city. Indeed, if his father had been a tradesman, he would not have got off without abuse from the comic poets. Nor ought one to believe Ister [*FGrHist* 334F34] when he says Sophocles was not an Athenian but rather a Phliasian. Even if Sophocles' family originally came from Phlius, still one cannot find this information in any author other than Ister. In fact Sophocles was an Athenian by birth. His deme was 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.

[2] They say that he was born in the second year of the seventy-first Olympiad, when Philip was archon in Athens [495/4 B.C.]. He was seven years younger than Aeschylus, and twenty-four years older than Euripides.

[3] He trained with other boys both in wrestling and in music, and won crowns for both, as Ister says [*FGrHist* 334F35]. He studied music with Lamprus, and after the naval battle at Salamis, 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.

¹ Ed. Radt 1977.

[4] He learned about tragedy from Aeschylus. He also was responsible for innovations in the dramatic competitions. He was the first to break the tradition of the poet's acting because his own voice was weak. For in the old days the poet himself served as one of the actors. He changed the number of chorus members from twelve to fifteen and invented the third actor.

[5] They say that he also took up the lyre and that only in the *Thamyris* did he ever sing; on account of this there is a picture of him playing a lyre in the Painted Stoa.

[6] Satyrus says [*FHG* 3.161ff.] that Sophocles invented the crooked staff himself. Ister also says [*FGrHist* 334F36] that he discovered the white half-boots that actors and chorus members wear, and that he wrote his dramas to suit their characters, and that he organised a *thiasos* to the Muses of cultivated people.

[7] In a word, his character was so charming that he was loved everywhere and by everyone.

[8] He won twenty victories, according to Carystius [*FHG* 4.359]. He often won second prize, but never third.

[9] The Athenians elected him general when he was sixty-five years old, seven years before the Peloponnesian war began, in the war against the Anaioi.

[10] He was so loyal to Athens that when many kings sent for him he did not want to leave his country.

[11] He held the priesthood of Halon, who was a hero under Chiron's tutelage along with Asclepius. After Sophocles' death Halon's shrine was maintained by his son Iophon.

[12] Sophocles was more pious than anyone else, according to what Hieronymus says [fr. 31 Wehrli] . . . about his golden crown. When this crown was stolen from the Acropolis, Heracles came to Sophocles in a dream and told him to go into the house on the right and it would be hidden there. Sophocles brought this information to the citizens and received a reward of a talent, as had been announced in advance. He used the talent to establish a shrine of Heracles Informer.

[13] The story is told by many authorities that at some point he brought a lawsuit against his son Iophon. Iophon was his son by Nicostrate, but he had a son Ariston by Theoris of Sicyon, and he was especially fond of this son's child, whose name was Sophocles. Once in a drama he portrayed Iophon

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