

... as being envious of him and as making accusations to his clansmen that his father had lost his mind in his old age. They censured Iophon. Satyrus [FHG 3.162] 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*.

[14] Ister [FGrHist 334F37] and Neanthes [FGrHist 84F18] say he died in the following way. When Callippides the actor came from the workshop in Opus and around the time of the festival of the Choes sent Sophocles a bunch of grapes, and when Sophocles put a grape that was still unripe into his mouth, he choked because of his advanced age and died. Satyrus says [FHG 3.162] that when Sophocles was reciting the *Antigone* and came to a passage toward the end of the play that did not have a break or mark for a pause, he strained his voice too much and gave up his life along with his voice. Some say that after he recited the drama, and he was proclaimed winner, he was overcome by joy and died.

[15] His body was placed on top of his ancestral tomb near the road to Deceleia, eleven stades from the city wall. Some say that they put up a statue of a siren in his memory; others, a bronze Cheledon. Since the Spartans were building a wall at this spot against the Athenians, Dionysus appeared to Lysander in a dream and ordered that the man should be buried. When Lysander ignored the dream Dionysus appeared to him a second time with the same message. Lysander then asked some fugitives who had died, and learned that it was Sophocles. So he sent a herald and allowed the Athenians to bury the body.

[16] Lobon says that this epitaph was written on his tomb:

In this tomb I hide Sophocles who won first prize with his tragic art, a most holy figure.

[17] Ister says [FGrHist 334F38] the Athenians voted to sacrifice to him each year because of his excellence.

[18] He wrote one hundred and thirty dramas, as Aristophanes says [p. 249, fr. iv N] of which seventeen are spurious.

[19] He competed against Aeschylus, Euripides, Choerilus, Aristias and many others, including his son Iophon.

[20] In general he used Homeric vocabulary. He took his

plots from the direction set by the epic poet and drew on the *Odyssey* for many of his dramas. He gives the etymology of Odysseus' name [*Od.* 19.406ff.] the way Homer did:

I am Odysseus, named correctly for my troubles. For many impious people have been angry [*odysanto*] at me [fr. 965].

He delineated character, elaborated and used contrivances skilfully, reproducing Homer's charm. For this reason a certain Ionian says only Sophocles is a pupil of Homer. Certainly many poets have imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but Sophocles alone culled the best from each. For this reason he was also called 'the bee'. He brought everything together: timing, sweetness, courage, variety.

[21] He knew how to match timing and events, so that he could delineate a whole character from a fraction of a line or from a single speech. This is the greatest mark of poetic skill, to delineate character or effect.

[22] Aristophanes says [fr. 580A Edmonds] that 'a honeycomb sat on him', and elsewhere (T108 Radt) that Sophocles' mouth is smeared with honey.

[23] Aristoxenus says [fr. 79 Wehrli] that he was the first of the Athenian poets to put Phrygian music into his own songs and to mix in the dithyrambic style.

5. THE LIFE OF EURIPIDES¹

Euripides the poet was the son of Mnesarchides, a storekeeper, and of Cleito, a vegetable-seller.² He was an Athenian. He was born in Salamis while Calliades was archon in the seventy-

¹ Ed. Méridier 1929. In the translation of the *Vita* I have followed Méridier's text: a chronological account (1-49), a set of anecdotes (50-113); then a second short biography with comments on the poet's style (114-35). For the reader's convenience footnotes mark correspondences with earlier sources.

² Text of Satyrus from *POxy.* IX 1176, on the advice of S. West 1966, 546-50, though with some modifications to Hunt's translations. For *Vita* 1-44,

fifth Olympiad, the year when the Greeks fought the naval battle against the Persians.³

[5] At first he practised for the pancration or boxing, because his father had understood an oracle to mean that he would win at contests in which crowns were awarded. And they say that he won a victory in games at Athens. Once he understood the oracle's meaning he turned to writing tragedy; he introduced many innovations, prologues, philosophical discourses, displays of rhetoric and recognition scenes, [10] because he attended lectures by Anaxagoras, Prodicus and Protagoras. Socrates [the philosopher] and Mnesilochus appear to have collaborated with him in some of his writings;⁴ as Teleclides says: 'that fellow Mnesilochus is cooking up a new play [15] for Euripides, and Socrates is supplying him with firewood' [fr. 39, 40]. Some authorities say that Iophon or Timocrates of Argos wrote his lyrics.⁵

They say that he was also a painter and that pictures of his are shown at Megara, that he was a torchbearer in the rites of Apollo Zosterius and that he was born on the same day as Hellanicus, [20] which was the day that the Greeks won the naval battle at Salamis, and that he began to compete in dramatic contests at the age of twenty-six. He emigrated to Magnesia and was awarded the privileges of a *proxenos* there and freedom from taxation. From there he went to Macedonia and stayed at the court of Archelaus. [25] As a favour to him he wrote a drama named for him, and he made out very well there because he was also appointed to an administrative post. It is said that he wore a long beard and had moles on his face; that

cf. also the translation of F. A. Paley, *Euripides*¹² (Cambridge 1872) lx–lxii.

Cf. *FGrHist* 328F218: 'It isn't true that his mother was a vegetable-seller, for it happens that both his parents were well-born, as Philochorus demonstrates.'

³ Cf. Jacoby on *FGrHist* 239A50, 63; 244F35.

⁴ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. ii 8–22, citing two lines of dialogue from a drama: 'When this is done in secret, whom do you fear?' 'The gods, who see more than men.' Such a conception of the gods will be Socratic; for in truth what is invisible to mortals is to the immortal gods easily seen . . .'

⁵ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xvi 17–29: 'The verses have the appearance of being by one of his competitors, as you say. But here too the comic poet's attack on Euripides is mischievous.'

his first wife was Melito, his second Choirile. He left three sons: the oldest [30] Mnesarchides, a merchant; the second, Mnesilochus, an actor; the youngest, Euripides, who produced some of his father's dramas.

He began to produce dramas when Callias was archon in the first year of the eighty-first Olympiad [456 B.C.]. First he put on the *Peliades*, with which he won third prize. He wrote a total of ninety-two dramas, [35] of which seventy-eight are extant. Of these three are spurious: *Tennes*, *Rhadamanthys* and *Perithous*. He died, according to Philochorus, when he was over seventy years old [*FGrHist* 328F220], according to Eratosthenes, seventy-five [*FGrHist* 241F12], and he was buried in Macedonia. He has a cenotaph in Athens, with an inscription on it either by Thucydides the historian or by the lyric poet Timotheus: [40] 'All Hellas is Euripides' memorial, but the land of Macedonia holds his bones, for it took in the end of his life. His fatherland was the Greece of Greece, Athens. Having brought great pleasure with his poetry he also won many men's praise' [*EG* 500ff. = *AP* 7.45]. [45] They say that both monuments were struck by lightning. They say that Sophocles, when he heard that Euripides had died, went before the public in a dark cloak and brought his chorus and actors on stage without crowns on their heads in the ceremonial parade preceding the dramatic competition, and that the citizens wept.

Euripides died in the following manner.⁶ [50] There was a

⁶ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xx 22–35: '(A) Well, these were the events of Euripides' life. The death he met was very violent and peculiar, according to the version of the oldest Macedonian story-tellers. (Diodor.) What was their account? (A) There is in Macedonia . . .'; fr. 39 col. xxi: ' . . . and he begged them off. Some time afterwards Euripides happened to be alone by himself in a grove at a distance from the city, while Archelaus went out to the chase. When they were outside the gates the huntsmen loosed the hounds and sent them on in front, while they themselves were left behind. The dogs fell in with Euripides unprotected and killed him, the huntsmen arriving on the scene later. Hence they say the proverb is still in use among the Macedonians, "There is such a thing as a dog's justice".' Cf. *Hermesianax* 7.61–68 Powell: 'I say that that ever-watchful man, who from all . . . developed a hatred of all women from the depth of his soul, struck by Eros' bent bow could not get rid of nocturnal agonies but wandered down the back alleys of Macedonia pursuing Archelaus' housekeeper, until Fate found a death for Euripides when he encoun-

town in Macedonia called the village of the Thracians because Thracians had once settled there. At some point a female Molossian hound belonging to Archelaus had strayed into the village. This dog the Thracians, as is their custom, sacrificed and ate. Accordingly Archelaus fined them one talent. Since they did not have the money, they asked Euripides to get them released from their debt to the king. [55] Some time later, when Euripides was resting by himself in a grove near the city and Archelaus came out to hunt, his dogs were released by their keepers and fell on Euripides. The poet was torn to shreds and eaten. [60] These dogs were the descendants of the dog that was killed by the Thracians. This is the origin of the Macedonian proverb, 'a dog's justice'.

The story is that in Salamis he furnished a cave that had an opening on the sea and that he spent his days there in order to avoid the public. Because of this he drew most of his comparisons from the sea.⁷ [65] His looks were melancholy, thoughtful and severe; he hated laughter and he hated women.⁸ On that account Aristophanes found fault with him: 'to me [Euripides] seems sour to speak to.'

They say that after he married Mnesilochus' daughter Choirile and realised that she was unfaithful [70] he first wrote the play *Hippolytus*, in which he exposes women's immorality, and then he divorced her. When her next husband said: 'she is chaste in my household,' Euripides replied: 'you're a fool if you think the same woman will be chaste in one man's house

tered Arrhibus' hateful dogs' (reading *ex onychōu* at 62 with Jacobs; see A. Cameron, 'Tener Unguis', *CQ* N.S. 15 [1965] 83). Also the *Suda*, s.v. Eur.: 'He died as a result of a plot by Arrhibius of Macedon and Crateuas of Thessaly, who were poets and envied him and persuaded Lysimachus, who was bought for ten minas, to release on Euripides the royal dogs which he had raised.'

⁷ Cf. *FGrHist* 328F219: 'Philochorus says that he had on the island of Salamis a foul and wretched cave (which we have seen) in which Euripides wrote his tragedies.' *Satyr.* fr. 39 col. ix: 'He was the owner of a large cave there with the mouth towards the sea, and here he passed the day by himself engaged in constant thought or writing, despising everything that was not great and elevated. Aristophanes at least says, as though summoned as a witness for this very purpose, "He is like what he makes his characters say". But once when witnessing a comedy he is said . . .'

⁸ Cf. n.10 below.

but not in another's.' [75] He took a second wife, but when he found she tended to be unchaste, he was more readily encouraged to slander women. The women planned to kill him and to come to his cave, where he spent his time writing.⁹

He was accused (enviously) of having Cephisophon as co-author of his tragedies. [80] Hermippus [fr. 94 Wehrli] also says that after Euripides' death Dionysius the tyrant of Sicily sent a talent to his heirs and got his harp, his tablet and his stylus; and when he saw them, he ordered the people who brought them to dedicate them as offerings in the temple of the Muses, and he had his own and Euripides' names inscribed on them. [85] For this reason he said he was considered a great friend of foreigners since foreigners particularly liked him, while he was hated by the Athenians. When a boorish youth said enviously that Euripides had bad breath, Euripides said: 'don't criticise me; my mouth is sweeter than honey and the Sirens.'¹⁰

[90] Euripides made fun of women in his poetry for the following reason. He had a home-bred slave named Cephisophon.¹¹ He discovered his own wife misbehaving with this boy.

⁹ Cf. n.12 below.

¹⁰ Cf. *Arist. Pol.* 1311b30f. (tr. Jowett): 'In the conspiracy against Archelaus, Dechamnichus stimulated the fury of the assassins and led the attack; he was enraged because Archelaus had delivered him to Euripides to be scourged; for the poet had been irritated at some remark made by Dechamnichus on the foulness of his breath.' Cf. *Satyr.* fr. 39 col. xx 1-15: "' . . . his mouth is . . . and extremely malodorous'. "Hush boy", he interrupted, "what mouth has there been such or could be sweeter than that from which issue songs and words like his?"' Also *Alex.Aetol.* 7 Powell: 'Good old Anaxagoras' boarding student looks sour to me and as if he hates laughter, and he hasn't learned to joke even in his cups; but whatever he might write had been made of honey and of the Sirens.'

¹¹ Cf. *Satyr.* fr. 39 col. xii 16-35: 'You have clearly comprehended my meaning and absolved me from developing it. He was embittered against the sex for this reason. He had, it seems, in his house a homebred slave named Cephisophon; and he detected his wife in misconduct with this person'; fr. 39 col. xiii: ' . . . bearing the outrage [calmly], as is related, directed the woman to live with the young man. When he was asked "What is the meaning of this?"', he said, "In order that my wife may not be his, but his mine—for that is just—if I wish". And he continued to oppose the whole sex in his poetry. (Di.) Quite absurdly! For why is it more reasonable to blame women because of a seduced woman than men because of the man who seduced her? As Socrates said, the same vices and virtues are to be found in both.'

At first he tried to dissuade her, and when he couldn't convince her, he left his wife to Cephisophon. [95] Aristophanes too refers to this: 'O best and darkest Cephisophon, you lived with Euripides in a lot of ways, and you wrote his poetry (so they say) along with him' [fr. 580]. [100] They also say that women lay in ambush for him at the Thesmophoria because of his criticisms of them in his poetry.¹² They wanted to destroy him, but they spared him first because of the Muses and then because he promised never again to say anything bad about them. For example, [105] this is what he said about women in the *Melanippe*: 'In vain men shoot their criticism at women. The bow twangs and misses. Women—I say—are better than men!' [fr. 499 N] and so on. Philemon was so devoted to Euripides that he dared to say the following of him: [110] 'If it's true the dead have feeling, as some men say, then I would hang myself so I could see Euripides' [fr. 130 Kock].

Euripides was the son of Mnesarchides. He was an Athenian. The writers of Old Comedy made fun of him in their plays by calling him the son of a woman who sold vegetables. [115] Some say that at first he was a painter but that after he had studied with Archelaus the natural philosopher and with Anaxagoras he started to write tragedies. For this reason presumably he was also somewhat arrogant and kept away from ordinary people and had no interest in appealing to his audiences. [120] This practice hurt him as much as it helped Sophocles. The comic poets too attacked him and tore him to pieces in their envy.

He disregarded all this and went away to Macedonia to the

¹² Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. x: 'Everyone disliked him, the men because of his unsociableness, the women because of the censures in his poems. And he incurred great danger from both sexes, for he was prosecuted by Cleon the demagogue in the action for impiety mentioned above, while the women combined against him at the Thesmophoria and collected in a body at the place where he happened to be resting. But notwithstanding their anger they spared the man, partly out of respect for the Muses . . .'; fr. 39 col. xi: (a long quotation about women from Euripides' *Melanippe*; the lines quoted in the *Vita* are not included in the surviving papyrus); fr. 39 col. xii: (several lines quoted from Ar. *Thesm.* 374–75, 335–37, parodying the style of a decree) '... Lysilla was the secretary, Sostrate proposed it'. "If there be a man who is plotting against the womenfolk or who, to injure them, is proposing peace to Euripides and to the Medes . . .".

court of King Archelaus,¹³ and when he was returning there late one evening he was killed by the king's dogs. He began to produce dramas around the eighty-first Olympiad, when Calliades was archon.

[125] Because he used the middle style he excelled in expression and used reasoning perfectly on either side. In his lyric poetry he was inimitable, and he elbowed virtually all the other lyric poets aside.¹⁴ But in dialogue he was wordy and vulgar and [130] irritating in his prologues, most rhetorical in his elaboration and clever in his phrasing and capable of demolishing previous arguments.

He wrote a total of ninety-two dramas, of which sixty-seven are extant and three in addition that are falsely attributed to him; also eight satyr plays, among these one that is falsely attributed to him. He won five victories.

6. THE LIFE OF ARISTOPHANES¹

Aristophanes the comic poet's father was Philippus. His nationality was Athenian, from the deme of Kydathenaion, and from the tribe of Pandionis. It was he who first is thought to have transformed comedy—which was still wandering around in the old style—into something more useful and more respect-

¹³ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xvii: 'These then, as I said, in their expression of views sought popular favour. He however, after putting in, so to speak, an obstructive plea, renounced Athens. (Di.) What was the plea? (A) It was entered in the following choral ode: "I have put wings of gold on my back, and the Sirens' winged sandals; lifted high into the wide upper air, I shall go to Zeus . . ." [fr. 911 N]; fr. 39 col. xviii: ' . . . began the songs. Or do you not know that it is this that he says? (Di.) How then? (A) In saying "to mingle my flight with Zeus" he metaphorically designates the monarch and also magnifies the man's power. (Di.) What you say seems to me to be more subtle than true. (A) Take it as you like. Anyhow, he migrated and spent his old age in Macedonia, being held in much honour by the sovereign; and in particular the story is told that . . .'

¹⁴ Cf. Satyr. fr. 8: ' . . . in emulation of the beauties of Ion, he developed and perfected [tragedy] so as to leave no room for improvement to his successors. Such were the man's artistic qualities. Hence Aristophanes wishes to measure his tongue "by which such fine expressions were polished".'

¹ Ed. Koster, 1975.

THE LIVES
OF THE
GREEK POETS

Mary R. Lefkowitz

The Johns Hopkins University Press

Baltimore, Maryland