biographies just as much as he liked foreign lands. Later, however, there were also in Greece readers who took to biography as a mirror of human nature. Biography did not necessarily become more concerned with the things of the spirit, but it became more ambitious.

II Fifth-Century Biographies and Autobiographies?

I

The question of what we may properly regard as the antecedents of fully developed biography and autobiography of the Hellenistic period is one that does not admit of a clear-cut answer. Any account in verse or prose that tells us something about an individual can be taken as preparatory to biography; and any statement about onself, whether in poetry or in prose, can be regarded as autobiographical. Looked at from this angle, the whole of the surviving epic and lyric poetry of the Greeks is antecedent either to biography or to autobiography.[1] But it seems reasonable to restrict the search for the antecedents of biography to works or sections of works whose explicit purpose is to give some account of an individual in isolation (instead of treating him as one of the many actors in a historical event). Similarly, I shall look for the antecedents of autobiography among accounts, however partial, of the writer's past life rather than among expressions of his present state of mind. In other words I incline to take anecdotes, collections of sayings, single or collected letters, and apologetic speeches as the truest antecedents of either biography or autobiography.

[1] The existence of specifically autobiographic poems is doubtful. Xenophanes frag. 18 Diehl[2] = 22 Diels[6] may be the beginning of such an autobiography (H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* [2nd ed. 1962] 372). Yet cf. M. Untersteiner, *Senofane* (1955) 134.

Let me, however, first of all indicate a few factors which might have contributed to the origins of Greek biography but in all likelihood did not. We can take it for granted that the Greeks, like other nations, had funeral orations and songs in honour of the dead—all of which are potential biographies. The *Iliad* presents the ceremonial laments of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen over the dead body of Hector (24.720). Pre-Solonian Athens is credited with the custom of funeral speeches in praise of the dead (Cicero *De legibus* 2.63). The chorus in Aeschylus expects somebody to sing the praise of the dead Agamemnon (*Agamemnon* 1548). There is no evidence that anything like a biography evolved directly from these ceremonial performances. But in the fourth century B.C. Isocrates shaped his encomium of Euagoras in the form of a commemorative speech: he exploited an occasion, if not a tradition.

Greek aristocracy shared the passion for genealogical trees which characterizes any aristocracy. As we know from Hecataeus of Miletus, it was no extravagance to claim fifteen ancestors. The genealogy of the great clan of the Philaidai, as reported by Pherecydes of Athens (*FGrHist* 3F2), and the famous inscription of Heropythos of Chios[2] show that in the fifth century in Greece quite a few families, apart from the Spartan kings, produced genealogies going back to the eighth or ninth century B.C. But this interest in genealogy does not seem to have produced a corresponding interest in biography. If we are to judge by Hecataeus, he told stories about himself, not about his ancestors. The Roman aristocrats of the third and second centuries B.C. knew, or at least spoke, more about their ancestors of the fifth century than the Greek aristocrats of the fifth century spoke about theirs of two or three centuries before.

But the Greeks had a long-standing interest in heroes of the past—Heracles, Theseus, Oedipus—and this is directly rele-

[2] *SGDI* 5656. For the date, L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (1961) 344.

vant to the origins of biography. Poems told episodes of their lives. In the early fifth century B.C. prose works replaced or supplemented poetry in this kind of mythical biography. To take the simplest example, Theocritus believed that Pisander of Camyrus was the first of the poets of old "to record for you the son of Zeus, the lion-slayer prompt of hand, and all the labors he accomplished" (*Epigrammata* 22; transl. A. S. F. Gow). The epic poet Pisander can hardly have lived after 550 B.C.[3] He was, no doubt, used by the prose writer Pherecydes of Athens, who seems to have been active in the first quarter of the fifth century B.C., though the demonstration provided by F. Jacoby for this date is not so strong as he believed.[4] We may assume the same type of relationship between the poem *Theseis*, probably of the late sixth century B.C., and the corresponding section of Pherecydes. The new interest in the lives of heroes is also reflected in late archaic art. The sequence of the deeds of Theseus in the Treasury of the Athenians at Delphi has been defined a "*bios* of the hero in chronological order."[5]

Furthermore, curiosity surrounded the personalities of the ancient poets such as Homer and Hesiod. At least Hesiod provided autobiographical details which later poets imitated. His encounter with the Muses became a commonplace to be found with appropriate variants in Parmenides, Callimachus, Ennius, Propertius, and others. Speculations about the lives of Homer and Hesiod are certainly earlier than the fifth century B.C.

Heraclitus refers to a story about the death of Homer as common knowledge (frag. 56). According to Tatianus, Theagenes of Rhegium, who lived before 500 B.C., did research on the life of Homer (Diels, *Vorsokratiker* I 51).[6]

[3] R. Keydell, *RE* s.v. "Peisandros," 144; Wilamowitz, *Textgesch. d. griech. Lyriker*, 66 n. 1.

[4] F. Jacoby, *Abhandl. zur griechischen Geschichtschreibung* (1956) 116; H. T. Wade-Gery, *The Poet of the Iliad* (1952) 90.

[5] G. M. A. Hanfmann, "Narration in Greek Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 61 (1957) 73.

[6] R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (1968) 11; cf. R. Cantarella, *Parola del Passato* 112 (1967) 1–28.

Research—or imagination—about the lives of Homer and Hesiod was intensified in the fifth century. The clan of the Homeridae who rather dubiously claimed descent from Homer through a daughter of the poet may have contributed to the formation of the fifth-century legends about the two poets. Learned men collected previous traditions and drew inferences from the poems themselves. Even Thucydides took an interest in such biographical details. He tells us that in 426 the Athenian strategos Demosthenes camped with his army "in the precinct of Nemean Zeus, where the poet Hesiod is said to have been killed by the men of that region, an oracle having told him that he should suffer this fate at Nemea" (3.96).

The publication of Papyrus Michigan 2754 in 1925 at last proved that Nietzsche had been right after all in attributing the authorship of the so-called *Agon* between Homer and Hesiod to the sophist Alcidamas who lived about 400 B.C. The text transmitted by the Byzantine tradition has interpolations not earlier than Hadrian. The fact that E. Meyer[7] and Wilamowitz[8] were among the opponents of Nietzsche who were shown to be wrong by Papyrus Michigan has its amusing side—the more so because Meyer had acutely perceived that Aristophanes, *Peace* 1282–1283, alluded to an episode to be found also in the *Agon*. Meyer implicitly recognized that the author of the *Agon* had worked on material circulating in the second part of the fifth century B.C.

There is nothing surprising in the conclusion of the *Agon*: the victory of Hesiod over Homer. Hesiod in his *Works and Days* had boasted of his victory in Chalcis but had left his rivals unnamed. When the biographers chose to make Homer the rival of Hesiod in order to establish that there had been contact between them, they had to take the consequence and accept that Hesiod had had the best of Homer. The personal contribution of Alcidamas to the legend of the contest

[7] *Hermes* 27 (1892) 378 n. 1.
[8] *Die Ilias und Homer* (1916) 396–439.

between the two poets is unclear and has been the subject of debate.[9] It may be nothing more than the notion that Hesiod received the prize because he was the poet of peace whereas Homer was the poet of war. This would be in keeping with the humanitarian feelings of Alcidamas, who sympathized with the Messenians against the Spartans and declared that there is no natural distinction between free men and slaves.

Another subject which interested fifth-century readers was the life and thought of the Seven Wise Men. The so-called drinking songs of the Seven Wise Men quoted by Diogenes Laertius with the formula *τῶν δὲ ᾀδομένων αὐτοῦ εὐδοκίμησε τάδε* are generally recognized as fifth-century products. *Pap. Soc. It.* IX 1093, as Bruno Snell saw, virtually proves or confirms that a *Banquet of the Seven Wise Men* circulated in the fifth century B.C. In more popular quarters stories were told about the life of Aesop. Herodotus had some knowledge of it, as the curious anecdote in 2.134 about Aesop's murder in Delphi shows. It is more difficult to say whether details of the Delphic story of Aesop which we find in Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta* 12.557A (compare Plutarch *Solon* 28), go back to the fifth century.[10]

The legend of Archilochus, too, must have been in the process of developing in the fifth century, if not earlier. About 250 B.C. Mnesiepes referred in his inscription in the Archilocheion of Paros to ancient traditions about Archilochus. One of these traditions was the encounter of Archilochus with the Muses. To the best of our knowledge Archilochus never claimed to have met the Muses. The episode, obviously modelled on Hesiod, was invented by Archilochus' admirers. It has been suggested that this episode is represented on the Boston pyxis dating from about 450 B.C. If this is correct, it would confirm Mnesiepes' statement and place some elements

[9] M. L. West, *Class. Quart.* 17 (1967) 433. Some of his points are controverted by V. Di Benedetto in a paper published in *Rend. Accad. Lincei* 1969. For further bibliography on Pap. Mich. 2754, cf. R. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt* (1965²) p. 21 no. 76.
[10] Snell, *Gesammelte Schriften* (1966) 115; La Penna, *Athenaeum* 40 (1969) 264.

of Archilochus' legend before 450 B.C.[11] One wonders how much of the biography of Sappho and Alcaeus—which interested both vase painters and Herodotus (2.135)—was put together in the fifth century.

If we knew more about the literary studies of Hellanicus, Damastes, and Glaucus of Rhegium, we should be in a better position to appreciate that research on the lives of the poets, of the Seven Wise Men, and even of the plebeian Aesop was part of the new urge to collect information about Greek literary antiquities. Hellanicus wrote an account of the winners of the Carnean games (καρνεονῖκαι) which included at least one excursus, if not more, on the development of music in Greece. Damastes wrote a work on poets and sophists, and Glaucus on "ancient poets and musicians." Hellanicus and Damastes, needless to say, were famous antiquarians. The title of Glaucus' book is clearly antiquarian.

The existence of real, full-fledged biographies of literary men is more doubtful. Theagenes may have written a biography of Homer. There is an increasing inclination among responsible scholars, such as F. Jacoby, to recognize in the substance of the so-called Herodotean life of Homer a fifth-century document—though not of course from Herodotus' pen.[12]

The conclusion is that we must distinguish between *contributions* to biography (such as the *Agon* between Homer and Hesiod or the *Banquet of the Seven Wise Men*) and *real*, full-fledged biographies (such as the alleged lives of Homer). Contributions to biography are certain. The existence of fifth-century biography of poets and Wise Men is conjectural, but, I should say, altogether likely.

II

If literary biography takes us among the sophists and other learned men of the late fifth century, political biography and

[11] *Archilochus*, ed. I. Tarditi (Rome 1968), with bibl.

[12] Wilamowitz, *Ilias und Homer*, 413–439; Jacoby, *Hermes* 68 (1933) 10 = *Kleine Philologische Schriften* I (1961) 11; R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 11.

autobiographical travel books seem to have their origins in Ionia half a century earlier. We are told that Skylax of Caryanda—the man who explored the Indian coasts by order of Darius I and wrote a report on his journey (Herodotus 4.44; Aristotle *Politics* 7.13.2)—was also the man who wrote a life of Heraclides, the famous contemporary tyrant of Mylasa (Herodotus 5.121). This piece of information comes from a problematic entry in the *Suda* and has often been doubted, but without sufficient reason. The title given by the *Suda* is τὰ κατὰ Ἡρακλείδην τὸν Μυλασσῶν βασιλέα. This means: "The story of the tyrant (or king) Heraclides of Mylasa," just as τὰ κατὰ τὸν Τέλλον in Herodotus 1.31 means "The story of Tellus." Skylax of Caryanda was obviously the man to write about Heraclides of Mylasa.[13] Any other theory has to postulate the existence either of a different Skylax or of a different Heraclides—or even of a different Skylax writing about a different Heraclides—which is a waste of ingenuity. We do not know what Skylax' book was like and whether it was a complete biography of Heraclides. But it was a book telling the story of an individual. Skylax appears to have written some sort of biographical work in the decades about 480 B.C. Sosylus, the historian of Hannibal, may have directly or indirectly derived from Skylax his information about Heraclides' stratagem in a naval battle (*FGrHist* 176F1).

Skylax may also have written a work with autobiographical features. The account he gave of his geographical explorations was inevitably a kind of partial autobiography. Accounts of travels, whether written or oral (to begin with the *Odyssey*), must be regarded as predecessors of autobiography. Eduard Norden showed this long ago. What characterizes Skylax is that the account of his journey was written in prose and

[13] H. Bengtson, *Historia* 3 (1954) 303 must be revised by taking into account L. H. Jeffery, *Ann. Brit. School Athens* 57 (1962) 126. F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 709T1 (1958) seems to agree with what I state in the text, but see his almost contemporary (1957) "Nachträge" (2nd ed.) to *FGrHist* 10 (p. 543) with their warning. Cf. also F. Gisinger, *RE* III A, 634f.

described real travel. There was more truth in his works than in the epic poems that went before them.

Next we know that in about 440 B.C. Ion of Chios wrote an account of travels—or rather, in his case, of visits (*'Επιδημίαι*)—in which he told of some of his personal adventures and encounters, such as the meeting with Pericles and Sophocles during the Samian War. There is no reason to believe that Ion told his own life from birth, but his tale was of a definite autobiographical character and a delight to read, to judge from the fragments.

Thirdly, we have fairly extensive fragments of the pamphlet written by Stesimbrotus of Thasus on Themistocles, Thucydides, son of Melesias, and Pericles. It used to be classified as an anti-Athenian pamphlet by an exile from Thasus, a victim of Pericles' policies. But Fritz Schachermeyr has shown that Stesimbrotus probably wrote his pamphlet some years after the death of Pericles.[14] The new date invites us to reconsider the purpose of the pamphlet. According to Schachermeyr, Stesimbrotus was a literary man who was more interested in recording the peculiarities of political leaders than in attacking their politics. He seems to have been the predecessor of the later writers of monographs on tyrants and demagogues. The name which immediately comes to mind for comparison is Theopompus, who devoted an excursus of his *Philippica* to the Athenian demagogues. Here again, if we have no full-fledged biography, we have an antecedent.

Finally, Diogenes Laertius in his life of Empedocles (8.63) gives a strange piece of information. He writes: "Aristotle too declares him [Empedocles] to have been a champion of freedom and averse to rule of every kind, seeing that, as Xanthus relates in his account of him, he declined the kingship when it was offered to him, obviously because he preferred a frugal life." This passage raises all sorts of problems. Diogenes Laertius gives a quotation of Xanthus within a quotation of Aristotle. We should like to know whether the

[14] *Sitzungsb. Oesterr. Akad.* 247, 5, 1965.

name of Xanthus was mentioned by Aristotle or was added by Diogenes Laertius or by an intermediate source. We should also like to be certain that the Xanthus here mentioned is Xanthus of Lydia, the historian contemporary with Herodotus. And, if Xanthus of Lydia is meant, we should like to be certain that his name was not used by a later forger or historical novelist to deceive his readers. Nor are we certain that in referring to an account of Empedocles Diogenes Laertius meant a biography. Yet I find it difficult to believe that Diogenes Laertius had in mind anybody but the famous Xanthus of Lydia. I also believe that his Greek implies that in his opinion Xanthus had written a book on Empedocles. What has been prudently translated as "Xanthus in his account of Empedocles" reads in Greek: *καθάπερ Ξάνθος ἐν τοῖς περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγει*. This is Diogenes Laertius' normal terminology indicating "a monograph about a certain man." For instance, *καθὰ καὶ 'Απολλώνιος ὁ Τύριος ἐν τοῖς περὶ Ζήνωνός φησι* (7.6): "Apollonius of Tyre says in his work about Zeno." Even if Diogenes Laertius did not mean that Xanthus had written a book on Empedocles, he at least implied that Xanthus had written at length on Empedocles.

I am much less certain that Aristotle quoted Xanthus and therefore vouches for the authenticity of the quotation. But Aristotle also knew that Empedocles left unfinished a poem on Xerxes' expedition to Greece (frag. 70 Rose = Diogenes Laertius 8.57)—a tantalising piece of information, for which Xanthus seems the obvious source.[15]

Neither the chronology of Empedocles' life nor that of Xanthus' has been established with sufficient certainty to allow us to say that Xanthus could not have written about Empedocles. Xanthus may have been active after 420 B.C. He may have had many good reasons for being interested in the Sicilian thinker: he was also interested in Zoroaster, according to a statement in Diogenes Laertius' preface (*FGrHist*

[15] J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés* I (1938) 238–240. H. Herter, *RE* IX A, 1354f.

765F32) which A. D. Nock successfully defended against many doubts.[16]

All in all, I do not see anything inherently improbable in the attribution of a life of Empedocles to Xanthus of Lydia. The Asiatic origin of Xanthus is an argument in favour of the authenticity of the account of Empedocles attributed to him. We shall soon see that interest in biographical stories was more widespread in Asiatic than in metropolitan Hellas. Jacoby must have had the same impression, because he included the passage of Diogenes Laertius on Empedocles among the authentic fragments of Xanthus the Lydian (*FGrHist* 765F33). Here again we have to distinguish between contributions to biography or to autobiography which are certain (such as the works by Stesimbrotus and Ion) and full-fledged biographies which are merely probable in varying degrees of probability (such as those we have attributed to Skylax and Xanthus).

To sum up, the evidence is neither abundant nor beyond suspicion; but it allows us to say that both biographical and autobiographical works were known in the fifth century B.C. —even outside the narrow sphere of literary and mythological biography. A few of these works, such as the lives of Theseus and of Homer and perhaps those of Aesop and of Heraclides the tyrant of Mylasa, seem to have been biographies according to the definition of a biography as an account of a life from birth to death. Other works may simply have been accounts of specific episodes of the life of a man.

The value of the evidence I have collected lies, to my mind, mainly in the warning it contains. Too much of fifth-century Greek literature has been lost. Those who put the origins of biography in the fourth century B.C. forget this warning. They seem to assume that what is lost never existed.

The warning is necessary in a field which inevitably leads us to consider relations between Greeks and non-Greeks. Our information about the early fifth century is particularly deficient in the field of international cultural relations. I will

[16] *American Journal of Archaeology* 53 (1949) 275.

only recall two episodes because they are indirectly relevant to our search. In 1942, during the war, Professor Jacques Perret created a sensation in France with his thesis *Les origines de la légende troyenne de Rome*. He seemed to have proved that Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, invented the legend of the Trojan origin of the Romans in 280 B.C. Owing to the war Professor Perret did not know that while he was writing his thesis Professor Giglioli in Rome had published archaic statuettes of Aeneas shouldering Anchises which had been discovered at Veii. The exact date of these statuettes, which seem to belong to the early fifth century B.C., does not matter: what became evident was that the legend of Aeneas was familiar to Etruscans and Romans at least two centuries before Pyrrhus. The cult of Aeneas in Italy had nothing to do with him. A few years ago Professor Alföldi gave seven reasons for refusing to believe that Rome had made a pact with Carthage about 500 B.C.[17] While his book was in proof Professor Pallottino published the famous inscriptions of Pyrgi—two in Etruscan and one in Phoenician—which made it evident that Rome and Carthage could not ignore each other about 500 B.C., at a time when Rome's neighbour Caere was under heavy Phoenician influence.

Both Perret and Alföldi had underrated the existing literary evidence which contradicted their theories, but above all they had underrated the extent of our ignorance of the affairs of the Mediterranean world about 500 B.C. In each case one casual discovery was enough to refute a priori contentions of able scholars.

III

Let us now consider some of the names included in our previous discussion. Two names belong to Asia Minor, indeed to marginal zones of Greek culture: Skylax of Caryanda and Xanthus the Lydian. The other two writers, Ion of Chios and Stesimbrotus of Thasus, were islanders. This point is important if seen in conjunction with one of the most

[17] A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins* (1965) 350.

striking features of Greek historiography of the fifth century B.C. Though Herodotus was obviously very interested in the family of the Alcmaeonids, in Themistocles, Cleomenes, Leonidas, and so forth, what he has to say about the life of the most important Greek leaders is very little. He can tell long stories about Cyrus, Cambyses, and Croesus or about Greek men who served the Persian kings, such as the doctor Democedes and the elder Miltiades (6.34ff). In these cases, as Professor Homeyer has shown, he organized his material according to principles of formal biography: origins, youth, achievements, death. But evidently he found more biographical material in Asia Minor than in metropolitan Greece. Even the stories of Cypselus and of the Alcmaeonids, the most conspicuous to come from metropolitan Greece, did not amount to more than isolated episodes (5.92, 6.125). This conclusion seems to be supported by what we read in Thucydides. His disinclination to give biographical details is obvious. It may reflect aristocratic disdain for personal details: in Athens private circumstances were made public and exploited by writers of comedy and hostile orators or demagogues. But this cannot be the whole truth. Thucydides did in fact put right essential details of the lives of Harmodius, Themistocles, and Pausanias because nobody had taken the trouble to do so before.[18] Thucydides was interested in biography, but some invisible barrier seems to have prevented him from pursuing this interest in Athens. The very episodes of Themistocles and Pausanias about which he wrote belonged to the history of Greco-Persian relations and had happened outside metropolitan Greece. Thucydides may have collected information about them during his exile. This would bear out the lack of interest of contemporary Athenians in the lives of the great men of the preceding generation.

The impression one forms in reading Herodotus and Thucydides is that interest in biographical details about political figures was more alive in Asia Minor and generally in Ionian culture than in Athens and other centres of metropolitan Greece during the fifth century B.C. Can this difference be explained in terms of cultural influences?

The question is at least worth asking. Interest in kings and tyrants is natural where kings and tyrants rule. When Greeks began to write historical prose, Ionia was being ruled by Persian kings and local tyrants. Furthermore, Asia Minor was exposed to Oriental tales with their strong biographical flavour. The stories about the Seven Wise Men may owe something to their oriental counterparts which go back to the Gilgamesh epos. These stories were apparently first recorded in Asia Minor. References to them begin with Hipponax. The meeting of the Seven Wise Men at Croesus' court is implied in Herodotus 1.29, though the first explicit reference is in Ephorus (*FGrHist* 70F181). According to Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.15.69, Democritus made his own (plagiarized?) the sayings of Aḥiqar. The Aramaic version of the story of Aḥiqar is known to have circulated among the Jews of Elephantina in the fifth century B.C. The reliability of Clement on this point is notoriously controversial: E. Meyer substantially accepted it;[19] H. Diels (*Vorsokratiker*[6] II.209) gave his reasons for rejecting it. What is certain in any case is that Theophrastus was acquainted with the story of Aḥiqar (Diogenes Laertius 5.50), which means that it must have made its way to Greece either in the fifth or in the fourth century B.C. It got mixed up rather soon with the story of Aesop, which reveals oriental influences in many other details. The essential data are collected in Professor B. E. Perry's introduction to his Loeb edition of Babrius and Phaedrus (1965). Autobiography was a well-cultivated literary genre in various countries of the Persian Empire from Egypt to Assyria.[20] Both Jews and Greeks reformed their political

[18] Cf. for instance H. Münch, *Studien zu den Exkursen des Thucydides* (Heidelberg 1935); F. Jacoby, *Atthis* (1949) 158; O. Lendle, *Hermes* 92 (1964) 129; A. Lippold, *RhM* 108 (1965) 336; C. W. Fornara, *Philologus* 111 (1967) 291 and *Historia* 17 (1968) 400.

[19] *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine* (3rd ed. 1912) 123–125.

[20] The best description of the various types of oriental historiography is perhaps in E. Täubler, "Die Anfänge der Geschichtsschreibung" in *Tyche*

life and their culture and redefined their national identity in relation to the Persians. We may therefore wonder whether it is a matter of pure coincidence that in the fifth century Nehemiah and perhaps Ezra wrote autobiographies in Judaea, while Ion wrote his autobiographical memoirs in Chios. Nehemiah's autobiography was a novelty in Judaea just as much as Ion's autobiographical notes were a novelty in Greece.[21]

We are not looking for precise models for Greek biographies and autobiographies in the East. We cannot do so, because we have no clear idea of what Skylax and Xanthus put into their biographical work. But we cannot easily discount the impression that it is of historical significance that both Skylax and Xanthus, the first biographers in the Greek language known to us, were Persian subjects. Indeed Xanthus was no Greek at all.

Given our evidence, we are unable to visualize in what way Greeks and non-Greeks interchanged cultural goods in the fifth century B.C. But there are occasional glimpses. One is Herodotus' allusion to the Persian Zopyrus "who deserted from the Persians to Athens" (3.160) and who obviously told

(1926) 17–74; cf. also R. Laqueur, *Neue Jahrb. f. Wiss. und Jugendb.* 7 (1931) 489–506. On oriental autobiographical inscriptions, S. Mowinckel, "Die vorderasiatischen Königs- und Fürsteninschriften," *Eucharisterion H. Gunkel* (1923) 278–322, is fundamental. Cf. W. Baumgartner, *Orient. Literaturz.* (1924) 313–317; H. Gese, *Zeitschr. f. Theol. und Kirche* 55 (1958) 127–145. On Egypt, E. Otto, *Die biographischen Inschriften der ägyptischen Spätzeit* (1954). On Assyria cf. especially H.-G. Güterbock, *Zeitschr. f. Assyriologie* 8 (1934) 1–91 and 10 (1938) 45–149. In general E. A. Speiser in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (1955) 37–76. An important text is S. Smith, *The Statue of Idri-mi*, 1949. We need a more precise typology of oriental biographical and autobiographical texts.

[21] It will be enough to refer to G. von Rad, *Zeitschr. f. Alttest. Wiss.* 76 (1964) 176–187; S. Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia* I–III, especially II, Oslo 1964–1965; U. Kellermann, *Nehemia: Quellen, Ueberlieferung und Geschichte* (1967) 56–87.

Earlier biographical elements in the Bible are discussed by J. Hempel, *Geschichten und Geschichte im Alten Testament bis zur persischen Zeit* (1964). On the special problems of the so-called Baruch biography in Jeremiah cf. for instance A. Weiser, *Glaube und Geschichte im Alten Testament* (1961) 321–329; O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (3rd ed., 1964).

him the story of his grandfather at the siege of Babylon. Herodotus also shows awareness of oriental biographical inscriptions, though he could not read them (2.106; 4.87; 4.91). Skylax' report of his sea voyage can hardly be separated from Hanno's account of his journey, which belongs to the fifth century, and probably to its first half. Hanno's account of his travels seems to have been translated from Phoenician into Greek only in the fourth or third century B.C.[22] Other similar texts may have been translated earlier. The bilingual *res gestae* which Hannibal left behind in Italy are rooted in a tradition of autobiographical inscriptions in Carthage, which in its turn was connected with oriental models. Darius' Behistun inscription was certainly no model for Nehemiah, Ion, or Hanno; each of these texts reflects a different religious and political outlook. But just as the Jews of Elephantina had a copy of the Aramaic text of Darius' autobiography, so the Ionians must have had copies of its translation into Greek. Autobiography was in the air in the Persian Empire of the early fifth century, and both Jews and Greeks may have been stimulated by Persian and other oriental models to create something of their own. We must dismiss the old preconception that all the autobiographies of the East were religious documents and uniform. What has come down to us is varied enough; and at the same time what we have is no fair sample of what has been lost.

These are random remarks from which it would be foolish to draw any firm conclusion. Biographical research about literary and artistic personalities of the past developed in connection with specific philosophical and cultural interests of the Greeks and appears to have been an independent achievement. External influences, if any, would, however, have affected: (a) autobiographies; (b) anecdotes (entertaining

[22] Cf. for instance R. Sénac, "Le périple du Carthaginois Hannon," *Bull. Assoc. G. Budé* 4, 4 (1966) 510–538, for recent discussion, but S. Gsell, *Hist. ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord* (3rd ed. 1921) I 468–523, is still basic. Most accessible ed. of the text in C. Müller, *Geographi graeci minores* I (1855). Hannibal's bilingual *res gestae*: Livy 28.46.16.

stories) about Aesop, Wise Men, and international adventurers like Democedes; (c) biographies of contemporaries (such as the life of Heraclides by Skylax?; and the life of Empedocles by Xanthus?).

IV

It remains true that neither biography nor autobiography became prominent literary genres in Greece in the fifth century B.C. We cannot generalize about society in the fifth century. But at least for Athens we can say that the cultural background as a whole did not favour the prominence of biography or autobiography.

Neither tragedy nor sculpture, as practised in the fifth century, displayed skill in biographical techniques. The interest of the poets who wrote tragedy was in decisive situations—situations from which inescapable consequences or at least inescapable alternatives followed. The idea of telling the life story of Oedipus or of Antigone step by step from birth to death in order to elucidate their characters and their importance is just the opposite of the tragic attitude. Tragedy must be entirely present to the spectators. As Aristotle perceived, there would be no possibility of *katharsis* if the spectators had to identify themselves with events they had not experienced. The same communication of the essential—to be apprehended at one glance—is characteristic of much, if not all, classical sculpture. The struggle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs on the western pediment at Olympia or the cavalcade on the frieze of the Parthenon are not episodes of a biography.

As I have intimated before, I have no desire to deny that even in Greek sculpture one might find embryonic attempts at biographical narration. It is a nice point whether the twelve metopes at Olympia describing Heracles' twelve canonic labours were meant to be read as sections of a biographical account. One might perhaps also find some biographical intention in vase painting, but the definition and discussion

of it would take us too far. If we were prepared to see biographical episodes in certain vase scenes of about 500 B.C.—for instance Croesus on his pyre in Myson's amphora—this still would not take us beyond that preliminary stage of biography which is the single anecdote.

Comedy and history raise more troublesome questions in their relations to biography. Comedy is different from tragedy in that it makes the spectators uncertain about their position as spectators. The game of allusions, the play with parody, the contemporary setting compel the spectator to remember details of ordinary life and of individuals with whom he is personally acquainted. There is abundant biographical and autobiographical material in the comedies of Aristophanes.[23] We know that Hellenistic biographers exploited it for their biographies of fifth-century Athenians. But by the time they did this, Aristophanes and his public had long been dead. Fifth-century comedy was meant to make people laugh at situations to which they could not feel extraneous: it was no objective contribution to the biography of Socrates or Cleon or Euripides.

The relation between history and biography is bound to come up in various contexts here. Greek historians were concerned with political and military events. Their subject matter was states, not individuals. The close connection between history and geography emphasized concern with the community rather than with the individual. Herodotus and Thucydides wrote in a period in which the most important decisions were taken by the states in their councils and assemblies. This produced or at least reinforced the impression that military and political transactions were in the hands of collective bodies. Other new sciences, such as medicine, confirmed this collective approach. Men living in different parts of the earth were ipso facto assumed to have different attitudes or

[23] Aristophanes talks directly about his past experiences in the parabasis of some of his comedies, notably in the *Knights, Clouds, Wasps,* and *Peace*. This form of autobiographical speech remained confined, as far as I know, to Old Comedy: see W. Kranz in *RE* XVIII, s.v. "Parabasis."

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abilities. Stable connections were postulated between climates and constitutions, and in their turn constitutions were supposed to condition the behaviour of individuals. The intellectual atmosphere in which history was born was one of faith in collective organization and of trust in natural explanations. It was a reaction to the faith in individual salvation and to the admiration for individual exploits which had characterized the age of the tyrants. Orators were not allowed to mention individual names when they delivered the official funeral speech for the dead in war. All this, of course, affected Herodotus less than Thucydides, the history of the Persian Wars less than the history of the Peloponnesian Wars. But the trend is clear in Herodotus also. The Spartans and the Athenians, not Leonidas and Themistocles, are Herodotus' protagonists of the Persian Wars. There is no indispensable Achilles or Hector in them—which shows the limits of Herodotus' debt to Homer. The idea that one could treat the Persian or the Peloponnesian Wars in biographical terms never dawned upon the mind of any Greek historian of the fifth century.

No history, however bent on emphasizing collective decisions, can manage to get rid of the disturbing presence of individuals: they are simply there. Indeed the Greek historians never denied that individuals affected military and political events. The very practice of democracy implied trust in leaders and created the climate for schools for leaders—as the sophists' schools were. Military leadership was recognized as a specific ability. The Athenian strategoi were elected, not chosen by lot like judges and councillors. One can go a step further. The discovery of history as a new intellectual discipline implied the recognition that understanding of human affairs was both possible and valuable. In so far as the politician was committed to the understanding of political affairs, there was an obvious similarity between the politician and the historian. Thucydides at least had no doubt that his ability to understand human affairs was akin to that of Pericles. Education, mental alertness, specific competence, and seriousness were to him factors of success both in politics and in historical writing. I have sometimes suspected that Thucydides saw Herodotus as a Cleon among the historians. Both Cleon and Herodotus tried to please their readers: both were demagogues, in Thucydides' eyes. But Thucydides confined his appreciation of individuals to their contribution to political life in specific moments: and so after all did Herodotus in the case of most Greek politicians. The value of the individual lay in his contribution to the welfare of the state to which he belonged. That excluded biography.

Historiography took the Greeks by surprise in the fifth century. It was the creation of a few men—Hecataeus, Herodotus, Thucydides, Hellanicus. There was very little preparation for it in the preceding century. The powerful personalities of the first historians imposed history on a public which was much more interested in tragedy, comedy, oratory, sophistic discussions. History remained what the first historians made it: a study of political and military actions. There was no desire to probe deeply into its foundations, to re-examine the role of the individuals in it. Indeed the implicit separation between biography and history of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. was to become explicit later, at least from Polybius onwards.

One word more before I take leave of the fifth century B.C. I have tried to give what evidence I think exists for biography in the fifth century, but I have not tried to speculate on the awakening of the Greek biographical spirit. I deeply respect recent works on *La naissance de l'histoire* (which is the title of a book by François Chatelet) or on *The Awakening of the Greek Historical Spirit* (which is the title of a book by Professor Chester Starr). Personally, however, I suspect that this search for what made historiography or biography possible in the fifth century B.C. is bound to be vague and not very rewarding. Professor Starr, for instance, finds the conditions for the awakening of the Greek historical spirit in the world of the epic, in the colonial expansion of the Greeks, in a new awareness of time, in the rise of the polis, in the new

individualism of lyric poetry. All these phenomena—and one could add many others, such as the monologues of heroes in epic poetry—have some vague connection with the creation of historiography and biography, but they belong to earlier centuries. They are neither contemporary with the rise of historiography and biography nor with each other. Either taken one by one or taken together, they do not explain the appearance of the first historical and biographical books in the fifth century.

For those who care to understand the mood which characterizes the little we know of biographical research in the fifth century, the extant fragments of Ion and Stesimbrotus are better guides. We can observe curiosity for the ways of eminent men, taste for the adroit answer, dislike for political opponents. With more diffidence and reserve, and therefore with fewer personal dislikes, the same mood is to be found in Herodotus.

III The Fourth Century

I

As soon as we turn to the fourth century the change is obvious. We no longer have to explore remote corners to find evidence of interest in biography and autobiography. We no longer have to ask why the contemporaries of great Greek men were so little interested in them. The evidence for interest in biography and autobiography becomes abundant and permeates all aspects of literature. Funerary monuments confirm this interest by their presentation of intimate personal and family life. I shall only recall the well-known fact that in the fourth century B.C. epigrams on tombs contain more biographical details than those of former centuries. Age, place of birth, name of father, cause of death become more frequent elements of an epitaph. Thus Asclepiades Maeander is presented as a successful doctor who followed the profession of his father Maeander.[1] In the joint monument of Philagros of Angele and Hegilla daughter of Philagros, the daughter gives her age and says that her husband will bear witness to her virtues (Peek 107). In an epigram from Thebes young Timocles, son of Asopichos, has his victories in the horse races exactly recorded (Peek 95). Visitors to sanctuaries recorded their experiences on stone. More particularly the patients in the sanctuaries of Asclepius were talkative about

[1] W. Peek, *Griech. Grabgedichte* (1962) no. 82.

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