THE SUDA’S LIFE OF SOPHOCLES (SIGMA 815): TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY WITH SOURCES Wm. Blake Tyrrell (Michigan State University)

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Preface

This project is offered as a resource for those interested in the life of Sophocles. Sigma 815 of the Byzantine lexicon, *The Suda*, forms its core. *The Suda* entry is annotated with thirteen notes which treat discrete subjects and around which are organized the sources for Sophocles’ life. An index to the notes has been provided. The sources are presented with the Greek and accompanying English translation. Commentary is interspersed among them where it is useful. The commentary does not attempt to build up a biography of Sophocles, for in the present condition of the sources none is possible.

Ada Alder’s monumental edition of *The Suda* is currently being translated by numerous scholars under the direction of Suda On Line, published by the Stoa Consortium. The author’s translation of sigma 815 forms part of this effort.

I have used T enclosed in parenthesis with a number in the reference line of a source to designate the number of the source, where available, in the list of testimonia collected by Stefan Radt in *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Vol. 4: *Sophocles*. A bolded number in parenthesis designates a source in the present work.
Introduction

Ἡ Σοῦδα, *The Suda*, perhaps *The Fortress* or *The Stronghold*, denotes the title, not the author as long thought, of a Byzantine lexicon. The *Suda* was compiled after the time of Photius (ninth century) whom it cites and Eustathius (twelfth century) who cites it. This lengthy work, five stout volumes in Ada Alder’s monumental Teubner edition, is generally assigned to the late tenth century, making it a product of the effort to preserve and classify knowledge by contemporary scholars. Nothing is known about its authors who were probably monks working at a library in Constantinople. They consulted directly the works of Homer, Sophocles, Aristophanes, and the *Palatine Anthology* but, for everything else, relied upon compilations of compilations that were often corrupt and inaccurate. The *Suda* includes explanations of difficult words and forms and proverbs but mainly provides historical and literary information. It also favors military and theological subjects that interested Byzantines. It remained popular as the interpolations and number of manuscripts indicate.

*The Suda*, sigma 815 covers the main points of an ancient biography of a tragedian. It identifies Sophocles’ time of birth and death, his fatherland and deme, and the name of his father. It lists his contributions to the art of tragedy and records the number of

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his plays and victories. It positions him chronologically in relation to other notables, namely, Socrates and Euripides. Except for one word, the text is straightforward and mostly in agreement with the *Life of Sophocles* included in the Codex Parisinus (xxxii, 9) and other manuscripts. It differs from the *Life* in the date of Sophocles’ birth, the spelling of his father’s name, and the number of victories, although the latter may be reconciled with the number given in the *Life*. The twenty-three chapters of the *Life of Sophocles* are included among the sources and, for convenience, a translation with text is appended.

The commentary does not attempt a biography of Sophocles, for none can be written. Two unimpeachable facts stand for Sophocles’ life: he was elected Treasurer of the Greeks for the Delian League in 443/442 B.C.E., and he won eighteen victories in the tragic contests at the City Dionysia. These are unimpeachable because there is evidence, the Athenian tribute lists (37) and an inscription (217), independent of the ancient biography about him that derives from his poetry and that of others, especially the comedians. This narrative aspires to sift the testimonia for Sophocles’ life and *oeuvre* for nuggets of historical worth and traces of the methodologies of their authors. These sources offer what is now known about Sophocles the man and poet apart from his extant plays and fragments. They undoubtedly contain elements of historical value. Sophocles, for instance, served as a general with Pericles during the Samian Revolt from the Athenian league in 441 B.C.E. T. B. L. Webster regards Sophocles’ tutelage with Lampros as historical and that his teacher had lasting influence on Sophocles: “[Lamprus’] music was sober and restrained rather than wild and realistic. We can see the same

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3 The Athenian year extended from the fall to the summer. In modern terms, a year began in 443 B.C.E. and ended in 442, and so the year is marked as 443/442.
contrasts between the choruses of Sophocles and the later choruses and arias of Euripides.” Mary R. Lefkowitz, on the other hand, points out that such anecdotes are meant “as representations of the poet’s heroic status.” Study with Lampros may have been devised to explain Sophocles’ style, and that his style is therefore the source of the detail. Webster himself finds confirmation of Lampros as Sophocles’ teacher in the latter’s poetry. Once doubts are raised whether a source testifies to, or is derived from, Sophocles’ life, it falls into the aporia of the chicken-and-egg.

The following may be regarded as historical in the evidence for Sophocles’ life:

1. His first victory came in 468 B.C.E. with Triptolemos and three other plays (82–89).
2. He did not compete in the City Dionysia in 467 (91).
3. He held the office of Hellenotamias in 443/442 B.C.E. (37).
4. He held a generalship during the Samian War (38–43).
5. He won first prize in 438 (95).
6. He won second prize in 431 (96).
7. His Oedipus Tyrannus was defeated by Philokles (98).
8. He served as proboulos on a committee of elders in 412/411, appointed to advise concerning the present circumstances (48–49).
9. He won first prize with Philoctetes in 409 (100).
10. He entered the Proagon of 406 in mourning for Euripides (101).
12. He produced plays for presentation at the festival of the City Dionysia and won eighteen victories (217).

4 Webster 1–2.

5 Lefkowitz 77.
13. He married Nikostrate (165) and had a son Iophon who became a tragedian (166–173) and who had a son, Sophocles, Sophocles’ grandson, who became a tragedian (180–184).
14. He invented the third actor (136–137).
15. He was devoted to Asclepius (53–58; 160–163).
16. His Oedipus at Colonus was produced in 401 posthumously by his grandson, Sophocles (104).
Sophocles,1 son of Sophilos, from the deme Colonus, Athenian,2 tragedian,3 born during the seventy-third Olympiad,4 and thus he was seventeen years older than Socrates.5 Sophocles was first to employ three actors and the so-called tritagonist, and he was first to bring forth a chorus of fifteen young men.6 Before then, choruses consisted of twelve youths. He was called Bee because of his sweetness.7 He himself began competing with a play against a play but not conducting the levy.8 He wrote elegy and paeans and an account in prose of the chorus in rivalry with Thespis and Choirilos.9 The sons whom he had were Iophon, Leosthenes, Ariston, Stephanos, and Menekleides.10 He died at ninety years,11 outliving Euripides.12 He taught 123 plays and was victorious, taking the prize twenty-four times.13
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A. Education and Youth (1–3)

1. Life of Sophocles 1 (T 1)

Καλῶς τε ἐπαιδεύθη καὶ ἐτράφη ἐν εὐπορίᾳ.

Sophocles was well educated and raised amid prosperity.

2. Life of Sophocles 3 (T 1)

Διεπονήθη δὲ ἐν παισὶ καὶ παλαίστραν καὶ μουσικὴν, ἐξ ὧν ἀμφοτέρων ἐστεφανώθη, ὡς φησίν Ἰστρος. ἐδιδάχθη δὲ τὴν μουσικὴν παρὰ Λάμπρῳ, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐν Σαλαμίνι ναυμαχίαν Ἀθηναίων περὶ τρόπαιον ὁντων μετὰ λύρας γυμνὸς ἀληλιμμένος τοῖς παιανίζουσι τῶν ἐπινικίων ἐξήρχε.

Sophocles trained among the boys both in the wrestling and in music and poetry; according to Ister [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 334 f 35], he received crowns in both. He studied music with Lampros. While the Athenians were gathered around the victory monument after the naval battle at Salamis, Sophocles, naked and anointed with oil, led the chorus that sang the victory songs, accompanying himself on the lyre.
3. Athenaeus *Deipnosophists* 1.20 ε (T 28)

Besides being beautiful during the prime of his youth, when he was a boy, Sophocles learned the arts of choral dance and music from Lampros. After the sea battle at Salamis, naked and anointed with oil, he led the chorus, accompanying himself on the lyre. Some say that he wore a cloak.

**COMMENTARY**

Scant as the evidence is, it suffices for a realistic (though not necessarily historical) picture of Sophocles as a beautiful youth who early on displayed exceptional musical talent. His selection to dance in the victory celebration at Salamis confirms his physical appearance and grace of foot. Study with Lampros whom Plutarch (*Moralia* 1142 b) ranks in the company of “Pindar, Dionysios of Thebes, Pratinas, and others who excelled in composing music for the cithara” suggests his precociousness, while tutelage by so prominent cithara player and composer implies the high status and wealth of his family. Yet, it is characteristic of the biography of tragic poets that their talent should be recognized early. Euripides’ father received an oracle that his son would receive crowns in contests (*Life of Euripides* 5); an oracle directed Aeschylus to compose tragedy (*Pausanias Geography of Greece* 1.21.2).6

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6 Lefkowitz 1981.93–94.
Plato’s remark in the *Menexenos* (236 A) that Lampros was inferior to Socrates’ teacher, Konnos, reproduces the biographical tradition of comparing Sophocles and Euripides unfavorably to Socrates (20–23).

B. Character (4–35)

4. *Life of Sophocles* 7 (Γ 1)

Καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν τοσούτη τοῦ ἤθους αὐτῷ γέγονε χάρις ὡστε πάντη καὶ πρὸς ἀπάντων αὐτὸν στέργεσθαι.

Simply put, there was such charm to his personality that he was beloved everywhere by everyone.

5. *Life of Sophocles* 10

Οὕτω δὲ φιλαθηναιότατος ἦν ὡστε πολλῶν βασιλέων μεταπεμπομένων αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠθέλησε τὴν πατρίδα καταλιπεῖν.

Sophocles was such a lover of Athens that, even though kings summoned him, he did not want to leave his fatherland.

6. Phrynichus fr. 31 (Kock) (Γ 105)

Μάκαρ Σοφοκλέης, ὃς πολὺν χρόνον βιοὺς ἀπέθανεν ευδαίμων ἀνήρ καὶ δεξιός· πολλὰς ποιήσας καὶ καλὰς τραγῳδίας καλῶς ἐτελεύτησ’, οὐδὲν ὑπομείνας κακὸν.

Happy Sophocles, who lived a long time
and died a happy and clever man, 
wrote many fine tragedies 
and ended well without suffering any evil.

7. Aristophanes *Frogs* 67–82 (Τ 101 with the addition of lines 67–70)

Δι.: κούδεις γέ μ’ ἀν πείσειεν ἀνθρώπων τὸ μὴ οὐκ ἐλθεὶν ἐπ’ ἐκείνον.

Ηρ.: πότερον εἰς Ἀιδοὺ κάτω;

Ηρ.: τί βουλόμενος;

Δι.: καὶ νῆ Δι’ εἰ τί γ’ ἔστιν ἔτι καταστέρω.

Ηρ.: τί θείοις άνθρώποις νήμιστων οἴοι μὲν γὰρ σκότων οἶσιν, οἰ δ’ οὔντες κακοί.

Ηρ.: τί δ’, οὐκ Τιφών ζῆ;

Δι.: τοῦτο γὰρ τοί καὶ μόνον ἔτ’ ἐστὶ λοιπὸν ἁγαθὸν, εἰ καὶ τούτ’ ἄφαντ’ οὐ γὰρ σάφην οὐδ’ οὐδ’ αὐτὸ τούθ’ ὅπως ἔχει.

Ηρ.: εἰτ’ οὐ Σοφοκλέα πρότερον ἀντ’ Εὐριπίδου μέλλεις ἀνάγειν, εἴπερ γ’ ἐκεῖθεν δεῖ σ’ ἄγειν;

Δι.: οὐ, πρὶν γ’ ἂν Τιφώντ’, ἀπολαβὼν αὐτὸν μόνον, ἀνευ Σοφοκλέους ὃ τι ποιεῖ καδανίσω.

κάλλως ο μὲν γ’ Εὐριπίδης πανούργος ἢν κάν ξυναποθάναι δεύο’ ἐπιχειρήσειε μοι’ ὃ δ’ εὔκολος μὲν ἐντάδ’, εὐκολος δ’ ἐκεί.

Dionysus: No man could persuade me not
to go fetch the man [Euripides].

Herakles: Go below? To Hades?

Dionysus: Yes, and even if there is somewhere below that.
Herakles: Why? What do you want?
Dionysus: I need a clever poet.
   “For some are not, and those that are are bad.”
Herakles: What’s this? Is not Iophon alive?
Dionysus: Yes, this is the only good thing left, if it is good.
   I don’t know for sure whether it’s a good thing.
Herakles: You don’t intend to bring Sophocles if you must bring
   someone up from there? He ranks before
Euripides. Dionysus: Not until I take Iophon by himself
   without Sophocles and test the ring of his poetry.
   Besides, Euripides is a scoundrel.
   He’d be up to deserting that place for me.
   Sophocles was easy-going here, and he is easy
   going there.

8. Aristophanes Frogs 786–794 (T 102)

ξα.
   κάπειτα πώς
   οὐ καὶ Σοφοκλής ἀντελάβετο τοῦ θρόνου;

Αἰα.
   μὰ Δὺ οὐκ ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλ’ ἐκυσε μὲν Αἰσχύλον,
   ὅτε δὴ κατῆλθε, κἀνεβαλε τὴν δεξιὰν,
   κάπειν ὑπεχώρησεν αὐτῷ τοῦ θρόνου’
   νυνὶ δ’ ἐμελλὲν, ὡς ἔφη Κλειδημίδης,
   ἐφεδρὸς καθεδείσθαι κὰν μὲν Αἰσχύλος κρατή,
   ἔξειν κατὰ χῶραν’ εἰ δὲ μὴ, περὶ τῆς τέχνης
   διαγωνιεῖσθ’ ἐφασκε πρὸς γ’ Εὐριπίδην.

Xanthos: Certainly Sophocles
   laid claim to the Chair in Tragedy.

Aeaecus: By Zeus, he did not. He kissed Aeschylus
   when he arrived and clasped his right hand
   and yielded the chair to him.
Now, as Kleidemides said, he is going
to sit aside as an alternative. If Aeschylus wins,
he’ll stay put, but if not,
he says that he will compete against Euripides
for the sake of the art.
9. Aristophanes *Frogs* 1515–1519 (T 103)

Aeschylus is speaking:

Σὺ δὲ τὸν θᾶκον
tὸν ἐμὸν παράδος Σοφοκλεὶ τηρεῖν
cαὶ διασῴζειν, ἣν ἀρ’ ἐγὼ ποτε
dεῦρ’ ἀφίκωμαι τούτον γὰρ ἐγὼ
σοφία κρίνω δεύτερον εἶναι.

You, Pluto, give this chair
of mine to Sophocles to watch over
and preserve. If ever I come this way again,
since I consider him to be
second to me in our art.

COMMENTARY

Ancient biographers lacked the primary materials like diaries and personal papers available to their modern counterparts. They turned to their subject’s poetry and poetry about him for anecdotes and judgments on his character which they believed to be factual. They drew heavily on Aristophanes’ *Frogs* for the Life of Aeschylus with influences appearing in the Lives of Sophocles and Euripides. In *Frogs*, Sophocles is a recent arrival to Hades. He yields the “chair of tragedy” to Aeschylus without a contest and is contented to sit as a bye in the contest that Aeschylus undertakes against Euripides. Aeschylus champions the old ways, traditional piety and education by music and athletics. Euripides espouses the newfangled sophistry, airy morality, and effetism of foreigners. The scenario leaves no place for Sophocles, hence he becomes “easy-going” “courteous,” to account for his own lack of

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7 Lefkowitz 1978.
competitiveness, and his style of poetry, with the extremes claimed, strikes a middle ground. From the Sophocles content in Hades it is no great leap to a “very patriotic” Sophocles who, in contrast with Aeschylus and Euripides, disdains invitations from powerful foreigners to remain in Athens. This Sophocles gains some support from man who, while eschewing a political career, ardently served the demos when called upon and left Athens only on its business. The real Sophocles, of course, had to be competitive: he competed all his adult life in the tragic contests and surely expected to win each time he entered the fray—the timeless mentality of the successful athlete.

10. Athenaeus Deipnosophists 13.603 E–604 F (T 75)
εἰρήσθαι· ἡ πορφυρέου ἀπὸ στόματος ἱεῖσα φωνὰν παρθένο, οὐδό ὁ ποιητής ἔφη <ὁ> λέγων ἡ χρυσόκόμαν Ἀπόλλωνα· χρυσέας γὰρ εἰ ἐποίησεν ὁ ζωγράφος τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ κόμας καὶ μὴ μελαίνας, χείρισθαν ἄν ἦν τὸ ζωγράφημα. οὐδὲ ὁ φάς ὀσοδόκακτυλον· εἰ γὰρ τις εἰς ὀδόν χρώμα βάφει τοὺς δακτύλους, πορφυροβάφου χεῖρας καὶ οὐ γυναικὸς καλῆς ποιησειεν <ἄν>. γελασάντω δὲ, ὁ μὲν Ἐρετριεὺς ἐνωπήθη τῇ ἐπιραπίξει, ὁ δὲ πάλιν τοῦ παιδὸς τῷ λόγῳ εἶχετο. εἴρετο γάρ μιν ἀπὸ τῆς κύλικος κάρφος τῷ μικρῷ δακτύλῳ ἀφαφέτεον, εἰ καθορά τὸ κάρφος. φάντος δὲ καθοράν, ἀπὸ τοῖνυν φύσησον αὐτὸ, ἵνα μὴ πλύνοιτο ὁ δάκτυλός σεν' προσαγαγόντος δ' αὐτοῦ τὸ πρόσωπον πρὸς τὴν κύλικα ἐγγυτέρω τὴν κύλικα τοῦ ἐαυτοῦ στόματος ἦγεν, ἵνα δὴ ἡ κεφαλὴ τῇ κεφαλή ἀσσοτέρα γένηται. ὡς δ' ἦν οἱ κάρτα πλησίον, προσλαβὼν τῇ χειρὶ ἐφίλησεν. ἐπικροτησάντων δὲ πάντων σὺν γέλωτι καὶ βοῇ ὡς εὖ ὑπηγάγετο τὸν παῖδα, ἰκαθορέω ἐπετεύχθης ἔλεγεν τε καὶ ἔπρησσεν ὅτι πίνοι η ἡ πράσσοι. τὰ μέντοι πολιτικὰ οὔτε σοφὸς οὔτε ἔκτισμος ἦν, ἀλλ' ἦς ἀν τις εἰς τῶν χρηστῶν Ἀθηναίων.

Καὶ Ἱερώνυμος δ' ὁ Ρόδιος ἐν τοῖς Ἰστορικοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν φησιν ὅτι Σοφοκλῆς εὐπρεπὴ παῖδα ἐξω τείχους ἀπήγαγε χρησόμενος αὐτῷ. ὁ μὲν οὖν παῖς τὸ ἰδίον ἰμάτιον ἐπὶ τῇ πόρῳ ὑπέστρωσεν, τὴν δὲ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους χλανίδα περιεβάλλοντο. μετ' οὖν ὁμιλίαν ὁ παῖς ἀρπάσας τὸ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους χλανίδιον ὠχετο, καταλιπὼν τῷ Σοφοκλεί τῷ παιδικὸν ἰμάτιον. οί δὲ εἰκὸς διαλαληθέντος τοῦ συμβεβηκότος Εὐριπίδης πυθόμενος καὶ ἐπιπαθάζων τὸ γεγονός καὶ αὐτὸς ποτε ἐφὶ τούτῳ κεχρῆσθαι τῷ παιδί, ἀλλὰ μὴν προσθείναι, τὸν δὲ Σοφοκλέα διὰ τὴν ἀκολούθαν καταφρονηθήναι. καὶ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἀκούσας ἐποίησεν εἰς αὐτὸν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἐπίγραμμα, χρησόμενος τῷ
Sophocles was a lover of youths as Euripides was of women. The poet Ion wrote the following in his work entitled *Sojournings [Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 392 ff 6]:* “I met Sophocles the poet on Chios while he was sailing as general to Lesbos, a playful man and clever over wine. Hermesilaos, Sophocles’ host and proxenos of the Athenians, was entertaining him. There appeared by the fire the boy who was pouring the wine. Sophocles said to him, ‘Do you wish for me to drink with pleasure?’ The boy said yes, and Sophocles then said, ‘Bring me the cup slowly, and draw it away slowly.’ The boy blushed even more deeply, and Sophocles said to the man sharing his couch, ‘How aptly did Phrynichus put it when he said, “There shines on crimson cheeks the light of eros”’ [Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 3 ff 13]. A teacher of grammar from Eretria or Erythrai interrupted: ‘You are wise in poetry, Sophocles, but Phrynichus was off the mark when he said that the cheeks of a beautiful boy are crimson. If a painter dabbed this boy’s cheeks with crimson paint, he would no longer appear beautiful. Surely, it is not a beautiful thing to compare the beautiful with that which is not beautiful.’ Sophocles laughed at the Eretrian and replied, ‘This line of Simonides [Poetae Melici Graeci 585] doesn’t suit you either, although it seems to the Greeks to be well said: “From her crimson mouth the maiden sent forth her voice,” or the poet who said “golden-haired Apollo” [Pindar Olympian Odes 6.41; 7.32; Paeanes 5.41]. If the painter had made the
hair of the god golden instead of black, his painting would not be as good. If the painter dipped his fingers into a rose-colored paint, he would have the hands of a dipper in rose-colored paint and not those of a beautiful woman.’ A laugh went around the company at this. The Eretrian was crushed by Sophocles’ retort, and Sophocles returned to talking with the boy. In the meantime, the boy had been trying to remove a piece of straw from the cup with his little finger. Sophocles asked whether he saw the straw. When the boy said yes, Sophocles said, ‘Blow it off, then, so you won’t get your finger wet.’ As boy drew his face toward the cup, Sophocles drew the cup nearer to his own mouth so that his head came nearer to the boy’s. When the heads were close, Sophocles embraced the boy and kissed him. Everyone rippled with laughter and shouts of glee over how Sophocles led on the boy. ‘I am practicing,” he said, “my generalship, gentlemen, since Pericles said that I know how to write poetry but not how to be a general. Didn’t this piece of generalship come out alright for me?’ Sophocles said and did many clever things while he was drinking wine. He was neither wise nor active in the affairs of the city but conducted himself as would one of the respectable Athenians.”

Hieronymos of Rhodes says in his Histories [fr. 35 Wehrli] that Sophocles led a comely boy outside the wall in order to enjoy him. The boy spread his cloak on the grass, and they threw Sophocles’ mantle over themselves. After their intercourse, the boy absconded, stealing Sophocles’ mantle and leaving Sophocles his boy’s cloak. As was likely, the incident made the rounds of the gossips, and Euripides heard about it. He scoffed at what happened and said that he had the boy but did not make a contribution, but Sophocles had let his self-indulgence in matters of the flesh make a fool of him. Sophocles heard what Euripides said and wrote the following epigram [fr. eleg. 4 West = 3 Diehl] which refers to the story of the Sun and Boreas [Aesop Fables 46; Babrius Fables 18] and indirectly to Euripides’ adulterous ways:
Helios, not a boy, Euripides, left me naked
without my mantle. Boreas joins you, poor thing, when
you are making love. You’re not smart. While sowing the
fields of others, you bring Eros to court for stealing clothes.

COMMENTARY

The dinner party at Hermesilaos’ house on Chios could have happened. Sophocles had to have been acquainted, at the least, with Ion, a fellow tragedian and bon vivant. Ion first produced plays for the City Dionysia in 451; at least twelve and as many as forty followed. He lost to Euripides’ *Hippolytus* in 428 but later gained a victory in tragedy and dithyramb. Overwhelmed with joy, he gave every Athenian citizen a jar of Chian wine. Nor is it improbable that Sophocles put into Chios where, as a general and famous poet, he was entertained by a local celebrity and habitué of Athens at the house of the man who represented Athenian interests. Nevertheless, Ion could have invented Sophocles’ campaign to kiss his host’s pretty cupbearer and his withering squelch of the pedantic grammarian. His characterization of Sophocles seems to capture—as it helps create—the essential Sophocles: he was neither wise nor active in the affairs of the city but conducted himself as would any of the good

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8 First victory and number of plays: *The Suda* iota 487. Defeat: *Argumentum* to Euripides *Hippolytus*. Gift of wine: Athenaeus *Deipnosophists* 1.3; *The Suda* iota 487.

9 On the other hand, Lefkowitz (1978.465) points out concerning Ion’s *Epidemiai* (*Sojournings*): “the surviving fragments of his *Epidemiai* provide little reassurance that he is a historian in our sense: they consist of dinner-table conversations, comparisons of generals and poets with one another, famous name-dropping.” Yet, Ion cannot be faulted for not being a modern historian, nor Athenaeus for considering a gossip-monger a source of memorable information.
Athenians. Unlike most Greeks, the poet Ion distinguishes between *chrestos* as “good” and as “useful to the community,” its etymological meaning. Sophocles, a good aristocrat but not an active politician, is not useful in Ion’s opinion. Perhaps the tragedian was too close to the man to see the usefulness that Albin Lesky discovers in “happy” Sophocles:

> The poet who knew the tragedy of human life and the very depths of sorrow as no other did, lived his outward life in a warm and peaceful light, and served his fellows as an example of a happy man.10

Although one upmanship between verbally clever men is not impossible, Sophocles did not write the epigram preserved by Athenaeus from Hieronymus of Rhodes because it draws upon Hellenistic biographies. It implies a reader familiar with the Sophocles and Euripides developed by biographers writing long after their deaths, among them, Satyrus of Callatis Ponitca (*floruit* ca. 300 B.C.E.), Hieronymus of Rhodes (*ca.* 290–230), and Ister of Cyrene (*ca.* 250–200). Further, the epigram deals with images of the poet created by the implied author of the epigram.11 The “I” develops a personality for Sophocles by erecting differences from his antipode, Euripides. The premise of the epigram is that Sophocles and Euripides resemble, respectively, Helios and Boreas of the fable The North Wind and the Sun:

> A contest like this arose between Boreas and Helios over which one could strip the goatskin cloak from a traveling bumpkin. Boreas, first up, blew as he blows from Thrace.

10 Lesky 272.

11 For the concept of the “implied author,” see Booth 71–76. On the epigram, see Tyrrell 2005.
His idea was to rob the wearer of his cloak by force. But the man did not let go his cloak, but, shivering, he clutched it by the edges all around him. He then sat down, leaning his back against a jutting rock. Then Helios peeped out sweetly at first and drove off the cold of the raw wind. He turned up the heat more. Suddenly, a burning heat gripped the farmer, and he threw off the cloak of his own accord and was stripped. Boreas, matched against Helios, was defeated. The fable means: “Strive for gentleness, son. You will accomplish more by persuasion than by using force” (Babrius Fable 18).

Euripides reproaches Sophocles for losing his cloak to the thievery of a boy whom Euripides had without making a contribution, that is, without removing his cloak and allowing it to be stolen. Sophocles replies that Euripides is accustomed to wearing his cloak in times of passion, because, like Boreas, he uses force. Euripides resorts to force since his lovers are other men's wives, and adultery is a cold business because of the penalties that conviction carries. On the other hand, Helios persuaded Sophocles to remove his cloak. He was hot from passion for the boy. The boy who aroused such passion (that is, eros) instantiates Eros, the primeval arouser of passion who, Hesiod says, is among the first gods to be born:

Then was born Eros, the most beautiful among the immortal gods,
loosener of limbs, who subdues the mind and prudent counsel
in the chests of all gods and of all men. (Theogony 120–122).

In Longus' Daphnis and Chloe (2.3–5), Philetas tells how he tried to entice Eros in the form of a boy into giving him a kiss:
And so, I asked him to come into my arms without fear. I swore more than once that I would let him go and give him a dowry of apples and roses and the right to harvest my plants and pick my flowers for all time, if only I received one kiss from him (4).

Philetas’ Eros escapes without bestowing a kiss or compensating him for his flowers. Sophocles’ Eros, embodied as it were in the boy, leaves with his cloak—no motive given much less that of thievery. When Euripides alleges to all that the boy stole the cloak, he brings Eros into the danger of being charged with stealing clothes, a capital offense when perpetrated in a gymnasium: “If anyone purloined a cloak or small oil flask or any other trivial thing from the Lyceum or the Academy or from Kynosarges, or if he purloined any article of clothing valued at more than ten drachmas from the gymnasia or from the harbors, Solon legislated a penalty of death” (Demosthenes Against Timocrates 114). Thus we may suppose that Sophocles stepped out with his erōmenos into an open area of a gymnasium that bordered the city walls, and there, Eros, denizen of gymnasia, pilfered his cloak.12

11. Plutarch Pericles 8.8 (T 74a)

Καί ποτε τοῦ Σοφοκλέους, ὅτε συστρατηγῶν ἔξεπλευσε μετ’ αὐτοῦ, παῖδα καλὸν ἐπαινέσαντος “οὐ μόνον” ἔφη, “τὰς χεῖρας, οὐ Σοφόκλεις, δεί καθαρὰς ἔχειν τὸν στρατηγὸν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ὦψεις.

Once when Sophocles was a member of the board of generals and was embarking on ship with Pericles, he praised a beautiful boy.

12 For Eros in the gymnasium, see Scanlon 211–219. On the epigram, see Tyrrell 2005
Pericles said, “Sophocles, a general ought to have not only hands that are clean but also eyes.”

12. Cicero De Officiis 1.144 (T 74c)

Turpe enim valdeque vitiosum in re severa convivio digna aut delicatum aliquem inferre sermonem. bene Pericles, cum haberet collegam in praetura Sophoclem poetam iique de communi officio convenissent et casu formosus puer praeteriret dixissetque Sophocles “O puerum pulchrum, Pericle!”, “at enim praetorem, Sophocle, decet non solum manus sed etiam oculos abstinentes habere.” atqui hoc idem Sophocles si in athletarum probatione dixisset, iusta reprehensione caruisset: tanta vis est et loci et temporis.

It is bad manners and in extremely poor taste to intrude matters into a serious discussions that belong to a party or risqué talk. Pericles had Sophocles the poet as his colleague in the praetorship. When they met concerning official business together, by chance a beautiful boy walked by, and Sophocles said, “O, what a beautiful boy, Pericles!” Pericles replied, “A praetor ought not only to have hands that abstain but even eyes.” And yet, if Sophocles had said the same thing in approving athletes, he would have been free of just blame. Such is the effect of place and time.

13. Stobaeus Anthology 3.17.18 (T 74b)

Περικλῆς Σοφοκλέους εὑπρετη παιδα δεικνύντος αὐτῷ, “ὦ Σοφόκλεις,” εἶπε, “τὸν σώφρονα στρατηγὸν οὐ μόνον τὰς χεῖρας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ὀψιν ἔχειν παρ᾽ ἐαυτῷ δεῖ.”
When Sophocles pointed to a comely boy, Pericles said to him, “The self-controlled general ought to keep to himself not just his hands but also his eyesight.”

14. Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX* 4.3 ext. 1 (T 74d)

Pericles Atheniensium princeps, cum tragoediарum scriptorem Sophoclem in praetura collegam habet atque is publico officio una districtus pueri ingenui praetereuntis formam inpensioribus verbis laudasset, intemperantiam eius increpans dixit praetoris non solum manus a pecuniae lucro sed etiam oculos a libidinoso aspectu continentes esse debere.

Pericles, foremost man of the Athenians, had as a colleague in the praetorship the writer of tragedies Sophocles. When Sophocles, distracted from his official duties, too eagerly praised the beauty of a well-born boy who passed by, Pericles chided him for his lack of moderation and said, “Not only should a praetor’s hands be kept from greed for money but also his eyes from lustful glances.”

15. [Plutarch] *Moralia* 838 f (T 74e)

Σοφοκλέα δὲ τὸν τραγικὸν θεασάμενος ἐπόμενον ἐρωτικῶς παιδί εἶπεν “οὐ μόνον δεῖ, Σοφόκλεις, τὰς χεῖρας ἐχεῖν παρ’ αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς.”

Isocrates, having watched Sophocles the tragedian following a boy with erotic purposes, said “Not only must one keep one’s hands to oneself, Sophocles, but the eyes also.”
COMMENTARY

Plutarch seems justified in accepting Pericles’ remark to Sophocles as genuine. The prudish Pericles, a dignified and aloof man, could easily have been offended by behavior like that Sophocles displayed at Hermesilaos’ dinner party and felt forced to remind Sophocles of his dignity as a representative of the Athenians in a time of crisis. Sophocles’ lack of qualifications as a general was never in doubt and deprived Pericles of a commander, which had to have irked a man who sought calm efficiency in managing the public and its affairs.

16. Aristophanes, Peace 693–699 (T 104a with the addition of lines 693-694)

13 Ion contrasts the “lordly and aloof” Pericles with the “easy Cimon who goes with the flow” (Plutarch Pericles 5.3).
Hermes: Oh! Oh! What stuff Peace asked me to find out from you.
Trygaeus: What stuff?
Hermes: All sorts as well as the old stuff she left behind at that time. First, she asked how Sophocles is faring.
Trygaeus: He’s happy, but something strange happened to him.
Hermes: What?
Trygaeus: From Sophocles he’s turned into Simonides.
Hermes: Simonides? How?
Trygaeus: Now that he’s old and musty he’d put to sea on a mat of rushes for money.

17. Scholiast to Aristophanes Peace 697 (T 104b)

Ὅτι ἐπὶ μισθῷ ἔγραφε τὰ μέλη· καὶ γὰρ Σιμωνίδης δοκεῖ πρῶτος . . . γράψαι ἀσμα μισθοῦ.

Because he wrote poetry for pay, for Simonides seems to have been the first . . . to write songs for money.

18. Scholiast to Aristophanes Peace 697 (T 104c)

Ὁ Σιμωνίδης διεβέβλητο ἐπὶ φιλαργυρίᾳ. καὶ τὸν Σοφοκλέα οὖν διὰ φιλαργυρίαν ἐοικέναι τῷ Σιμωνίδῃ. λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὅτι ἐκ τῆς στρατηγίας τῆς ἐν Σάμῳ ἔργυρισατο.

Simonides was criticized for his love of money. Because of the love of money, Sophocles seems to be like Simonides. It is said that Sophocles also received money from the campaign in Samos.
19. Scholiast to Aristophanes Peace 697 (T 104d)

Otherwise. Sophocles seemed to never have been too worked up at length about wages and settlements.

COMMENTARY

The joke is that Sophocles is so desperate for money that he goes to sea in a basket. Hesiod says of sailing for profit:

I do not speak in praise of sailing,
for it does not make my heart leap for joy.
It is dangerous, and you would hardly escape its evils. But men undertake sailing out of the folly of their minds. But for wretched men, wealth becomes their very life existence. To die among the waves is dreadful (Works and Days 682–688).

The joke arose in 421 B.C.E., twenty years after Sophocles’ generalship in the Samian Revolt and the year when Aristophanes produced Peace. Simonides reportedly was the first poet to write for money (Scholiast to Pindar Isthmian Odes 2.9a). The combination of Sophocles as poet and as public official, a conventional target for jibes about bribery and corruption, occasioned the joke. The author of the Life of Sophocles omits the allegation from disbelief or to give “a favourable picture of the poet.” One Scholiast deemed interest in profits beneath Sophocles. The joke says more about Aristophanes’ willingness to

14 Lefkowitz 1981.83.
harpoon anyone for a laugh, even a member of his own thiasos or group of comrades.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{20. Scholiast to Aristophanes Clouds 144 (T 106a)}

Τούτῳ καὶ ἡ Πυθία δοκεῖ τὸν περὶ τοῦ Σωκράτους χρησμὸν εἰπεῖν:

σοφὸς Σοφοκλῆς, σοφώτερος δ᾽ Εὐριπίδης,
ἀνδρῶν δὲ πάντων Σωκράτης σοφώτατος.

toúton Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ Μόλων ἐν τῷ κατὰ φιλοσόφους ἐψεῦσθαι φησιν’ τοὺς γὰρ Πυθικοὺς χρησμοὺς ἔξαμέτρους εἶναι.

To this one [Chairephon] the Pythia seems to have told the oracle about Socrates:

Wise is Sophocles. Wiser is Euripides.
Wisest of all men is Socrates.

Apollonios Molon says in his treatise \emph{On Philosophers} that is false, for Pythian oracles are in hexameters.

\textbf{21. Scholiast to Plato Apology 21 A (T 106b)}

Χρησμὸς περὶ Σωκράτους δοθεὶς Χαιρεφῶντι τῷ Σφητίῳ

\textsuperscript{15} Lefkowitz 1981.83 note 3 observes that Aristophanes abuses fellow members of his thiasos (\emph{Inscriptiones Graeae} ΙΙ\textsuperscript{5} 3.2343) in Clouds 351 (Simon) and Arcarnians 46 (Amphitheos). For thiasos, see on 144.
An oracle concerning Socrates given to Chairephon of Sphettos:

Wise is Sophocles. Wiser is Euripides.
Wisest of all men is Socrates.

22. The Suda sigma 820 (T 106c)

Σοφὸς Σοφοκλῆς, σοφότερος δ’ Εὐριπίδης,
ἀνδρῶν δὲ πάντων Σωκράτης σοφότατος.

Wise is Sophocles. Wiser is Euripides.
Socrates is wiser than all men.

23. Origin Against Celsus 7.6 (T 106d)

Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἀπάντων Σωκράτην εἶπε σοφότατον εἶναι,
ἡμβλυνε τὸν ἐπαινὸν αὐτοῦ τὸ πρὸς τοῦτον λεγόμενον περὶ
Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους ἐν τῷ “σοφὸς Σοφοκλῆς, σοφότερος
δ’ Εὐριπίδης”· τραγῳδιστοῖσιν οὖν σοφῶν ύπ’ αὐτοῦ
λελεγμένων κρείττων εἶναι νομισθεὶς ὁ Σωκράτης,
tὸν ἐπὶ τῆς
σκηνῆς καὶ τῆς ὀρχήστρας τοῦ τυχόντος ἀλθοῦ ἐνεκεν
ἀγωνιζομένων καὶ ὅπου μὲν λύπας καὶ οἰκτούς τοῖς θεαταῖς
ἐμποιοῦντων ὅπου δὲ ἀσέμνους γέλατας (τοιοῦτον γὰρ τι
βούλεται τὰ σατυρικὰ δρᾶματα), οὐ πάνυ τι τὸ διὰ φιλοσοφίαν
καὶ ἀλήθειαν ἐμφαίνει σεμνὸν καὶ διὰ σεμνότητα ἐπαινεῖτον.

If the Pythian said that Socrates was the wisest of all men, he
blunted the praise of Socrates by comparing him to Euripides and
Sophocles with “Wise is Sophocles. Wiser is Euripides.” For
Socrates is considered to be better than writers of tragedies who compete on the stage and in the orchestra for an ordinary prize and who make up grief and weeping for spectators and indecent laughter (for such is the intention of satyr plays). Perhaps he did not make him seem august on account of his philosophy and truth or praiseworthy on account of his augustness.

COMMENTARY

The Scholiasts link Chaerephon of Aristophanes’ Clouds 144, “A flea bit Chaerephon’s eyebrow,” with an oracle. Chaerephon is known for an oracle but not this one. This oracle is a prosaic comparison of great men. Chaerephon’s oracle as related in Plato’s Apology (20 E-21 A) poses a quandary that puzzles Socrates. Chaerephon, a friend of Socrates from youth, “went to Delphi and had the effrontery to ask the oracle. . . if anyone was wiser than me [Socrates].” The response, “no one is wiser,” corresponds to an oracle’s usual riddling style of speech and implies a subtextual meaning which Socrates must discover for himself, namely, “in this oracle, the god is saying that human wisdom is worth little or nothing at all” (23 A).16

24. Plato Republic 329 B (T 80a)

Cephalus is speaking:

Καὶ δὴ καὶ Σοφόκλει ποτε τῷ ποιητῇ παρεγενόμην ἐφωτωμένω ὑπὸ τινὸς “πῶς” ἔφη, ὡς Σοφόκλεις, ἔχεις πρὸς τἀφροδίσια; ἐτι οίος τε εἰ γυναικὶ συγγίγνεσθαι; καὶ ὁς ἐνυφήμει “ἔφη, ὡς ἄνθρωπε ἀσμενέστατα μέντοι αὐτὸ ἀπέφυγον, ἀσπερ λυττώντα τινα καὶ ἀγριον δεσπότην αποφυγών.”

16 On the oracle of the Scholiast, see Parke-Wormell 2.170.
I was once with Sophocles the poet when he was asked by someone, “How, Sophocles, are you disposed towards sex? Are you still able to lie with a woman?” And he replied, “Hush, my man, most gladly did I escape sex, as if a slave escaping a raging and savage master.”

25. Plutarch Moralia 5.525 A (T 80b)

Ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἐρωτηθεὶς εἰ δύναται γυναικὶ πλησιάζειν, “εὐφήμει, ἄνθρωπε,” εἶπεν· “ἐλεύθερος γέγονα λυττόντας καὶ ἀγρίους δεσπότας διὰ τὸ γῆρας ἀποφυγόν.”

Sophocles, asked whether he could be with a woman, replied, “Hush, my man, I have become a free man, as if a slave who escaped, raging and savage masters through old age.”

26. Plutarch Moralia 8.788 E (T 80c)

Ὁ γὰρ Σοφοκλῆς ἄσμενος ἔφη τὰ ἀφροδίσια γεγηρακώς ἀποπεφευγέναι καθάπερ ἄγριον καὶ λυσσῶντα δεσπότην.

Sophocles said that he gladly escaped sex by having gotten old, as if a slave escaping a savage and raging master.

27. Plutarch Moralia 12.1094 E (T 80d)

Διαπορεῖ . . . εἰ γέρων ὁ σοφὸς ὄν καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος πλησιάζειν ἔτι ταῖς τῶν καλῶν ἀφαίς χαίρει καὶ ψηλαφήσεις, οὐ τὰ αὐτὰ μέντοι Σοφοκλεὶ διανοούμενος ἀσμένως ἐκφυγόντι τὴν ἡδονήν ταύτην ὀσπερ ἀγρίον καὶ λυττόντα δεσπότην.

[Epicurus] raised the question whether a man of good sense but old who was unable to be with a woman still delighted in the
touch and feeling of beautiful women. He did not think the same as Sophocles who, like a slave, gladly escaped this pleasure as if it were a savage and raging master.

28. Athenaeus Deipnosophists 12.510 b (T 80e)

Καίτοι Σοφοκλῆς γ’ ὁ ποιητής, τῶν ἀπολαυστικῶν γε εἰς ὧν, ἵνα μὴ κατηγορή τοῦ γήρως, εἰς σοφοσύνην ἐθετο τὴν ἀσθένειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν περί τὰς τῶν ἀφροδισιών ἀπολαύσεις, φήσας ἀσμένως ἀπηλλάχθαι αὐτῶν ὡσπερ τινὸς δεσπότου.

Sophocles the poet, a man extraordinaire for pleasures, lest he blame old age, attributed his weakness to moderation concerning the pleasures of sex, saying that he gladly was quit of them as if from some master.

29. Philostratos, Life of Apollonius 1.13 (T 80f)

Αὐτὸς δὲ μήτ’ ἂν γῆμαι μήτ’ ἂν ἐς ὀμλίαιν ἀφικέσθαι ποτὲ ἀφροδισιῶν, ὑπερβαλλόμενος καὶ τὸ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους· ὁ μὲν γὰρ λυττῶντα ἐφη καὶ ἄγριον δεσπότην ἀποφυγεῖν ἐς γῆρας ἐλθὼν, ὁ δ’ ὑπ’ ἀρετῆς τε καὶ σοφοσύνης οὐδ’ ἐν μειρακίῳ ἡττήθη τούτου, ἀλλὰ καὶ νέος ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἐρωσμένος ἐκράτει τε καὶ λυττῶντος ἐδέσποζεν.

Apollonius himself said that he neither married nor engaged in sexual intercourse, surpassing even what Sophocles did in this matter. For Sophocles said that, by having reached old age, as if a slave, he escaped a raging and savage master, but out of goodness and moderation, he himself was never defeated by this master even as a youth but, although young and sound of body, he kept control and mastered the raging master.
30. Stobaeus Anthology 3.6.42 (T 80g)

Σοφοκλῆν ἤρετό τις πρεσβύτην ὄντα, εἰ ἔτι πλησιάζοι γυναικὶ ὧδ’ “εὐφήμει,” ἔφη “ἀσμενέστατα ἀπέφυγον ὡσπερ λυττῶντα καὶ ἀγρίου δεσπότην.”

When Sophocles was an old man, someone asked him whether he still got up close with a woman. “Hush,” he said, “most gladly did I escape as if a slave from a raging and savage master.”

31. Ammianus Marcellinus History 25.4.2

Ita inviolata castitate enituit ut post amissam coniugem nihil umquam venerium †augis laren†, illud advertens, quod apud Platonem legitur, Sofoclen tragoediarum scriptorem, aetate grandaevum, interrogatum ecquid adhuc feminis miseretur, negantem id adieciisse quod gauderet harum rerum amorem ut rabiosum quendam effugisse dominum et crudelem.

Julianus struggled with a chastity so inviolate that after the loss of his wife . . . nothing ever of sex, alluding to what is said in Plato. Sophocles, the writer of tragedies, on being asked at an advanced age whether he still had intercourse with women, said no and added that he was overjoyed that he had escaped the desire for those things as if a slave from a furious and savage master.

32. Cicero On Old Age 47 (T 80i)

At non est voluptatum tanta quasi titillatio in senibus. Credo, sed ne desideratur quidem; nihil autem est molestum quod non desideres. Bene Sophocles, cum ex eo quidam iam affecto aetate
quareret utereturne rebus veneriis, “di meliora!” inquit, “libenter vero istinc sicut ab domino agresti ac furioso profugi.”

No such a great urge, as it were, for sexual pleasures exists in old men. I suppose, but it is not missed. What you do not miss does not bother you. Sophocles put it well. When someone asked him—he was already of an advanced age—whether he had sex, he replied, “Gods forefend! Gladly have I escaped from that as if a slave from a wild and raging master.”

33. Valerius Maximus Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX 4.3 ext. 2 (T 80k)

Sophocles autem aetate iam senior, cum ab eo quidam quareret an etiam nunc rebus veneriis uteretur, “di meliora!” inquit, “libenter enim istinc tamquam ex aliqua furiosa profugi dominatione.”

Sophocles, already older in age, when someone asked him whether he still now had sex, said, “Gods forefend! Gladly have I escaped from that as if a slave from some raging master.”

34. [Aeschines] Letter 5.5 (T 80l)

Ὅτε μὲν ὑπεραγαπῶ τὰ παρόντα καὶ ὡσπερ φασί Σοφοκλέα ἡδῆ γέροντα ὑπὲρ ἀλλῆς ἡδονῆς εἰπεῖν, ὡσπερ κυνὸς λυττάσῃς ἀπηλλάχθαι ποτὲ τῆς τοῦ πολιτευσθαι ἡδονῆς δοκῶ... 

When I really am enjoying the present, I seem to have escaped the pleasure of taking part in government as if from a raging dog, something they say Sophocles by then an old man said about the rest of pleasure.
35. *The Suda* sigma 816

Ὡτι Ἀπολλώνιος ἐς σωφρονούνην ὑπερβάλλετο τοῦ Σοφοκλέους· ο μὲν γὰρ λυττῶντα ἔφη καὶ ἄγριον δεσπότην ἀποφυγεῖν, ἐλθόντα ἐς γῆρας· ὁ δὲ Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ Τυανεὺς ὑπ’ ἀρετῆς τε καὶ σωφρονούνης οὐδὲν ἐν μειρακίῳ ἡττήθη τούτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ νέος ὃν καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἐφρωμένος ἐκράτηε τε καὶ λυττῶτος ἐδέσποζεν.

They say that Apollonios [of Tyana] surpassed Sophocles in self-control for this reason. Sophocles said that he escaped, as if a slave, from a raging and bestial master when he arrived at old age. Because of his virtue and self-control, however, Apollonios of Tyana was not overcome by this master even as a youth, but, although young and physically vigorous, he exerted control and mastery over the beast.

COMMENTARY

The opening scene of Plato’s *Republic* prefigures the discussion of pleasure found in books Five and Nine. Cephalus observes to Socrates how, as his body decays, he finds greater enjoyment in good conversation. For his part, Socrates says, he enjoys talking with the elderly, because they have gone farther down the road of life and have much to tell others who may follow them. Cephalus eagerly shares his wisdom. He tells how his contemporaries frequently complain about old age, yearning for the pleasures of their youth and recalling sex, drink, parties, and everything else that goes with them (*Republic* 329 A). But he thinks differently and quotes something Sophocles once said as confirmation of his view. For Cephalus, “much peace and freedom from the such pursuits accrue from old age” (329 C).
Cephalus cites Sophocles as an expert because he would have been about seventy-five in 421 B.C.E., the generally accepted dramatic date of the Republic. Plato, on the other hand, knows that Sophocles lived another fifteen years, and his extraordinary longevity secured an unshakeable foundation for his expertise. There may also be a Platonic jibe at the poet’s lack of philosophical insight, for like common men, Sophocles considers pleasure solely in physical terms, not gleaning the existence of pleasure apart from the senses.

The anecdote derives from its function in the dialogue. Someone had to sound the clarion of the escape from sexual frenzy as a bonus of old age. Who better than Sophocles who lived more than most men? The anecdote, not likely to be historical, inspired a string of sources that adds nothing to its historicity.

C. Political Career (36–49)

36. Pliny Natural History 37.40 (T 15)

Sophocles poeta tragicus, quod equidem miror, cum tanta gravitas ei cothurni sit, praeterea vitae fama alias principi loco genito Athenis et rebus gestis et exercitu ducto.

Although Sophocles, poet of tragedy, possessed much importance in the sphere of the cothurnus, something that I admire, his life is marked by birth at a high station, public accomplishments, and generalship of an army.

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17 Taylor 263–264; Guthrie 437–438.
Sophocles from Kolonos was Hellenotamias (443/442 B.C.E.).

COMMENTARY

It may seem strange to describe Sophocles as having a “political career,” but he apparently enjoyed serving the demos, and the city and Pericles took advantage of his name and integrity for a figurehead. Sophocles belonged to two boards whose members the Athenians elected and was elected chairman of one of them. He first appears in the sources as a public figure in the service of the demos in 443/442 B.C.E. at the age of fifty-three. An eager citizen, he may have carried out other tasks before becoming a Treasurer of the Hellenes. By the time he stood for election in the late winter month of Anthesterion (roughly February/March), he had gained the confidence and respect of the Athenians and the begrudging approval, at least, of their emergent leader, Pericles.

The board of 443/442 undertook a new assessment of the monies paid as tribute by the Athenians’ subject allies. Reassessment, not due to be carried out in 442/441, was moved up at Pericles’ initiative. Pericles wanted these treasurers to undertake an extensive reorganization, and, with his hand on their activities, he must have seen Sophocles as an asset. Victor Ehrenberg who [18]

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18 Ehrenberg points out that during the years of Pericles’ ascendancy, only one man besides Sophocles, Demodokos of Aragyros, can be identified as an hellanotamias who held a generalship (133).
examines the function of these *hellanotamiai* in detail, reaches this conclusion concerning Sophocles’ place among them:

He had no special personal responsibility, and he was not elected for any particular knowledge or efficiency of his own. He was to represent the board, and the intelligence as well as the name and social standing of the poet were prominent enough, and his personal integrity sufficiently trusted, to serve that purpose well.\(^{19}\)

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38. Scholiast to Aristides (485.28) (T 19)

Τῶν δέκα στρατηγῶν ἐν Σάμῳ τὰ ὄνόματα κατὰ Ἀνδροτίωνα· Σωκράτης Αναγυράσιος, Σοφοκλῆς ἐκ Κολωνοῦ ὁ ποιητής, Ανδοκίδης Κυδαθηναιεύς, Κρέων Σκαμβωνίδης, Περικλῆς Χολαργεύς, Γλαύκων ἐκ Κεραμέων, Καλλιστάτους Αχαρνεύς, Ξενοφῶν Μελιτεύς, Λαμπίδης Πειραιεύς, Γλαύκετης Ἀθηναῖος, Κλειτοφῶν Θοραιεύς.

The names of the ten generals in Samos according to Androtion [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 324 F 38] are Socrates of the deme Anagyrous, Sophocles of the deme Kolonos, the poet, Andokides of the deme Kydathenaion, Kreon of the deme Skambonidai, Pericles of the deme Cholargos, Glaunon of the deme Kerameis, Kallistratos of the deme Acharnai, Xenophon of the deme Melite, Lampides of the deme Peiraieus, Glauketes †Athenian†, and Kleitophon of the deme Thorai.

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\(^{19}\) Ehrenberg 134.
39. Strabo *Geography of Greece* 638 C (T 20)

Athenians who earlier sent Pericles as general and with him the poet Sophocles laid siege to the Samians who were in revolt and treated them badly. Later, the Athenians sent to Samos two thousand of their own citizens to take possession of portions of land on the island.

40. Justinus *Historiae Philippicae* 3.6.12 (T 23)

Athenians elected two generals in response to the adverse storm of war, Pericles, a man of demonstrated bravery, and Sophocles, the writer of tragedies. With their army divided, these men devastated the fields of the Spartans and added many cities in Asia to the Athenian empire. Broken by their setbacks, the Lacedaemonians concluded peace for 30 years.
41. Aristodemus Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 104 F 1.15.4 (T 21)

Τῷ τεσσαρεσκαιδεκάτῳ δὲ ἔτει Ἀθηναίοι Σάμον πολιορκήσαντες εἶλον στρατηγοῦντος αὐτῶν Περικλέους καὶ Σοφοκλέους.

In the fourteenth year [of the Thirty Years Peace], Athenians besieged and captured Samos under the generalships of Pericles and Sophocles.

42. Σ Hermogenes in C. Walz Rhetores Graeci 5.388 (T 22)

Ἄς τεσσαρεσκαιδεκάτῳ ἐτεί ἐλυσαν Ἀθηναίοι, Σάμον πολιορκία ἐλόντες Περικλέους καὶ Σοφοκλέους στρατηγοῦντων . . .

In the fourteenth year, the Athenians broke it [the Thirty Years Peace] and captured Samos by siege. Pericles and Sophocles were generals . . .

43. Life of Sophocles 1 (T 1)

Οὐ γὰρ εἰκός τὸν ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦτον γενόμενον στρατηγίας ἀξιωθήναι σὺν Περικλεί καὶ Θουκυδίδῃ, τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς πόλεως.

It was not likely that someone born of a tradesman father would be thought worthy of a generalship with Pericles or Thucydides, foremost men of the city.
COMMENTARY

Athenians elected Sophocles to the board of ten generals for 441/440, a year during which nothing eventful was expected. “He was elected for the highest office,” Ehrenberg notes, “but not for the Samian War.” Although he became with Pericles the most famous of the generals of that year, he accomplished nothing of military worth. He may have accompanied a small squadron of ships to raise reinforcements around Lesbos and Chios (Thucydides 1.116.1). This duty would have entailed attendance at social gatherings like that at the house of the proxenos Hermisilaos. Twenty-five ships from the Chians and Lesbians later joined the Athenian fleet (1.116.2).

44. *The Suda* μυ 496 (Τ 24)

Μέλητος: . . . οὗτος ἔγραψε περὶ τοῦ ὄντος, καὶ ἀντεπολιτεύσατο δὲ Περικλεὶ. καὶ ὑπὲρ Σαμίων στρατηγήσας ἐναυμάχησε πρὸς Σοφοκλῆν τὸν τραγικὸν Ολυμπιάδι πτδ'.

Meletos: . . . this man wrote about Being. And he was a political opponent of Pericles. He was a general for the Samians and fought a naval battle against Sophocles the tragedian in the eighty-fourth Olympiad (444-441 B.C.E.).

COMMENTARY

*The Suda* records a defeat that Sophocles suffered from the philosopher Melissos whom the lexicon’s compilers misidentify as Meletos. Plutarch refers to this engagement in defending philosophers against the charge of unworldliness: “Melissos, one

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20 Ehrenberg 117.
of his fatherland’s generals, fought a naval battle against the Athenians and defeated them” (Moralia 1126 b). He recounts the battle in his Pericles (26.6). The Athenians had been besieging the city of Samos for some time when Pericles withdrew with sixty ships to intercept a Phoenician fleet as far from the island as possible. It proved to be a mistake:

after Pericles had sailed away, Ithagenes’ son Melissos, a philosopher and one of the generals of the Samians, expressing nothing but contempt for the small number of Athenian ships and their generals’ lack of experience, persuaded the Samians to attack the Athenians. A battle ensued, and the Samians emerged the victors. They captured many of the enemy and destroyed many of their ships. They gained dominance over the waters and imported the supplies they needed for the war that had been lacking. Aristotle says that Pericles had been defeated once before by Melissos.

The Phoenician fleet never appeared. Pericles, learning of the disaster, returned to Samos and defeated Melissos at sea (Pericles 27.1). The Suda probably puts Sophocles in command because, with Pericles absent, his is the only name known to its compilers and their sources. Yet, Sophocles had to be somewhere, and weathering a blockade would be a reasonable and safe, if uncomfortable, place for him, especially when the fleet was at full strength. Melissos’ contempt for the inexperience of the Athenian generals suggests that he capitalized on Sophocles’ inaptitude as general to stir up the Samians.

The counter-evidence, however, weighs against Sophocles’ presence. Plutarch surely would have mentioned Sophocles, had his name appeared among the several sources he consulted for the incident. For the compilers, however, as we have seen, Sophocles
was the only name associated with the Samian Revolt besides that of Pericles who was known to be elsewhere. Sophocles added a dimension to the battle that now pitted two famous men, the philosopher and the tragedian, against one another.

45. Argumentum I to Sophocles Antigone

Φασὶ δὲ τὸν Σοφοκλέα ἠξιῶσθαι τῆς ἐν Σάμῳ στρατηγίας εὐδοκιμήσαντα ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῆς Ἀντιγόνης. λέλεκται δὲ τὸ δρᾶμα τοῦτο τριακοστὸν δεύτερον.

They say that Sophocles was deemed worthy of the generalship in Samos, because he distinguished himself in the production of the Antigone. The drama is recorded as the thirty-second.

COMMENTARY

Aristophanes, scholar and head of the library at Alexandria (ca. 194–180 B.C.E.), contends in the first Argumentum to Sophocles’ Antigone that the poet was rewarded with the generalship for producing Antigone. The synchronicity, deeply rooted in Sophoclean lore, raises problems by assigning the production of the drama to 442/441. Aristophanes apparently assumed that since a poet gained a generalship around the time when his series of plays won first prize at the City Dionysia, the Athenians elected him because of the play.

Athenians held elections for generals in the seventh prytany in Anthesterion, the month before the celebration of the City Dionysia in Elaphebolion. The Athenians could hardly have elected Sophocles to a generalship in appreciation for a play that they had yet to watch. Moreover, the Parian Marble (92) has Euripides victorious for the first time at the festival in 441, the
spring of the year 442/441. The competitive Athenians would not have rewarded second place. Thus, the production of the Antigone must be set back to the festival of 443/442 held in the spring of 442. This dating requires Sophocles to be working upon the Antigone and its companion pieces at the same time he was conducting his tenure as Hellanotamias. Athenians recalled his Antigone and, out of gratitude for the experience, elected him general. The unknowns in this synchronicity are the onus of Sophocles’ obligations as treasurer, the ease with which he composed verse, and ability to juggle responsibilities to the demos, the Muses, his family, and himself.

Despite rejecting the connection between the play and election, Ehrenberg accepts that Antigone was produced in spring 442 on the basis that moving the play “One more year further back would make it unlikely that the story of the reward could ever have arisen.”21 His view depends upon the assumption, created by the Aristophanes’ claim in his Argumentum, that the Antigone preceded the generalship. If, in Ehrenberg’s language, the propter hoc must be rejected, then the post hoc that occasioned the propter hoc, is assumption disguised as chronological fact.22 R. G. Lewis

21 Ehrenberg 136.

22 In speaking of the Sophocles who “owed his strategia to the success of Antigone,” Ehrenberg (120) decides: “However, the whole story, beautiful as it is, is hardly true. It is more likely that one of the later pseudo-scholars, to whom we owe the material of the hypothesis, inferred from the coincidence of dates to a causal connection—post hoc, ergo propter hoc.” Then again (135): “We have mentioned the story in which Sophocles’ strategia in 441/0 is described as a reward for that play; we have discarded the propter hoc, but we believe that we have to accept the post hoc; that is to say, the performance must have taken place shortly before Sophocles became strategos.” Ehrenberg opts for spring 442.
offers a chronology that has Sophocles write the *Antigone* as a consequence of things that he saw in the Samian War.\(^{23}\) Sophocles was not elected for the war, but he could have found the inspiration for the play in Pericles’s actions in the agora of Samos. Plutarch (*Pericles* 28.1–2) reports that Pericles subjected the leaders of the revolt to *apotympanismos*. He bound them to boards until they were nearly dead. He then had them released, clubbed to death and exposed without funeral rites. Plutarch found the incident in the Samian historian and sensationalist Duris and does not believe the report because it is not mentioned in other sources. If this vengeance occurred, Sophocles would have known about it.

The Sophocles of the sources presents a happy bon vivant who paradoxically knows the lot men have been dealt by being neither beasts nor gods. The characterization leaves no room for the poet who exercised his craft by learning the work of others and struggling to frame his own ideas. The “before the elections” scenario requires a poet who made this verses, on a guess some 4600, with the “ease of gods.” He was serving as treasurer and financial overseer for the Delian League in 443/442 and in the next year he was with Pericles around Samos until the war ended in late spring or early summer of 439 B.C.E. These activities would have deprived most writers of the time and energy for the hard task of converting thought to writing. If so, then perhaps the *Antigone* was written after the war with it in mind and was performed at the festival of 438 when it won Sophocles the first place reported in the *Hypothesis* to Euripides’ *Alcestis* (95). Without further evidence from the sands of Egypt, however, the chronology will remain at 442 because scholarship is fixated on the “before the war” scenario.

\(^{23}\) Lewis 1988.
Oὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς τὸν ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου γενόμενον στρατηγίας ἀξιωθῆναι σὺν Περικλεὶ καὶ Θουκυδίδῃ, τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς πόλεως.

It was not likely that someone born of a tradesman father would be thought worthy of a generalship with Pericles or Thucydides, the first men of the polis.

Καὶ Αθηναῖοι δὲ αὐτὸν ξε’ ἐτῶν ὄντα στρατηγὸν εἵλοντο πρὸ τῶν Πελοποννησιακῶν ἔτεσιν ζ’, ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ἀναίους πολέμῳ.

Athenians elected him general in his sixty-fifth year, seven years before the Peloponnesian War, in the war against the Anaioi.

This evidence for a second and even a third generalship for Sophocles is tenuous, the probable product of his Samian fame and longevity.

If, as the Life of Sophocles states, he had been a colleague of a Thucydides, it could only have been the son of Melesias, Cimon’s brother-in-law and mortal enemy of Pericles. Thucydides was in exile for the period from 443 to 433 and could not have participated as general during the Samian Revolt. Ehrenberg suggests that the compiler, knowing of Sophocles’ generalship during the Samian War and reading of a general Thucydides in
the same war (Thucydides 1.117.2), “fused all his knowledge together in one brief but utterly mistaken sentence.”

The people from Anaia were probably exiles from Samos (Thucydides 3.32.2, 4.75.1) who settled there, vowing implacable hostility toward Athenians. The Life’s statement cannot be correct as it stands, for Sophocles was sixty-five in 431, and the Anaean War happened in 428.25

47. Plutarch, *Nicias* 15.2 (Τ 26)

Τοῦ δὲ Νικίου καὶ διὰ τάλλα μέγας ἢν καὶ διὰ τὸν πλοῦτον καὶ διὰ τὴν δόξαν ὁ ὄγκος, λέγεται δ’ ἐν τῷ στρατηγῷ ποτὲ βουλευομένων τι κοινῆ τῶν συναρχόντων κελευθείς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πρῶτος εἰπείν γνώμην Χοφοκλῆς ὁ ποιητής, ὡς πρεσβύτατος ὃν τῶν συστρατηγῶν, “ἐγώ” φάναι “παλαιώτατος εἰμι, σὺ δὲ πρεσβύτατος.”

Eminent was the stature of Nicias for many reasons but in particular because of his wealth and reputation. Once when Nicias and his fellow generals were consulting together, Sophocles the poet was asked by Nicias to give his opinion first, since he was the eldest of the generals. Sophocles replied, “I am the oldest, but you are the most senior.”

COMMENTARY

Nikias held generalships and conducted campaigns during 426–423 B.C.E. without notable success or failure. He became

24 Ehrenberg 117 note 1.

25 Webster 12; Gomme 3.280.
worthy of being *presbs* after 421 when he secured from the Lacedaemonias the Peace that bears his name. The anecdote uses the wide-spread knowledge of Sophocles as general to bring together two famous men. It derives its punch, however, from Sophocles’ longevity and deference to higher authority à la the Aristophanic Sophocles of the *Frogs*. On the other hand, Webster combines Aristophanes’ joke in the *Peace* (16) about Sophocles’ enriching himself by putting to sea with Plutarch’s encounter with Nicias to assume that “Sophocles was general in one of the years in which Nicias was general, 426–3.”

26 Lefkowitz 1981.80.

27 Webster 12–13.
Another topic [that of doing away with a verbal attack is to assert] that the act is a mistake or bad luck or necessity. For instance, Sophocles said that he was not trembling for the reason his accuser said, so that he seem to be an old man, but from necessity. For eighty years were not something he had willingly.

COMMENTARY

The news of the defeat in Sicily arrived at Athens in the fall of 413 B.C.E. In 412/411, the Athenians appointed a committee of elders “who would advise concerning the present circumstances whenever the occasion arose” (Thucydides 8.1.3) This board consisted of ten members (Aristotle Constitution of the Athenians 29.1). The only known members were of an advanced age, Sophocles about eighty-three, and Hagnon who had been a general in 440 (Thucydides 1.117.2) and a founder of Amphipolis in 437 (4.102.3), in his seventies at the least. Aristotle may, however, be speaking of another Sophocles, perhaps the politician he mentions in Rhetoric 1.14.3 and 3.18.6.

D. Piety (50–59)

50. Scholiast to Sophocles Electra 831 (T 107)
Sophocles was utterly incapable of speaking ill of the gods, for he was one of the most pious men.

51. Libanius Letters 390.9

Ἀνὴρ σωφρονέστερος μὲν Πηλέως, θεοφιλῆς δὲ οὐχ ἦττον ἢ Σοφοκλῆς.

A man more moderate than Peleus and not less pious than Sophocles.

COMMENTARY

For Greeks, piety, eusebeia, was reverence and admiration for the gods and things divine (sebas) in a good (eu-)—moderate and sensible—way. Walter Burkert includes among its qualities the fear of changing what is customary, the things left behind by the ancestors; restraint; and freedom from meddlesomeness toward the gods and all things connected with them such as “festivals, temples, sacrifices [which] are semna, revered, grand, and august, and so too are clothes, manner of speech, and behaviour at the festivals of the gods.”

52. Life of Sophocles 12 (T 1)

Γέγονε δὲ καὶ θεοφιλῆς ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ὡς οὐκ ἄλλος, καθα ψην Ἱερώνυμος . . . περὶ τῆς χρυσῆς στεφάνης. ταύτης γὰρ ἐξ ἀκροπόλεως κλαπεῖσης κατ᾽ ὁναρ Ἡρακλῆς ἐδηλώσε Σοφοκλεῖ, λέγων τὴν τιμὴ οἰκούσαντ ὀἰκίαν ἐν δεξιᾷ εἰσίοντι

28 Burkert 273.
Sophocles was devout as no other, as Hieronymos says [fr. 31 Wehrli] . . . about the episode of the golden crown. After the crown was stolen from the Acropolis, Herakles appeared to Sophocles in a dream, telling him to look for a house on his right as he was walking where the crown had been hidden. He revealed crown to the demos and received a talent, the reward decreed before this event. He took the talent and founded a shrine for Herakles the Revealer.

COMMENTARY

Sophocles was known for his exemplary piety from both his hospitality to Asclepius (53–55) and priesthood of the hero Halon (56) as well as from his plays. His praise of Eros (Antigone 781–805) and Ajax’s boastful rejection of Athena’s aid (Ajax 770–775) and its aftermath, come readily to mind. Biographers sought to illustrate such character traits with anecdotes. The dream sent by Herakles shows the hero’s respect for Sophocles, while Sophocles’ expenditure of the gold underscores the piety that attracted Herakles’ attention.

53. Plutarch Moralia 1103 A (T 68)

Τὸν Ἀσκληπιὸν Σοφοκλῆς ξενίζειν αὐτός τε πειθόμενος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων οὕτως ἔχοντας διὰ τὴν γενομένην ἐπιφάνειαν.

Sophocles himself, persuaded by a vision that appeared to him with the others concurring, acted as host for Asklepios.
54. Etymologicum Magnum 256.6 (T 69)

Dexion: Sophocles was so named by the Athenians after his death, they say, because Athenians wished to assert cultic honors for the dead Sophocles. They built a hero shrine for him and named him Dexion, the Receiver, from this reception of Asklepios. He received the god into his house and founded an altar. For this reason, he was called Dexion.

55. Plutarch Numa 4.8 (T 67)

The story is that Asclepius stayed with Sophocles as his guest while Sophocles was alive, many proofs of which still remain, and that when Sophocles died, another god, it is said, took care of his burial.
Sophocles also held the priesthood of Halon, a hero who with Asklepios at the side of Cheiron . . . founded after his father’s death by his son Iophon.

57. *Inscriptiones Graecae* II/IIF 1252 (T 70)

Kleianetos, son of Kleomenes, of the deme Melite, moved this measure. It has been decided by the priests: since Kalliades, son of Philinos, of the deme Peiraieus, and Lysimachides, son of Philinos, of the deme Peiraieus are good men regarding the association of the priests of Amynos and Asklepios and Dexion, to commend them for their merit and righteousness toward the gods and concerning the association of the priests, and to award each of them a crown of gold worth 500 drachmas; to extend to them and their descendants exemption from the *chous* in both sacrifices; to give them both for sacrifice and offering whatever should seem...
best to the priests. To record this measure on two stone pillars and to erect one in the shrine of Dexion and the other in the shrine of Amynos and Asclepios; to give to them for the pillars whatever should seem best to the priests so that others may be supportive of the association of the priests, knowing that they will repay favors to the benefactors worthy of the benefactions.

58. *Inscriptiones Graecae* II/III² 1253 (T 71)

Θεοί ἔδοξε τοῖς [ὁργεῶσιν . . . .] Ἰππομάχου Με[λίτεις εἶπεν· ἐπεὶ . . . .]δώρος καὶ Ἀν[ . . . . .ν]δρες δίκαιοι γεγόνασι περὶ τὰ κοινὰ τῶν ὀργεών τοῦ Αμύνου καὶ τοῦ Ασκληπιοῦ καὶ τοῦ Δεξίονος, ἐπαινέσαι αὐτοὺς δικαιοσύνης ἑνεκα καὶ στεφανῶσαι αὐτῶν ἐκάτερον χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ. τὸ δὲ ψήφισμα τόδε ἀναγράψαι ἐν τῷ ιερῷ ἐν στήλει λιθίνῃ.

Gods; It was decided by the [priests; .....] of Hippomaches, of the deme Me[lite moved. Since . . . ]doros and Anti[ . . . . ] have proved to be just men concerning the association of the priests of Amynos and Asclepios and Dexion, to commend them because of their righteousness and to award each of them with a gold crown. To record this measure in the shrine on a stone pillar.

COMMENTARY

Asclepius came to Athens from Epidaurus, his major center in southern Greece, during a lull in the hostilities between the cities secured by the Peace of Nicias. G. R. Dodds surmises that the plague of 431 undermined trust in the efficacy of traditional religion, and Athenians set out “looking for a new and better magic.”29 Plutarch (53) speaks of a dream that appeared to

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29 Dodds 193. For the Asclepius, see Edelstein and Edelstein; Parke 63–65. For the Eleusinian Mysteries, see Parke 59–72.
Sophocles in which, Dodds imagines, “Asclepius . . . said, ‘Fetch me from Epidaurus,’ whereupon they [Athenians] fetched him δράκοντι εἰκασμένον [in the shape of a serpent] in the way of the Sikyonians:30

The Sikyonians say that the god was conveyed to them from Epidaurus on a wagon drawn by a brace of mules. The god took the shape of a serpent, and Sickyonian Nicagora, mother of Agasikles and wife of Echetimos, brought him (Pausanias Geography of Greece 2.10.3).

According to a fourth-century inscription, Telemachos the Athenian arranged for Asclepius’ journey, and it was in his chariot, drawn presumably by war horses, that the god in serpentine form, accompanied by his daughter Hygieia (Health), mounted the Acropolis.31 Perhaps Hygieia was represented by her cult statue. Father and daughter were temporarily installed in the

30 Dodds 203 note 86.

31 Inscriptiones Graecae II 4960a [beginning of the fourth century B.C.E.]:

. . . . .
. . . . . Having come from Zea,
at the time of the great mysteries,
[the god] put in at the Eleusinion
and summoned from home a serpent,
he brought it here on a chariot
of Telemachos . . . .
. . . . . At the same time came Hygieia
and thus this whole temple was founded
in the archonship of Astyphilos of Kydantidai. . . .
100 Electronic Antiquity 9.1

shrine of Eleusinian Demeter on the slope of the Acropolis. For this, devotees of Asclepius undoubtedly had the cooperation of the priests of Demeter.

The god arrived on the eighteenth of Boedromion (roughly September), during the festival of Demeter’s mysteries. The goddesses’ Holy Things were still in the shrine, awaiting their escort by procession back to Eleusis on the nineteenth. On the eighteenth, the Mystai (initiates) were sequestered inside across the city, collecting and preparing themselves for the procession and the revelations on the twentieth that climaxed the initiation. The god’s timing later became the aition for a festival, the Epidauria, that readied late-comers to the mysteries for its final days.

Also waiting its new home was the serpent whom Sophocles had accepted into his. The tragedian’s hospitality, as often stated, has relevance for his poetry, but the observation leads more to speculation than to Sophocles’ religious beliefs. Sophocles, however, was closely associated with Asclepius. The Life reports that he belonged to the priesthood of the hero and healer Halon who was himself connected with the god. After Sophocles’ death, Athenians recognized his piety toward Asclepius by heroizing him under the name of Dexion, Receiver. An inscription found in the shrine of the healing god Amynos on the west slope of the Acropolis testifies to the historicity of the shrine and cult of Dexion.

59. *Life of Sophocles* 17 (T 1)

Ἴστορος δὲ φησιν Ἀθηναίους διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν ψήφισμα πεποιηκέναι καθ’ ἐκαστὸν ἔτος αὐτῷ θύειν.
Istros says [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 334 ff 38] that the Athenians passed a decree to offer sacrifice to Sophocles annually because of his excellence.

COMMENTARY

After his death, Sophocles was extended the honors and sacrifices of a hero. He received offering once a year on a day fixed by the sacred calendar when a feast was held.
102 Electronic Antiquity 9.1

Note Two
Father, Deme, Polis
(60–75)

A. Father (60–68)

60. Life of Sophocles 1 (T 1)

Sophocles was an Athenian, son of Sophilos who was not, as Aristoxenos [fr. 115 Wehrli] says, a carpenter or bronze smith or, as Ister [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 334 f 33] claims, a manufacturer of knives and swords by trade, but Sophilos perhaps owned slaves who were bronze smiths or carpenters. It was not likely that someone born of such a father would be thought worthy of a generalship with Pericles or Thucydides, the first men of the polis. Sophocles would not have been left unscathed by the poets and free of their abuse, [had he been of low birth], seeing how they did not restrain from attacking
Themistocles. Ister [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 334 ff 34] must not be believed when he says that Sophocles was not an Athenian but a Phliasian. Even supposing that he was originally from Phlios in Argos, it is not possible to find this claim in anyone else except Ister. Sophocles was an Athenian, of the deme Kolonos, distinguished for his life and his poetry. He was well educated, raised amid prosperity, and proven in the exercise of his citizenship and embassies abroad.

61. Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 239 A 56 (T 33)

Σοφοκλῆς ὁ Σοφίλλου ὁ ἐκ Κολωνοῦ . . .

Sophocles, son of Sophillos, the Sophocles from Kolonos . . .

62. Simas Palatine Anthology 7.21 (T 177)

Τόν σε χοροῖς μέλψαντα Σοφοκλέα, παῖδα Σοφίλλου . . .

You, Sophocles, who sang with choruses, son of Sophilos . . .

63. Diodorus Bibliotheca 13.103.4 (T 85)

Σοφοκλῆς ὁ Σοφίλου . . .

Sophocles, son of Sophilos . . .
64. Aelian *On the Nature of Animals* 7.39 (T 7)
The son of Sophilos in Aleadae

65. Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 7.74.2 (T 8)
Sophocles, son of Sophilos

66. Tzetzes *Epistles* 6 (T 9)
Son of Sophilos . . . Sophocles

67. Tzetzes *Chiliades* 3.274 (T 10)
Sophocles, son of Sophilos

68. Tzetzes *Chiliades* 6.650 (T 11)
Sophocles, the tragedian, legitimate son of Sophilos . . .
The name of Sophocles’ father is variously spelled. Σοφίλλος is found in the Parium Marble and Simias. The Suda has Σωφίλος, and Σοφίλος appears in Diodorus and Inscriptiones Graecae 2674. The form Σωφίλος appears in an Athenian inscription of 333 B.C.E. (Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum 962.185) and another of 329/328 (298.25).

The Life of Sophocles 1 provides the only evidence for Sophocles’ father. Sophillos was an owner of slaves skilled in metal and woodworking who may have produced knives and swords. The Life correctly rejects the claim that Sophillos was a artisan himself on the grounds that his son never would have been accepted at the levels of society he traversed. Themistocles attracted the attention for supposedly having a non-Athenian mother (Plutarch Themistocles 1) which, at the time of his birth, was neither unusual nor subject to derision. Buecheler emends Θεμιστοκλέους to Περικλέους, but the reading of the manuscript is to be preferred, since Pericles’ parentage was undoubtedly Athenian and of the highest station of Athenians.

B. Deme (69–73)

69. Life of Sophocles 1 (T 1)

Ἐγένετο οὖν Σοφοκλῆς τὸ γένος Ἀθηναῖος, δήμου Κολωνῆθεν.

Sophocles was an Athenian, from the deme Colonus.
70. Argumentum to Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus (T 12)

Τὸ δὲ δράμα τῶν θαυμαστῶν ὁ καὶ ἡδη γεγρασκώς ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἐποίησε, χαριζόμενος οὐ μόνον τῇ πατρίδι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐαυτοῦ δήμῳ ἦν γὰρ Κολωνήθην· ὡστε τὸν μὲν δήμον ἐπίσημον ἐπιδείξαι.

[Oedipus at Colonus] is a drama about amazing things. Sophocles, already in advanced old age, produced it to the delight not only of his fatherland but also to that of his deme, for he was from Colonus, and, in this way, he rendered his deme famous.

71. Eustathius, Commentary on Homer's Iliad 351.8 (T 13)

Ταῦτὸν δὲ πάντως κολωνὸν κάνταυθα καὶ κολώνην εἰπεῖν. νικᾶ δὲ ὑμως τὸ Ὅμηρικόν, ὥ καὶ Σοφοκλῆς ἀκολουθῶν “κολώνην ἄκραν τάφου,” ἐφη, εὐ ἄλλως εἰδὼς τὴν ὄρθισιν ταὐτότητα, καθότι Κολωνὸς μὲν δήμος αὐτῷ ἐν Αθήναις, ὁ δὲ ἐκεῖθεν δημότης, ὅποιος καὶ αὐτός, Κολώνηθεν (sic) ἐλέγετο φύναι, οὐ Κολωνόθεν.

Everywhere the word is kolōnos [mound of stones, hill]; here [Homer, Iliad 2.811] there is also kolōnē. Still, the Homeric expression won out. Even Sophocles followed it [Electra 894] in saying “lofty kolōnē of a tomb.” He surely knew the same thing was pronounced differently [that is, as kolōnos]. His deme in Athens is Kolonos, and he was a demesman from there, and as such, he himself is said to be “from Kolōnē,” not “from Kolōnos.”
72. Cicero, *De Finibus* 5.3 (T 14)

Me ipsum huc modo venientem convertebat ad sese Coloneus ille locus, cuius incola Sophocles ab oculos versabatur, quem scis quam admirer quamque eo delecter. Just now I [Quintus] was coming here myself when that place Colonus diverted me to it whose inhabitant Sophocles is gone from our sight. You know how much I admire him and how much I delight in him.

73. Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus* 668-693

Εὐίππου, ξένε, τάσδε χώ‐
ρας ίκου τά κράτιστα γάς ἐπαυλα,
τόν ἀργήτα Κολωνόν, ἐνθ’
ἀ λίγεια μινύρεται
θαμίζουσα μάλιστ’ ἀη‐
δόν χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσσαις,
τόν οἰνωπὸν ἔχουσα κισ‐
σόν καὶ τάν άβατον θεοὺ
φυλάδα μυριόκαρπον ἀνάλιον
ἀνήνεμον τε πάντων
χειμώνων’ ἵν’ ὁ βακχι‐
τας ἀεὶ Δίώνυσος ἐμβατεύει
θείαις ἀμφιπολῶν τιθήναις.

θάλλει δ’ οὐρανίας ὕπ’ ἀ‐
χνας ὁ καλλιβότρυς κατ’ ἡμαρ αἰεὶ
νάρκισσος, μεγάλοιν θεοῖν
ἀρχαιον στεφάνωμ’, ὄ τε
χρυσαυγής κρόκος’ οὐδ’ ἄυ‐
πνοι κρῆναι μινύθουσιν
Κηφισοῦ νομάδες ὃεε‐
θρων, ἀλλ᾿ αἰὲν ἐπ᾿ ἡματι
ἀκηράτῳ σὺν ὀμβρῳ
στερνούχου χθονός· οὐδὲ Μου-
σάν χοροί νιν ἀπεστύγησαν, οὐδ᾿ αὐ
ἀ χρυσάνιος Ἀφροδίτα.

You have come, stranger, to the best place to live
in this land far-famed for its horses,
white Colonus, where
the melodious nightingale
ever sings, sheltered
by the verdant valleys
and clinging to the god’s wine-dark
ivy and inviolate
foliage that abounds in berries
and lies unreached by the sun
and the blasts of storm winds.
Here the reveler Dionysus always
walks in the company of the divine nymphs of Nysa.

Wetted by the dews of the heavens,
the narcissus ever flourishes by day
with its beautiful clusters, ancient
garland of the twain goddesses,* and, with it,
too, the saffron-gold crocus. The ranging
springs of Kephisos’ streams
slumber not nor fail to flow,
but ever and for the day
the river swiftly bears returns
and with its undefiled waters
traverses the plains of the breast ed earth.
The choruses of the Muses
Aphrodite of the Golden Reins
shun not this land.

* Demeter and Persephone

COMMENTARY

Colonus Hippios, one of the demes (townships) of Attica, embraced a hill about a 1.25 miles north of the Acropolis. The hill, about 186 feet high (56.7 meters), was sacred to the horseman and hero Kolonos (Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus 59). It was on the roads around Colonus that Poseidon first showed men how to use his gift of the horse (715; Pausanias Geography of Greece 1.30.4). Sophocles’ Antigone describes the grove at Kolonos as she looks southeast toward the walls and Acropolis of Athens:

Father, abject Oedipus, the towers
that shelter the city, as my eyes can see, are far off,
but this place is sacred, to guess with certainty, pregnant
with laurel, olive, and grape vines. Within, well-feathered
nightingales utter soft, sweet sounds (Sophocles Oedipus at
Colonus 14–18).

“The many nightingales, heard to warble from the thick covert,
argue the undisturbed sanctity of the inner grove.”32 Old uncut
trees near water could mark a copse as sacred. Some were open to
the wayfarer for rest and haven; the grove Oedipus approaches,
dedicated to the Eumenides, is not to be tread upon by humans
(Oedipus at Colonus 126). When Oedipus enters and declares that “I
will never depart from this resting place” (Oedipus at Colonus 45),

32 Jebb Oedipus Coloneus 70. For the sacred grove, see Burkert 85–87 and the appreciation (Fox 41–45) of the sanctity of the
countryside among pagans for whom “the triumph of Christianity
was accompanied by the sound of the axe on age-old aboreta” (44).
it becomes a crossroads where sacred and profane overlap. Sophocles may have embellished the sacredness of the grove, but of its role in *Oedipus at Colonus* Charles Segal observes:

[Sophocles] makes it the emblem not only of the ambiguity of Oedipus but also of the mysterious place of tragedy on the confines of structure and chaos, the familiar and the unknown, civic order and the infinities of death and the gods. Sunless and silent, the grove suggests the nothingness of death. Yet it is also alive with the vital movements of nature. Both physically and metaphorically it stands between the polis and the hidden sources of energy that give Athens its special strength and its favored relation to the gods.33

C. Polis (74–75)

74. Life of Sophocles 1 (T 1)

Ἀπιστητέον δὲ καὶ τῷ Ἴστρῳ φάσκοντι αὐτὸν οὐκ Ἀθηναίον ἀλλὰ Φλιάσιον εἶναι· εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀνέκαθεν Φλιάσιος ἦν, ἀλλὰ πλὴν Ἴστρου παρ᾿ οὐδένι ἄλλῳ τούτῳ ἐστιν εὑρεῖν. ἐγένετο οὖν Σοφοκλῆς τὸ γένος Ἀθηναίος, δήμου Κολωνήθεν.

Ister [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 334 ff 34] must not be believed when he says that Sophocles was not an Athenian but a Phliasian. Even supposing that he was originally from Phlius in Argos, it is not possible to find this claim in anyone else except Ister. Sophocles was an Athenian, of the deme Kolonos.

33 Segal 371–372.
75. Athenaeus Deipnosophists 604 D (T 75)

Τὰ μέντοι πολιτικὰ οὔτε σοφὸς οὔτε ἴκτηριος ἦν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἄν τις εἰς τῶν χρηστῶν Ἀθηναίων.

He was neither wise nor active in the affairs of the city but conducted himself as would one of the respectable Athenians.

COMMENTARY

The inscription from the Athenian Tribute Lists (37) alone proves Sophocles’ status as an Athenian from Colonus. Invective against a man’s morality, family, origins was grist for the comedians. Since the author of the Life did not find the imputation that Sophocles was not an Athenian elsewhere, Ister or his source probably invented it. Writers of biography were not above the invective practiced in the theater and courts as the charge that Sophocles’ father was a craftsman and Euripides’ a shopkeeper (instead of a land owner) and his mother a peddler of vegetables (Life of Euripides 1–2).
A. Student of Aeschylus (76)

76. Life of Sophocles 4 (T 1)

Παρ’ Αἰσχύλῳ δὲ τὴν τραγῳδίαν ἔμαθε.

Sophocles learned tragedy at the side of Aeschylus.

COMMENTARY

The contention that Sophocles was Aeschylus’ student puts Sophocles in a succession of student-becoming-master, a narrative strategy used by ancient biographers that is based, in this instance, on the fact that Aeschylus was the older man and poet. A similar alignment of notable men as master and student forms part of the chronology of the doxographical tradition, the collected opinions of philosophers.34 See also on 105.

B. Early Tragedian and Actor (77–81)

77. Athenaeus Deipnosophists 1.20 e (T 28)

Καὶ τὸν Θάμυριν διδάσκων αὐτὸς ἐκαθάρισεν ἀκρῶς δὲ ἐσφαίρισεν, ὅτε τὴν Ναυσικάαν καθήκε.

34 Kirk and Raven 4; Fairweather 263.
While he was producing his *Thamyris*, he played the cithara; he played ball exceedingly well when he did his *Nausicaa*.

78. Eustathius Commentary on the Iliad 381.8 (T 29)

"Ὅτι δὲ τὸ σπουδαίως κιθαρίζειν ἐφιλεῖτο τοῖς παλαιοῖς . . . μαρτυρεῖ . . . καὶ ἡ τραγικὴ (ποίησις), ἐν ἡ προφανῶς Σοφοκλῆς περιμένει οὐ μόνον δεινὸς εἶναι σφαιρίσαι, ὡς ἡ κατ’ αὐτὸν ἐδήλωσε δραματικὴ Ναυσικα, καθά καὶ ἐν τοῖς εἰς τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν δηλοῦται, ἀλλὰ καὶ κιθαρίζειν ἀκρος· οὕτω δὲ καὶ ὀρχεῖσθαι καὶ χορεῦειν.

That the ancients enjoyed playing the cithara seriously is shown by the tragedy in which brilliant Sophocles moved about, singing. Not only was he clever at throwing a ball, as the Nausikaa of the drama showed about him just as Nausicaa is shown in the *Odyssey* [6.100−101], but also top-notch at playing the cithara. He was also this way in dancing in a row and in a chorus.

79. Eustathius Commentary on the Odyssey 1553.63 (T 30)

"Ὅς καὶ, ὅτε, φασί, τὰς Πλυντρίας ἐδίδασκε, τὸ τῆς Ναυσικᾶς πρόσωπον σφαίρᾳ παιζούσῃ ὑποκρινόμενος ἵσχυρός ἐυδοκίμησεν.

They say that when Sophocles produced *Plyntriai*, he became really famous for acting the part of Nausicaa playing with a ball.
**80. Life of Sophocles 5 (T 1)**

Φασὶ δὲ ὅτι καὶ κιθάραν ἀναλαβὼν ἐν μόνῳ τῷ Θαμύριδι ποτε ἐκιθάρισεν, δὴν καὶ ἐν τῇ ποικίλῃ στοᾷ μετὰ κιθάρας αὐτὸν γεγράφθαι.

They say that he took up the cithara and played in the play *Thamyris* alone, and that, for this reason, he was depicted among the cithara players on the Stoa Poikile.

**81. Life of Sophocles 4 (T 1)**

Καὶ πολλὰ ἐκαινούργησεν ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι, πρῶτον μὲν καταλύσας τὴν ὑπόκρισιν τοῦ ποιητοῦ διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν μικροφωνίαν (πάλαι γὰρ καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς ὑπεκρίνετο αὐτός).

Sophocles introduced many innovations in the contest. He was first to separate the role of actor from that of poet on account of his weak voice (for in olden times, the poet himself performed as actor).

**COMMENTARY**

During tragedy’s formative period, the poet acted in his own plays. According to Plutarch, Solon once watched Thespis himself performing, “as was the custom among the ancients.”³⁵ Sophocles delivered a virtuoso performance as Nausikaa in the play *Plyntriai*, enlivening with athletic grace Homer’s plain description of Nausicaa and her slaves who “threw off their scarfs and played with a ball” (*Odyssey* 6.100). This play is also called *Nausicaa*, a name that sounds like a biographer’s shorthand or a compilers

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³⁵ Plutarch *Solon* 29.6; Aristotle *Poetics* 1403 b 23.
trick for remembering the play or distinguishing it from another of the same title.36

The poet displayed his minstrelsy in *Thamyras*, the Attic spelling (e.g. Plato *Republic* 620 A) for the hybristic bard, Thamyris. The fragments of the play do not permit a reconstruction of Sophocles’ treatment, but, given his Homeric proclivities (105), he probably began with Homer’s account of Thamyris’ challenge to the Muses:

> [At] Dorion . . . the Muses, encountering Thamyris of Thrace, made end to his singing as he was traveling from Oichalia and Oichalian Eurytos. He strutted and boasted that he would prevail even if the Muses themselves should sing, the daughters of Zeus of the aegis. The Muses, roused to anger, made him lame and, further, took away his marvelous singing and caused him to forget his craft with the cithara (*Iliad* 2.594–600).

Pollux preserves a detail of a mask worn by an actor playing Thamyris that can only be Sophocles’ actor: “The special masks: . . . Thamyris having one gray eye and one black.”37 The pioneering German literary critic, G. E. Lessing, explained the convention of this mask by referring to a passage in Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* (11.3.74):38

36 Pearson 1.xviii–xxi.

37 Pollux *Onomasticon* 4.141: ἐκοκευα μὴ ἐστὶ κερασφόρος, ὡς Ἱνειός τυφλός, ὡς Ἡθυμων τὸν μὲν ἄχων γλαυκόν φθαλμόν, τὸν δὲ μέλανα (Special masks: Actaeon is the bearer of horns or blind Phineus or Thamyris having one gray eye and one black eye). *Glaucoma* denotes the vision impaired by a cataract (Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 80 a 17).

38 Lessing 291–292.
In comedies, the father whose role is important, because he is sometimes aroused and other times calm, has one eyebrow raised and the other in normal position. Actors customarily show that side as much as possible that agrees with the part they are acting at the time.

A gray eye is the conventional way to depict blindness. Lessing noted that the actor, since he could not change masks, held the black eye toward the audience while Thamyris was sighted, and the gray eye after he had been blinded.

Sophocles did not win first prize with Thamyras and its companion pieces, but the popularity from the role, or his friendship and connections with the noted painter Polygnotos, may have led to his inclusion among the cithara players in Polygnotos’ painting in the Stoa Poikile. The porch was built by Peisianax, an Alcmaeonid and relative of Cimon’s by marriage. It was an open row of columns, enclosed at the ends by a short wall and paralleled by another. It proved to be a popular spot in the life of the city. Polygnotos used Epinice, Cimon’s sister, as the model for Priam’s daughter Laodice in his “Capture of Troy” in the stoa (Plutarch Cimon 4.6). Whether he used Sophocles similarly or the many folks who lingered there imagined resemblances is a question. Janet Fairweather, noticing that it was “unusual for a tragedian, as opposed to a lyric poet, to be shown holding a lyre in a painting on the Stoa Poikile, the standard attributes of a dramatist being the scroll and the mask,” wonders whether the anecdote originated “as a piece of impressive bluffing on the part of an imaginative art-gallery guide.”

Sophocles’ acting in *Plyntriae* and *Thamyras* bears witness to his physical strength and coordination and leaves no grounds for accept a weak voice as a motive for giving up acting in the light of the rise of professional actors and the increased demands upon the poet in the production of four plays.

C. *Triptolemos*, First Victory (82–89)

82. *Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 239 A 56 (T 33)

Ἀφ’ οὗ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ Σοφίλλου ὁ ἐκ Κολωνοῦ ἐνίκησε τραγῳδία ἐτῶν ὄν ΔΔΓΙΙ, ἔτη ἩΗΠΙ, ἄρχοντος Ἀθήνης Αὐηθίωνος.

From when Sophocles, son of Sophillos, the Sophocles from Colonus, won with a tragedy at the age of 28, 206 years, in the archonship of Apsephion at Athens (469/468).40

83. Eusebius *Chronicles* Ol. 77.2 (471 B.C.E.) (T 32a)

Sofocles tragoediarum scriptor ingenii sui opera publicavit.

Sophocles, writer of tragedies, first presented works of his genius.

84. Eusebius *Chronicles* Ol. 77.4 (469 B.C.E.) (T 34 a)

Sofocles et Euripides clari habebantur.

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40 The compiler of the inscription known as the *Parian Marble* calculated dates from the number of years separating an event from 264/263 B.C.E. Thus 206 years from 264/263 yields a date of 470/469.
Sophocles and Euripides were considered famous.

85. Pliny *Natural History* 18.65

Haec fuere sententiae Alexandro Magno regnante, cum clarissima fuit Graecia atque in toto orbe terrarum potentissima, ita tamen ut ante mortem eius annis fere CXLV Sophocles poeta in fabula Triptolemo frumentum Italicum ante cuncta laudaverit, ad verbum tralata sententia “et fortunatam Italiam frumento cânère candido.”

Such were the opinions [concerning the kinds of wheat among the Greeks] that during the kingship of Alexander the Great, when Greece was most famous and powerful in the whole world, that, still, Sophocles in his *Triptolemus* 145 years before Alexander’s death praised Italian grain. A literal translation of his thought is “fortunate Italy is whitened with white grain” [fr. 600 Radt; 543 Nauk].

86. Plutarch *Cimon* 8.7 (Τ 36)

Έθεντο δ’ εἰς μνήμην αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν τραγῳδῶν κρίσιν ὁνομασθῆν γενομένην. πρώτην γὰρ διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Σοφοκλέους ἔτι νέου καθέντος Ἀψεφίων ὁ ἄρχων, φιλονικίας οὔσης καὶ παρατάξεως τῶν θεατῶν, κριτὰς μὲν οὐκ ἐκλήρωσε τοῦ ἀγῶνος, ὡς δὲ Κίμων μετὰ τῶν συστρατήγων παρελθὼν εἰς τὸ θέατρον ἐποιήσατο τῷ θεῷ τὰς νενομισμένας σπονδάς, οὐκ ἐφῆκεν αὐτοὺς ἀπελθεῖν, ἀλλ’ ὀρκώσας ἡνάγκασε καθίσαι καὶ κρῖναι δέκα ὄντας, ἀπὸ φιλῆς μιᾶς ἕκαστον. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀγὼν καὶ διὰ τὸ τῶν κριτῶν ἀξίωμα τὴν φιλοτιμίαν ὑπερέβαλε.

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41 145 years before Alexander’s death in 325/324 B.C.E. yields a date of 469/468.
Athenians remembered him [Cimon] and his judgment of the tragedians that became famous. Sophocles, still a young man, was producing his first plays. In view of the rivalry and partisanship among the spectators, the archon Apsephion [469/468] did not choose the judges by lot for the contest. After Cimon entered the theater with the other generals and offered the customary libations to the god, Apsephion did not let them leave. He bound them with an oath and forced them to sit down and make the judgment, since they were ten, one from each tribe. Because of the prestige of the judges, the rivalry in the contest was intensified. When Sophocles won, it is said that Aeschylus became very upset and grieved and did not remain for long at Athens but went out of anger to Sicily where he died and was buried near the city of Gela.

87. Sophocles Triptolemos fr. 596 Radt (539 Nauck) in Etymologicum Magnum 395.11

Δράκοντε θαιρὸν ἀμφιπλὶξ εἰληφότε

Dragons holding astride the pole of the chariot with their coils

88. Sophocles Triptolemos fr. 598 Radt (541 Nauck) in Dionysios of Halicarnassus Roman Antiquities 1.12.1

Οἰνώτρου δὲ κομίσαντος αὐτοὺς εἰς Ἰταλίαν Οἰνώτροι χρόνον τινὰ ἐκλήθησαν. ματυρεῖ δὲ μοι τῷ λόγῳ Σοφοκλῆς μὲν ὁ τραγῳδοποιὸς ἐν Τριπτολέμῳ δράματι πεποίηται γάρ αὐτῷ
Δημήτηρ διδάσκουσα τὸν Τριπτόλεμον, όσην χώραν ἀναγκασθῆσαι σπείρων τοῖς δοθεῖσιν ύπ’ αὐτῆς καρποῖς διεξελθεῖν μνησθεῖσα δὲ τῆς ἑῳου πρῶτον Ἰταλίας, ἡ ἐστὶν ἀπ’ ἀκρας Ἰαπυγίας μέχρι πορθμοῦ Σικελικοῦ, καὶ μετὰ τούτο τῆς ἀντικυρίον ἀφαμένη Σικυλίας, ἐπὶ τὴν ἐσπέριον Ἰταλικάν αὐθις ἀναστρέψει καὶ τὰ μέγιστα τῶν οἰκοὺν τὴν παράλιον ταύτην ἐθνῶν διεξέρχεται, τὴν ἄρχην ἀπὸ τῆς Οἰνώτρων οἰκήσεως ποιησαμένη. ἀποχρή δὲ ταῦτα μόνα λεχθέντα τῶν ιαμβείων ἐν οἷς φησι·

tὰ δ’ ἐξόπισθε, χειρὸς ἐς τὰ δεξιὰ
Οἰνωτρία τε πᾶσα καὶ Τυρρηνικος κόλπος Λιγυστική τε γῆ σε δέξεται.

After Oinotros had brought them [Lykaonians] into Italy, the Lykaonians were called for a time Oinotrians. Sophocles the tragedian testifies to the story for me in his play Triptolemos, for Demeter is depicted instructing Triptolemos how much land he would be compelled to traverse and sow for the fruits she had provided. Demeter, recalling first eastern Italy which extends from the promintory of Iapygia to the Strait of Sicily, and next touching upon Sicily on the opposite side, she turns back to western Italy and narrates the most important of the peoples dwelling on this shore, beginning from the settlement of the Oinotrians. This quotation of iambic lines suffices in which Sophocles says:

Next after this, to the right of my hand,
all Oinotria and Tyrrhenian
Gulf and the land of Liguria will receive you.
Δεῖ δὲ τῷ Διογένει καὶ πρὸς τὸν Σοφοκλέα χρήσασθαι πολλὰς γὰρ ἀνθρώπων μυριάδας ἐμβεβληκεν εἰς ἀθυμίαν περὶ τῶν μυστηρίων ταύτα γράψας:

ὡς τρισόλβιοι
κεῖνοι βροτῶν, οἱ ταύτα δειχθέντες τέλη
μόλωσ᾽ ἐξ Ἀιδοῦ τοίσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεὶ
ζῆν ἐστιν, τοῖς δ᾽ ἄλλοισι πάντ᾽ ἐχειν κακά.

Διογένης δ᾽ ἀκούσας τι τοιοῦτον “Τί λέγεις” ἐφη “κρείττονα μοῖραν ἔξει Παταικίων ὁ κλέπτης ἀποθανὼν ἢ Ἐπαμεινώνδας, ὅτι μεμύηται;”

We must use Diogenes against Sophocles, for Sophocles has brought countless thousands of men into depression over the Mysteries by writing the following:

Thrice blessed are those of mortals who, having beheld these rites, go to Hades, for to these alone is it possible to live there, but to the others all evils pertain.

On hearing these lines, Diogenes expostulated: “What are you saying? Pataikion the thief, when he dies, will have a better lot than Epameinondas because he has been initiated?”

COMMENTARY

Lessing first combined the disparate sources, Pliny’s Natural History and the Eusebius’ Chronicles, to conclude that Sophocles’ maiden victory at the City Dionysia came with Triptolemos in 468
The festival for that year proved memorable on account of the intense rivalry over the prize in tragedy. The archon Apsephon aborted the usual procedure for selecting the ten judges when Cimon, premier Athenian of the day, entered the theater with his colleagues in the generalship. Since each had been elected by his tribe, Apsephon observed the rule of one tribe, one judge, when he swore them in as judges. They awarded first place to Sophocles in preference to Aeschylus, mainly it seems, for Triptolemos.

Webster sees in the judges’ decision the possibility that “Sophocles was one of Cimon’s friends or, considering their relative positions, that Cimon was the patron of Sophocles.”

Triptolemos, reduced now to fragments, many consisting of single words preserved by the Alexandrine lexicographer Hesychius, was still available in the late first century B.C.E. when Dionysios of Halicarnassus cited it as evidence for the Oenotrians, early inhabitants of southern Italy. Fragments 596 and 598 Radt (539 and 541 Nauck) suggest that its plot was similar to that summarized by Apollodorus, although Sophocles confines the inhabited world to Magna Graecia:

For Triptolemos, the elder of Metaneira’s sons, Demeter outfitted a chariot with winged dragons and gave him wheat with which he sowed the inhabited earth while being borne through the heavens (The Library 1.5.2).

42 Lessing 287.

43 Webster 8: “The inference becomes more plausible when we remember that Cimon and Sophocles had three common friends—Archelaus, Polygnotus, and Ion,” whose relations with Sophocles Webster develops (9–10).
Fragment 837 Radt (753 Nauck) cannot be definitively attributed to the *Triptolemos* but its subject is amenable, the benefits that beholding the Mysteries confer upon their initiates.

Sophocles struck a cord among Athenians in 468 when he brought them a tetralogy that included the *Triptolemos*. They were familiar with the deeds of Triptolemos, and the mysteries at Eleusis had long been part of their religious calendar. Sophocles put into the form of his medium the claim made by orators at public funerals that their land was the source of the fruits for mankind. Their topos held that

our earth, moreover, did not begrudge her fruits but distributed them to others. After this, she produced for her sons the vine, relief from toils. Nurturing gods and bringing them to maturity, she brought them to men to be their leaders and teachers (Plato *Menexenos* 238 A).

Athenians who were growing in power and influence from the operations of their Delian League against the Persians saw themselves and their land in the deeds of the goddess and her hero and rewarded Sophocles accordingly.

D. Career in Brief (90–104)

90. *Life of Sophocles* 19 (T 1)

Συνηγωνίσατο δὲ καὶ Αἰσχύλῳ καὶ Εὐριπίδη καὶ Χοιρίλῳ καὶ Ἀριστίᾳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς καὶ Ἰοφῶντι τῷ υἱῷ.

44 For the public funeral and its *epitaphios logos*, see Loraux 17–76.
He competed against Aeschylus, Euripides, Choirilos, Aristias, and many others, including his son Iophon.

COMMENTARY

Unless Thespis, first prize winner at the first presentation of tragedies in 535, 534, or 533 B.C.E., survived to reach his nineties, Sophocles did not compete against him as the The Suda alleges.

The Life of Sophocles lists among his competitors Choirilos and Aristias. Choirilos began competing during the sixty-fourth Olympiad (523–520 B.C.E.) and among the one hundred and sixty plays he reputedly produced, he won thirteen victories. He also changed the masks and the effects of the costumes (The Suda chi 594).

Aristias, son of Pratinas (Suda pi 2230) who was first to write satyr plays, became with his father a fine writer of this form, second in popularity only to Aeschylus (Pausanias Geography of Greece 2.13.7).

82–89. First victory in 468 B.C.E. with four plays, one of which is Triptolemos.

91. Hypothesis to Aeschylus Seven Against Thebes

Ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Θεαγένους ὀλυμπιάδι σῇ ἐνίκα Λαίῳ, Οἰδίποδι, Ἐπτὰ ἐπὶ Θῆβας, Σφιγγί σατυρική. β (δεύτερος) Αριστιας Περσεί, Ταυτάλω . . . Παλαισταίς σατύροις τοῖς Πρατίνου πατρός. γ (τρίτος) Πολυφράσμων Λυκουργεία τετραλογία.
The Seven Against Thebes was produced in the archonship of Theagenes [467 B.C.E.] during the 78th Olympiad. Aeschylus won with Laïos, Oedipus, Seven Against Thebes, satyr Sphinx. 2nd (second) was Aristias with Perseus, Tantalos . . . Palaistai, a satyr play, those of his father, Pratinas. 3rd (third) was Polyphrasmon with Lykourgeia, a tetralogy.

COMMENTARY

Sophocles did not submit an entry or, less likely, was denied a chorus, for the contest of the following year (467 B.C.E.). The Argumentum to Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes lists the names of the victors. Aeschylus took first place; Aristias second, and Polyphrastos, third.

The dates of the productions of the extant plays, except for Philoctetes and Oedipus Coloneus, are uncertain. The Ajax is usually considered to be the oldest, produced between the years 460 and 450.

In 443–442, Sophocles served as Hellanotamias (37) and in 441–439 as general in the Samian War (38–43).

92. Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 239 A 60

Ἀφ' οὗ Εὐριπίδης ἐτῶν ὡν ΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔ τραγωιδίᾳ πρῶτον ἐνίκησεν, ἔτη ΗΓΙΔ[ΔΓΙΠΙ], ἀφ' ἱστορος Αθήνησι Διφίλο[ν].

From when Euripides, being 44 years old, first won with a tragedy, 178 years with Diphilos archon in Athens.45

45 178 years before 264/263 B.C.E. yields a date of 442/441.
Life of Sophocles 8 (T 1)

Sophocles won twenty victories, as Karystios [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 4, 359] says, and frequently took second place but never third.

The Antigone was presumably produced and awarded first place in 442, as commonly held. See on 45. In 441, Euripides won first prize (92). It is questionable whether Athenians would have awarded Sophocles with a generalship for placing second. Sophocles never took third prize. Antigone is said to have been the thirty-second play. The reason for the designation is unknown. It may be a call number. The verb lelektai suggests that its source was a catalogue, perhaps that of a library.46

94. Athenaeus Deipnosophists 14.638 D (T 31)

Kratinos in Cowards [fr. 97 Kock] . . . and in Herdsman [fr. 15 Kock] makes fun of [Gnesippos] for his poetry [by criticizing the archon]:

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46 Pearson xvi–xvii.
Who did not assign a chorus to Sophocles who applied but to the son of Kleomachos whom I would not deem worthy of producing songs for me or for the Festival of Adonis.

COMMENTARY

Under what circumstances Sophocles was denied a chorus and what he did with the plays is not known. The comic poet Cratinus was active in the theater from the mid-fifth century until about 423. The date of the *Herdsmen* is not known.

Marcel Detienne says of the festival of Adonis: “The Adonia, an exotic festival tolerated by the Athenian city on the periphery of the official cults and public ceremonies, were a private affair. This was so in two aspects, first in that they took place in the house of a private individual and not in a sanctuary or other public place, and secondly in that those who took part, whether men or women, were lovers, courtesans and those who frequented them.”

95. *Hypothesis II to Euripides Alcestis*

Ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Γλαυκίνου ἄρχοντος τὸ λ.† πρῶτος ἦν Σοφοκλῆς, δεύτερος Εὐριπίδης Κρήσσαις Ἀλκήστιδι. Ἀλκαίων τῷ διὰ Ψωφίδου, Τηλέφω, Ἀλκήστιδι.

*Alcestis* was produced in the archonship of Glaukinos. Sophocles was first; Euripides, second with *Kressai, Alcmaion in Psophis, Telephos, Alkestis*.

47 Detienne 65.
COMMENTARY

In 438, Sophocles won first place with plays unknown.

96. Hypothesis of Aristophanes the Grammarian to Euripides Medea

Ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Πυθοδώρου ἄρχοντος ὀλυμπιάδος πτ' ἐτει α'. πρῶτος Εὐφορίων, δεύτερος Σοφοκλής, τρίτος Εὐριπίδης Μεδεία, Φιλοκτήτη, Δίκτυι, Θερισταῖς σατύροις.

Medea was produced with Pythodoros archon in the first year of the 87th Olympiad [431 B.C.E.]. First was Euphorion, second Sophocles, and third Euripides with Medea, Philoktetes, Diktys, and Theristai, satyr play.

97. Argumentum to Euripides Hippolytus

Ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Ἐπαμείνονος ἄρχοντος ὀλυμπιάδι πτ' ἐτει δ'. πρῶτος Εὐριπίδης, δεύτερος Ἰοφών, τρίτος Ἰων.

The Hippolytus was produced in the archonship of Epameinon in the 87th Olympiad, the fourth year. Euripides was first; Iophon, second, and Ion, third.

COMMENTARY

In 428, Sophocles did not apply for a chorus or, less likely, was denied a chorus since Euripides garnered first prize with Hippolytus, and Iophon, second prize, and Ion, third. Sophocles may have been serving as general in the Anaean War.
98. *Argumentum* II to Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* (T 39)

Everyone kindly endorsed Sophocles’ *Tyrannus* standing out from all his work, although it was defeated by Philokles, as Dikaiarchos says [fr. 80 Wehrli].

99. Aristides 46.256 (T 40)

Among Athenians, Sophocles with *Tyrannus* was defeated by Philokles. O Zeus, and gods, not even Aeschylus had anything to say. Why was Sophocles inferior to Philokles? There was shame in hearing this much, that he was better than Philokles.

**COMMENTARY**

If, as often suggested, Aristophanes parodied *Oedipus Tyrannus* with “*O polis, polis*” (*Acharnians* 27) at the Lenaia in Gamelion (roughly January) of 425 B.C.E., Sophocles’ play would have been produced a few months before at the City Dionysia of 426 or at an earlier festival. Seeing the plague of 429 as a subtext of the first scene is inevitable, and Sophocles’ original audience probably did so. But the nothing decisive for the play or its dating has ensued from the insight. The *Oedipus Tyrannus* is generally placed in the years 429–425.
Despite the fascination that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* aroused during the twentieth century, Sophocles lost to Philokles, Aeschylus’ nephew, whose bitter style earned him the nickname Chole (Bile) (*The Suda* phi 378).

Sophocles may have been shamed, as Aristides assumes, but he frequently won first and second prizes.

The *Women of Trachis* is usually dated to the period 429–425 B.C.E. and the *Electra* to 418–410.

**100. ***Argumentum II* to Sophocles *Philoctetes*

Ἐδιδάχθη ἐπὶ Γλαυκίππου πρῶτος ἦν Σοφοκλῆς.

*Philoctetes* was produced in the archonship of Glaukippos [409 B.C.E.]; Sophocles was first.

**101. ***Life of Euripides* 44–47 (T 54)

Λέγουσι δὲ καὶ Σοφοκλέα ἡκύσαντα ὧτι ἐτελεύτησεν, αὐτὸν μὲν ἰματίῳ φαιῶ προελθεῖν, τὸν δὲ χορὸν καὶ τοὺς ὑποκριτὰς ἀστεφανώτους εἰσαγαγεῖν ἐν τῷ προαγῶνι, καὶ δακρύσαι τὸν δήμον.

**COMMENTARY**

They say that when Sophocles heard that Euripides had died, he entered the Proagon wearing the dark cloak of mourning and led in his chorus and actors without garlands, and the people burst into tears. Sophocles entered plays for the City Dionysia of 406 B.C.E. because he participated with his actors and choristers in the
Proagon of that year. The Proagon or Preliminary to the Contest was held in the Odeion on the ninth of Elaphebolion, the day before the processation that opened the festival of the City Dionysia. Dramatists showed to the public for its inspection the actors and choristers who wore neither costumes or masks. At the same time, the subjects of their plays were announced, although how this was accomplished is not known. Sophocles took the occasion to mourn publicly Euripides who had died recently.

102. Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 239 Α 64 (T 3)

Ἀφ’ οὗ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ ποιητὴς βιώσας ἐτη ΓΔΔΔΙΙ ἐτελεύτησεν καὶ Κῦρος ἀνέβη, [ἐτη ΗΔΔΔΙΙ, ἀρχ]οντος Αθήνηι Καλλίου τού †προτέρου†.

From when Sophocles the poet, who had lived 92 years, died, and Cyrus went up, [143 years, the arch]on at Athens being Kallias the †first† [406/405].

103. Diodorus Siculus Library 13.103.4 (T 85)

Περὶ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον ἐτελεύτησε Σοφοκλῆς ὁ Σοφίλου, ποιητῆς τραγῳδιῶν, ἐτη βιώσας ἐνενήκοντα, νίκας δ’ ἐχων ὀκτωκαίδεκα.

48 For the Proagon, see Aischines Against Ctesiphon 66–68 with scholia, available in Pickard-Cambridge, 63; also 67–68; Parke, 132–133.
About the same time [406/405], Sophocles, son of Sophilos, composer of tragedies, died. He lived ninety years and had eighteen victories.

COMMENTARY

Sophocles died in 406 B.C.E. between the celebration of the Great Dionysia in March 406 and the Lenaia in January.

104. Argumentum II to Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus

Τὸν ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ Ὄιδίπουν ἐπὶ τετελευτηκότι τῷ πάππῳ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ ὑιὸς ἔδίδαξεν, υἱὸν Ἀρίστωνος, ἐπὶ ἀρχοντος Μίκωνος, δὲ ἐστὶ τέταρος ἀπὸ Καλλίου.

Sophocles, grandson of Sophocles and son of Ariston, produced the Oedipus at Colonus after the death of his grandfather in the archonship of Mikon [402–401], who is fourth from Kallias.

COMMENTARY

Oedipus at Colonus was produced in 401 posthumously by his grandson, Sophocles.

E. Style (105–109)

105. Life of Sophocles 20 (T 1)

Τὸ πᾶν μὲν οὖν Ὄμηρικῶς ὄνομαζε. τούς τε γὰρ μῦθους φέρει κατ’ ἱχνος τοῦ ποιητοῦ καὶ τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν δὲ ἐν πολλοῖς δράμασιν ἀπογράφεται. παρετυμολογεῖ δὲ καθ’ Ὄμηρον καὶ τούνομα τοῦ Ὀδυσσέας.
Sophocles generally used the language of Homer and fashioned his plots in the footsteps of that poet. In many of his plays, he drew upon the *Odyssey*. He gives the etymology of the name Odysseus in the Homeric way [*Odyssey* 19.406–409]:

Rightly for my sufferings am I called Odysseus,
for many unfriendly men have caused me pain [fr. 965].

He delineated characters, embellished diction, and skillfully introduced solutions external to the plot, attaining the charm of Homer. From this a †certain Ionian† said that only Sophocles was Homer’s student. Many others imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but only Sophocles plucked the brilliance from each. For this he was said to be the *Bee* [145–153]. He combined various elements, timing, sweetness, daring, and variety.

**COMMENTARY**

In biographical discourse, the claim that Sophocles is Homer’s student indicates that he imitates the style of his predecessor.49 The large percentage of titles of his plays whose myths are taken

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49 Fairweather 263.
from the epic cycle as well as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* confirm Sophocles’ penchant. He did not merely borrow but recast the story to his vision of the tragic. For example, Sophocles surely meant for his audience to hear in Tecmessa’s plea to Ajax not to leave the hut (*Ajax* 485–524) Andromache’s appeal to Hector to stay within the protection of the walls (*Homer Iliad* 6.407–439). Andromache speaks with her husband who shares her concerns and listens and is moved. Tecmessa’s words fall in vain before Ajax, and after they do reach him, he speaks to deceive her into thinking he will live although he has already planned his death. In Sophocles’ version, words do not communicate, and language fails Tecmessa and Ajax. Sophocles’ scene may be Homeric, but it is not Homer.

106. *Life of Sophocles* 21 (T 1)

Sophocles knew how to proportion timing and events so that from a short half-line or a single speech, he constructed a whole character. This is the most important aspect of the poet’s art, namely, to reveal character or suffering.

107. *Plutarch Moralia* 79 B (T 100)

Ὅσπερ γὰρ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἐλεγε τὸν Αἰσχύλου διαπεπαιχώς ὄγκον, εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατάτεχνον τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς, τρίτον ἢδί τὸ τῆς λέξεως μεταβάλλειν εἶδος, ὅπερ ἐστιν ἥθικώτατον καὶ βέλτιστον, ὡς τοῖς νοον πανηγυρικῶν καὶ κατατέχων εἰς τὸν ἀπτόμενον ἰθοὺς
καὶ πάθους λόγον καταβῶσιν, ἀρχονται τὴν ἀληθῆ προκοπὴν καὶ ἄτυφον προκόπτειν.

As Sophocles used to say, only after he played around with the grandiloquence of Aeschylus and the sharpness and artificiality of his own, did he change to the third manner of speaking which is one most concerned with character and is best. So those who pursue philosophy begin to make authentic and unaffected strides when they change from pompous and artificial language to a discourse that deals with character and emotions.

108. Aristotle Poetics 1460 b 32 (T 53a)

Εἰς αἰτιμᾶται ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθῆ, ἀλλʼ ἵσως ὡς δεῖ, οἷον καὶ Σοφοκλῆς ἐφῄ αὐτὸς μὲν οἵους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδην δὲ οἷοί εἰσιν, ταύτῃ λυτέον.

If the objection is brought that [a poet’s description of something] is not true but perhaps as it must be, the poet may reply that things are as they ought to be just as Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be, but Euripides as they are. In this way, the objection may be met.

109. Vatican Gnomology 518 (T 53b)

Ὁ αὐτὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς διὰ τι αὐτὸς μὲν ποιεῖ τὰ ἡθη τῶν ἀνθρώπων χριστά, Εὐριπίδης δὲ φαῦλα, “ὅτι” ἐφῇ, “ἐγὼ μὲν οἶους ἐδει εἶναι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποιῶ, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ὅποιοι εἰσιν.”

When asked why he makes the character of his people useful, and Euripides makes his worthless, “because,” Sophocles said, “I
make the people as they should be, and that one makes them as they are."

COMMENTARY

G. M. A. Grube admirably summarizes older views of character in Sophoclean tragedy:

The gods are taken for granted in Sophoclean tragedy which centres upon human characters. His men and women, though they thus occupy the centre of the stage, themselves accept the pattern of the virtues. They are human, they fail and are punished, and they accept the punishment. The fault is not always their own, there are insoluble problems, but it is a curious feature of Sophoclean tragedy that the general impression of serenity is not broken by the cruel fate of an Oedipus, the clash of irreconcilable loyalties in *Antigone*, even the matricide of Orestes.50

Charles Segal offers a contemporary view of character in tragedy. Although the audience “must identify” with the hero as a human being (lest the drama become a dramatized intellectual exercise), “character” in Sophocles, Segal points out, is not a “human personality.” The conventions of the theater, “the mask, the special boots or kothornoi, the stylized gestures, the artificial and often difficult poetic language,” function to defamiliarize the hero and distance him from the audience:

The individuality of the Sophoclean hero appears not in small personal details but, as in Homer, in a few large essential gestures. It is revealed not so much through

50 Grube 5.
the free play of idiosyncratic personality as in the vision of 
an idealized heroic self and the realization and resolution 
of the conflict between that self and the restrictions 
imposed by the world of men and the world of the gods.

To be an individual in Sophocles is to have a 
special destiny apart from other men and to suffer a 
potentially dangerous, indeed fatal, isolation from the 
community and its secure values. That destiny stamps his 
life with moral significance. Only if he fulfills that destiny 
can the hero realize himself, and not relinquish something 
essential to his nature. To have such a destiny also means 
to have a place within the larger order of the gods. The 
play of divine forces about the hero’s life is the mark of 
such tragic individuality. Conversely, that individuality 
brings the gods, with the disturbance that their presence 
always involves, crashing into his life. The hero stands at 
the point where the divine and human spheres intersect, 
where the separation between them becomes difficult and 
mysterious, where the intelligible order of life meets with 
darker levels of existence.51

Sophocles appears to have been aware of what he was hoping to 
accomplish and conscious of how he went about it. His 
assessment of his characters—men as they ought to be—has 
conditioned the reception of his plays. It was viewing Antigone as 
a personality who willingly lays down her life for her brother that 
roused the distaste and misapprehension of the importance of her 
decision not to oppose the citizens on behalf of a husband or son 
(904–910). Critics have approached Antigone as a play about 
Antigone rather than one about social issues in which Antigone is 
a player, namely, the rent in the cultural fabric caused by the

51 Segal 8.
demos’ appropriation of the remains of those Athenians, husbands and sons, killed in its wars for its public funeral.\textsuperscript{52}

F. And Actors (110–120)

110. \textit{Life of Sophocles} 6 (T 1)

Φησὶ δὲ καὶ Ἴστρος . . . πρὸς τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν γράψαι τὰ δράματα.

\textit{Istros} [\textit{Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker} 334 f 36] says that . . . he wrote plays with a view to the qualities [of his actors and choristers].

111. Scholiast to \textit{Aristophanes Clouds} 1266 (T 42)

Άλλοι δὲ τραγικὸν ὑποκριτὴν εἶναι τὸν Τληπόλεμον, τὸν συνεχῶς ὑποκρίνομενον Σοφοκλεῖ.

Others say that the tragic actor is Tlepolemos, who acted lots of times for Sophocles.

112. Scholiast to \textit{Aristophanes Frogs} 791 (T 43)

Κλειδημίδης: Καλλίστρατος ὁτι ἵσως Σοφοκλέους υἱὸς ὁτος Ἀπολλώνιος δὲ ὅτι Σοφοκλέους ὑποκριτῆς.

Kleidemides: Kallistratos says that this may be Sophocles’ son; Apollonios, that he is Sophocles’ actor.

\textsuperscript{52} Tyrrell and Bennett 112–117.
113. The Suda νu 170

Distributions of actors: the poets received three actors, chosen by lot, to play the parts; the victor among them was accepted automatically for the next year.

114. Demosthenes On the False Embassy 246 (T 44)

Theodoros frequently acted the part of Sophocles’ Antigone as also did Aristodemos frequently. In this play, there are lines in iambic verse [175–190] that are well and profitably composed. Aeschines himself has repeated these lines to you frequently and has them memorized, but he omitted them. To be sure, you know that the role of tyrants and those with scepters, as if a prize, falls to tritagonists.

115. Demosthenes On the Crown 180 (T 45)

Boûlei ἐμαυτὸν μὲν ὃν ὄν ποιητήν ἐλάμβανον τρεῖς ὑποκριτάς κλήρῳ νεμηθέντας ὑποκρινόμενους τὰ δράματα, ἀλλὰ τούτῳ ἧς ὁ νικήσας εἰς τοῦπιόν ἄκριτος παραλαμβάνεται.
Do you wish me to Battalos [Stutterer], a name you call me when you ranting and raving and chopping me to pieces? But you don’t want any ordinary hero for yourself but someone from the stage, a Kresphontes or Creon or Oinomaos whom you once mauled badly in [the deme] Kollytos?

Histrio in terra Graecia fuit fama celebri, qui gestus et vocis claritudine et venustate ceteris antistabat: nomen fuisse aiunt Polum, tragœdias poetarum nobilium scite atque asservate activavit. is Polus unice amatum filium morte amisit. eum luctum quoniam satis visus est eluxisse, rediit ad quaestum artis. in eo tempore Athenis Electram Sophoclis acturus gestare urnam quasi cum Oresti ossibus debebat. ita compositum fabulae argumentum est ut veluti fratris reliquias ferens Electra comploret commisereaturque interitum eius existimatum. igitur Polus lugubri habitu Electae indutusossa atque urnam et sepulcro tulit fillii et quasi Oresti amplexus opplevit omnia non simulacris neque imitamentis, sed luctu atque lamentis veris et spirantibus. Itaque cum agi fabula videretur, dolor actus est.

There was in Greece a very famous actor who, endowed with clarity of voice and personal charm, stood before the rest. His name, they say, was Polos. Skillfully and earnestly he acted the tragedies of distinguished poets. This Polos lost his son whom he loved with a love like no other. Since he seemed to have sufficiently mourned his loss, he returned to the pursuit of his art. At the time in Athens, he was going to act the role of Sophocles’ Electra and had to carry an urn filled supposedly with the bones
of Orestes. The plot of the play is so written that Electra, as if carrying the remains of her brother, weeps and laments his reputed death. Therefore, Polos, wearing the mourning costume of Electra, carried the bones and urn from the tomb of his son and embraced them as if they were Orestes’. He completed the scene not with imitation and semblance but with real grief and laments. Therefore, although the play seemed to be being acted, it was Polos’ grief that was being enacted.

117. Epictetus *Dissertations* fr. XI (T 47)

Η οὐχ ὃς ὁτι οὐκ εὐφωνότερον οὐδὲ ἥριον ὁ Πῶλος τὸν τύραννον Οἰδίποδα ὑπεκρίνετο ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ ἀλήτην καὶ πτωχόν;

Do you not see that Polos did not act the role of Oedipus the tyrant more melodiously or euphoniously than the wanderer and beggar at Colonus?

118. Scholiast to Sophocles *Ajax* 846 (T 48)

Debei de υπονοήσαι ὃτι περιπίπτει τῷ ἔξοδῳ καὶ δεὶ καρτερόν τινα εἶναι τὸν ύποκριτήν, ὡς ἄξαι τοὺς θεατὰς εἰς τὴν τοῦ Αἰαντος φαντασίαν ὅποια περὶ τοῦ Ζακυνθίου Τιμοθέου φαινήν, ὃτι ἢγε τοὺς θεατὰς καὶ ἐψυχαγώγη τῇ υποκρίσει, ὡς Σφαγέα αὐτὸν κλιθήναι.

It must be assumed that Ajax falls on his sword. The actor must be a strong fellow so as to draw the spectators into the presentation of Ajax. They say this about Timotheos of Zacynthus, namely, that
he drew the spectators and seduced them with his acting so that he came to be nicknamed Sphageus.\textsuperscript{53}

119. Plutarch \textit{Moralia} 841 f

Εἰσήνεγκε δὲ καὶ νόμους . . . τραγωδίας αὐτῶν ἐν κοινῷ γραψαμένους φυλάττειν καὶ τὸν τῆς πόλεως γραμματέα παραναγινώσκειν τοῖς ὑποκρινομένοις· οὐκ ἔξειναι γὰρ παρ’ αὐτὰς ὑποκρίνεσθαι.

Lycurgus introduced laws [among them] . . . that the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides be written out and kept in a place of public record and that the clerk of the city read and compare the copies with the actors, for it was not permitted to act apart from the copies.

120. \textit{Life of Aeschylus} 12

Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ τοσοῦτον ἠγάπησαν Αἰσχύλον, ὡς ψηφίσασθαι μετὰ <τόν> θάνατον αὐτοῦ τὸν βουλόμενον διδάσκειν τὰ Αἰσχύλου χορὸν λαμβάνειν.

Athenians so loved Aeschylus that they decreed after his death that whoever wished to produce the plays of Aeschylus receive a chorus.

COMMENTARY

This evidence for Sophocles’ actors may be illuminated by reference to the first three of Pickard-Cambridge’s four-stage model for the development of actors in tragedy.\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{53} Butcher/Priest, \textit{Ajax’} address to his sword before he falls upon it (\textit{Ajax} 815).
\end{quote}
In the first stage, the poet acted in his own plays as Sophocles did in *Plyntrai* and *Thamyras*.

The rise of the professional actor ushered in the next stage when poets, stepping back, began hiring their own actors. Sophocles frequently employed Tlepolemos and perhaps Kleidemides. The competition among poets for the best actors must have been keen, and a man of Sophocles’ wealth and reputation would have enjoyed a distinct advantage. It would have been during this time, when he knew beforehand who his actors would be, that he wrote tragedies to suit the speaking or singing abilities of his actors.

This situation started to give way when the demos, to redirect competition among individuals to its own benefit, followed its customary strategy of converting an aristocratic practice into a public institution. It took over paying the protagonists and inaugurated a competition among them alone for a prize. The contest was undoubtedly administered by the archon eponymus, the official in charge of the City festival, who distributed actors to tragedians by lot. (The lot assured the formal equality, at least, of the democracy in a characteristic way.) An actor plays the primary role which could change in the course of a play through all four of his tragedian’s dramas. As an added bonus, the winner of the contest was invited back to perform the following year without having to audition (113).

This system, Pickard-Cambridge’s third stage, ended as actors became more famous than poets. In order that one poet not dominate through the exclusive use of a notable actor, actors appeared in one tragedy of each poet.

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54 Pickard-Cambridge 93–94.
The careers of Theodoros, Polos, and Timotheos a.k.a. Sphageus do not belong to this fourth stage but to the theater of the fourth century when, after 386 B.C.E., the tragic festival welcomed revivals of old plays. During this period, actors altered the scripts of the venerable classics so notoriously that Lycurgus had a law passed forbidding the practice (119). Sophocles’ plays remained popular without the encouragement extended to those of Aeschylus.

Aeschines opened himself to Demosthenes’s venom by acting in a company that toured the demes and appeared in the festival of Rural Dionysus. The actors Smylos and Socrates organized and ran the company, probably sharing the lead roles in old plays, among them Sophocles’ Antigone.

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55 Pickard-Cambridge 99.

56 Life of Aeschylus 12: “The Athenians so loved Aeschylus that they decreed after his death that whoever wished to produced the plays of Aeschylus receive a chorus.”

57 Demosthenes On the Crown 262: “You hired yourself out to those famous actors, Simylos and Socrates, everybody calls the Groaners [Barystonoi]. You gleaned fruit, figs, grapes, and olives, like a fruit peddler swiping his wares from the fields of others, and you made out better from that than from the contests you waged over your life. It was war between you and the spectators—no truces, no heralds—and you received many a blow. No wonder you make fun of us who have no experience of the sorts of dangers you incur.” Pickard-Cambridge 52 on this company of actors and tragedy in the fourth century.
G. And Aeschylus (121–127)

121. Life of Sophocles 4 (T 1)

Παρ’ Αἰσχύλῳ δὲ τὴν τραγῳδίαν ἔμαθε.

Sophocles learned tragedy at the side of Aeschylus.

122. Life of Sophocles 19 (T 1)

Συνηγωνίσατο δὲ καὶ Αἰσχύλῳ.

He competed against Aeschylus.

123. Life of Aeschylus 8 (T 37)

Απῆρε δὲ ως Ίέρωνα, κατὰ τινας μὲν υπὸ Αθηναίων κατασπουδασθεὶς καὶ ἡσσηθεὶς νέῳ ὀντὶ Σοφοκλεῖ . . .

Aeschylus left to go to Hieron [tyrant of Syracuse], according to some, because he was mortified by the Athenians and defeated by Sophocles who was a young man . . .

124. Athenenaeus Deipnosophists 10.428 f (T 52a)

Πρώτος γὰρ ἔκεινος . . . παρῆγγαγε τὴν τῶν μεθυόντων ὑψιν εἰς τραγῳδίαν . . . ἀ δ’ αὐτὸς ὁ τραγῳδιοποιὸς ἐποίει, ταύτα τοῖς ἡρώοι περιέθηκε· μεθύων γοῦν ἔγραφε τὰς τραγῳδίας. διὸ καὶ Σοφοκλῆς αὐτῷ μεμφόμενος ἔλεγεν ὅτι “ὦ Αἰσχύλε, εἰ καὶ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖς, ἀλλ’ οὖν οὐκ εἰδῶς γε ποιεῖς,” ὡς ἱστορεῖ Χαμαίλεων ἐν τῷ περὶ Αἰσχύλου.
Aeschylus first introduced the spectacle of drunkards into tragedy . . . What the tragedian did himself he attributed to his heroes. In fact, he wrote his tragedies while drunk. Thereupon even Sophocles reproached him, saying that “Aeschylus, even if you write what is necessary, you do not do so knowingly,” as Chamaeleon writes in his work on Aeschylus [fr. 40 Wehrli].

125. Athenenaeus Deipnosophists 1.22 A (T 52b)

Μεθύων δὲ ἐποίει τὰς τραγῳδίας Αἰσχύλος, ὡς φησι Χαμαλέων. Σοφοκλῆς γούν ὄνειδιζεν αὐτῷ ὅτι, εἰ καὶ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖ, ἄλλ’ οὐκ εἰδῶς γε.

Aeschylus used to write his tragedies while drunk, as Chamaeleon says [fr. 40 Wehrli]. Sophocles in fact criticized him because even if Aeschylus wrote what is necessary, he did not do so knowingly.

126. Eustathius Commentary on the Odyssey 1598.58 (T 52 c)

Αἰσχύλος . . . ἐν τῷ μεθύειν γράφων ἐπαινετὰς τραγῳδίας ἠκούσε παρὰ Σοφοκλέους τὸ ὁ Αἰσχύλε, εἰ καὶ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖς, ὃμως οὐκ εἰδῶς γε ποιεῖς.”

Aeschylus . . . while writing praiseworthy tragedies in a state of drunkenness heard from Sophocles “Even if you compose what is necessary, nevertheless you do not do so knowingly.”

127. Plutarch fr. 130 (T 52d)

Σοφοκλῆς ἐμέμφετο Αἰσχύλῳ ὅτι μεθύων ἔγραφε: “καὶ γὰρ εἰ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖ,” φησι, “ἄλλ’ οὐκ εἰδῶς γε.”
Sophocles criticized Aeschylus because he wrote while drunk: “for even if he writes what is necessary,” he says, “he does not do so knowingly.”

COMMENTARY

These sources are pertinent for the way in which ancient writers invented the lives of poets, but they offer nothing historical for the life of Sophocles. The claim that Sophocles was Aeschylus’ student, as noted (76), is a formula for relating poets and philosophers and recognizing imitation.

Sophocles could hardly escape being influenced by the elder poet who was at his prime when Sophocles won in 468/467 with Triptolemos. Since Sophocles’ extant plays belong to his mature period, they offer few clues, while the early Triptolemos exists only in fragments.

Lefkowitz attributes Aeschylus’ drunkenness to the comment by the Aristophanic Euripides (Frogs 945) that Aeschylus says whatever pops into his mouth.58

58 Lefkowitz 1981.68, 71.
Note Four
Year of Sophocles’ Birth
(128–133)

128. Life of Sophocles 2 (T 1)

Γεννηθῆναι δὲ αὐτόν φασιν οα’ Ὀλυμπιάδι κατὰ τὸ δεύτερον ἐτος ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Αθήνησι Φιλίππου. ἤν δὲ Αἰσχύλου νεώτερος ἐτεις ζ’, Εὐριπίδου δὲ παλαιότερος κδ’.

They say that Sophocles was born in the second year of the seventy-first Olympiad [495/494] in the archonship of Philippos at Athens. He was 7 years younger than Aeschylus and 24 years older than Euripides.

129. Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 239 Α 56 (T 33)

Ἄφ’ οὖ Σοφοκλῆς ο Σοφίλλου ὁ ἐκ Κολωνοῦ ἐνίκησε τραγῳδία ἐτῶν ὄν ΔΔΓΙΙ, ἔτη ΗΗΓΙ, ἄρχοντος Αθήνησι Αψῆφιωνος.

From when Sophocles, son of Sophilos, the Sophocles from Colonus, won with a tragedy at the age of 28, 206 years, in the archonship of Apsephion at Athens [469/468].

130. Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 239 Α 64 (T 3)

Ἄφ’ οὖ Σοφοκλῆς ο ποιητής βιώσας ἔτη ΓΔΔΔΔΙΙ ἔτελεύτητεν καὶ Κύρος ἀνέβη, [ἔτη ΗΔΔΔΔΙΙΙ, ἄρχ]οντος Αθήνησι Καλλίου τοῦ †προτέρου}.
From when Sophocles the poet, who had lived 92 years, died, and Cyrus went up, [143 years, the arch]on at Athens being Kallias the †first† [406/405].

131. Eusebius *Chronicles* Ol. 93.1 (408 B.C.E.) (T 6a)

Euripides aput Archelaum et Sofocles Athenis moritur.

Euripides dies at Archelaus’ court [in Macedonia], and Sophocles at Athens.

132. Diodorus Siculus *Library* 13.103.4 (T 85)

περὶ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον ἐτελεύτησε Σοφοκλῆς, ὁ Σοφίλου, ποιητὴς τραγῳδιῶν, ἐτη βιώσας ἐνενήκοτα, νίκας δ' ἔχων ὀκτωκαίδεκα.

About the same time [406/405], Sophocles, son of Sophilos, composer of tragedies, died, having eighteen victories.

133. [Lucian] *Macrobius* 24 (T 90)

Σοφοκλῆς ὁ τραγῳδοποιός ὅλα γάρ σταφυλῆς καταπιών ἀπεννίγη πέντε καὶ ἐνενήκοντα ζήσας ἔτη.

Sophocles, composer of tragedies, choked to death while swallowing a grape at the age of ninety-five.
COMMENTARY

The Suda sets the year of Sophocles’ birth in the seventy-third Olympiad (488–485 B.C.E.) which would have Sophocles in his eighty-third year at the oldest in 406/405, the year of his death. This date is too early for a man who lived to “extreme old age” (174). The Suda’s number oz’ should be amended to oa’, the seventieth Olympiad (496–493).59

According to the Parian Marble 56, Sophocles was twenty-eight years old in 469/468 B.C.E. when he won his first victory at the City Dionysia. Accordingly, he was born in the fourth year (497/496) of the seventieth Olympiad (500 B.C.E.). On the other hand, Parian Marble 64 says that Sophocles was ninety-two years at the time of his death in 406/405 B.C.E., an unshakable date in the life of Sophocles. Jacoby neatly reconciled the discrepancy by noting that Parian Marble 56 counts exclusively and 64 inclusively.60 Both sections agree on 496/495 as the year of Sophocles’ birth, and this date has become the standard.

The synchronism with Aeschylus and Euripides reported in the Life is mistaken. Sophocles was about twenty-nine years younger than Aeschylus (b. 525/524 B.C.E.) and eleven years older than Euripides, born about 485.

59 Jacoby 1980.182.

60 Jacoby 1980.181.
Note Five
Synchronicity with Socrates
(134–135)

134. Plato *Apology* 17 D

Νῦν ἐγώ πρῶτον ἐπὶ δικαστήριον ἀναβέβηκα, ἔτη γεγονός ἐβδομήκοντα.

At this time I have come to the court for the first time, being in my seventieth year.

135. Plato *Crito* 52 E

Socrates is quoting the Laws:

“Αλλο τι οὖν,” ἂν φαίειν, “ἡ συνθήκας τὰς πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς καὶ ὁμολογίας παραβαίνεις, οὐχ ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης ὁμολογήσας οὐδὲ ἀπατήθητες οὐδὲ ἐν ὑπόθεσις ἀναγκασθεὶς βουλεῦσασθαι, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἔτει ἐβδομήκοντα, ἐν οἷς ἐξήν σοι ἀπιέναι, εἰ μὴ ἡρέσκομεν ἡμεῖς μηδὲ δίκαιαι ἐφαίνοντο σοι αἱ ὁμολογίαι εἶναι.”

“What else are you doing,” the Laws would say, “than breaking your covenant and agreements with us after agreeing upon them without any pressure or deception and under no duress to make a decision in a short time. You have had seventy years during which you could have left, had we not suited you or the agreements not seemed just to you.”
COMMENTARY

According to Plato, Socrates was seventy years old in 399 B.C.E. when he was indicted by Anytus and his cohorts. Socrates was thus born in 369 and was twenty-seven years, not seventeen as *The Suda* contends, younger than Sophocles. As often suggested, *The Suda*’s number ιζ should be amended to ικζ.

Synchronism of this sort is a device of biographers to relate famous men in the absence of other evidence. The historical Sophocles and Socrates were probably acquainted with another; the circle of aristocrats was small. Plato’s Socrates refers to Sophocles in the *Phaedrus* (268 C) and Sophocles’ name comes up in conversation at the beginning of the *Republic* (329 C).
Sophocles introduced many innovations in the contests. He was first to separate the role of actor from that of poet on account of his weak voice, for in olden times, the poet himself performed as actor. He increased the number of choristers from twelve to fifteen and invented the third actor.

Aeschylus was the first to take the number of actors from one to two and lessened the part of the chorus, making speech the first performer. Sophocles introduced three actors and scene-painting.
In antiquity, the chorus alone acted throughout the play; later, Thespis invented one actor in order to allow the chorus to rest. Aeschylus introduced a second actor, and Sophocles, a third one and brought tragedy to its full compliment.

Aeschylus himself invented the third actor, but according to Dikaiarchos of Messana [fr.76 Wehrli], Sophocles did so.

Tritagonist: from Sophocles, who was first to use three actors and the so-called tritagonist.
141. *Life of Sophocles* 6 (T 1)

Σάτυρος δὲ φησιν ὅτι καὶ τὴν καμπύλην βακτηρίαν αὐτὸς ἐπενόησε. φησί δὲ καὶ Ἰστρος τὰς λευκὰς κρηπίδας αὐτὸν ἐξευηρηκέναι, αἷς υποδεσμεύονται οἱ τε ὑποκριταὶ καὶ οἱ χορευταί καὶ πρὸς τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν γράψαι τὰ δράματα ταῖς δὲ Μούσαις θίασον ἐκ τῶν πεπαιδευμένων συναγαγεῖν.

Satyros says [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 3.161] that he designed the crooked staff himself, while according to Ister [Die Fragmente der griecssshichen Historiker 334 F 36], he invented white boots that the actors and choristers wore, and that he wrote plays with a view to the nature of the actors and that he organized a *thiasos* for the Muses from cultivated people.

142. Servius to Vergil *Eclogue* 8.10 (T 99)

Cothurnus autem calciamentum tragicum, cuius usum quidam Sophoclem primum scaenae intulisse volunt.

The cothurnus is the shoe of tragedy whose use some maintain Sophocles first introduced to the stage.

143. *Life of Sophocles* 23 (T 1)

Φησὶ δὲ Ἀριστόξενος ὡς πρῶτος τῶν Αθηνησθέν ποιητῶν τὴν Φρυγίαν μελοποιάν εἰς τὰ ἁδικα ἀσματα παρέλαβε καὶ τοῦ διθυραμβικοῦ τρόπου κατέμιξεν.

Aristoxenos [fr. 79 Wehrli] says that he was the first of poets from Athens to introduce Phrygian melody into his songs and mix in the dithyrambic style.
Themistius

Oratio 26.316 D (T 96)

Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ σεμνὴ τραγῳδία μετὰ πάσης ὁμοῦ τῆς σκευῆς καὶ τοῦ χοροῦ καὶ τῶν ύποκριτῶν παρελήλυθεν εἰς τὸ θέατρον; καὶ οὐ προσέχομεν Ἀριστοτέλει, ὅτι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ὁ χορὸς εἰσὶ ἡδέν εἰς τοὺς θεούς, Θέσπις δὲ πρόλογόν τε καὶ ῥῆσιν ἐξεῦρεν, Αἰσχύλος δὲ πριτὸν ὑποκριτὴν καὶ ὀκρίβαντας, ταῦτα δὲ πλείω τούτων Σοφοκλέους ἀπελαύσαμεν καὶ Εὐριπίδου;

Has not stately tragedy along with all its equipment and chorus and actors come into the theater? Do we not heed Aristotle (137) that at first the chorus on entering sang to the gods, and that Thespis invented the prologue and set speech, and that Aeschylus, the third actor and the platform? And did we not benefit from more of such things from Sophocles and Euripides?

COMMENTARY

Ancient scholars held that tragedy developed incrementally until it attained its mature and final form. Their belief probably owes much to Aristotle’s Poetics (e.g. 1449a 14–31). They were also interested in discovering what innovations were made and by whom and consulted books on the history of each genre and on inventions generally.61 In the event that the inventor was unknown, they were not above fabricating a name, usually that of a famous practitioner of the art. Diogenes Laertius, for instance, rejects Aristotle’s attribution of the invention of the dialogue to the obscure Alexamenos of Styra or Teos in favor of Zeno the Eleatic (Lives of the Eminent Philosophers 3.48). Satyros of Callais Pontica, the source for Sophocles’ invention of crooked staff, composed his Life of Euripides by accepting whole cloth as factual Aristophanes’ view of Euripides in the Thesmophoriazousae. Ister of Cyrene undermines his own authority for Sophocles’ invention of

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61 Fairweather 264.
white boots for his choristers and actors by asserting that the tragedian was not an Athenian.

Most claims of these biographers cannot be verified or unequivocally rejected. Though devoid of value for the history of Sophocles, they contribute toward the ancient portrait of Sophocles as a tragedian, namely, by depicting him as an artist who not only produces the objects of his craft, dramas but also adds to the form of tragedy itself. He is a culture hero whose actions change the world by bringing tragedy to fruition.

Sophocles’ invention of the third actor is more problematic in that it rests upon the authority of Aristotle. From another writer, the statement would be suspect: Thespis invented the actor, Aeschylus added a second, Sophocles added a third, and Euripides added none, because the number of actors in tragedy attained is *summa forma* with three. Aristotle authored studies on tragedy and the victories at the City Dionysia and Lenaia and deserves the benefit of the doubt. Sophocles would have added the actor during the period after his first victory in 468 and Aeschylus’ use of the actor in the *Oresteia* of 458. In his *Antigone*, for example, Sophocles capitalizes on the exchange of dialogue allowed by the third actor to develop the character of Creon in dialogue with the terrified Watchman and defiant Antigone, and in *Electra* of Clytemnestra jubilant at the Pedagogus’ news of Orestes’ death that crushes Electra.

Aistoxenus seems a reliable source for Sophocles’ introduction of Phrygian melodies because of the research conducted by Aristotle’s school of which Aristoxenos was a prominent member (*The Suda* alpha 3927). Aristoxenos wrote extensively on music, biography, and history, accumulating an opus of 453 pieces according to the *The Suda*. One of these dealt with song writing (*melopoia*) in four books.
Sophocles may have organized a *thiasos* or group of cultured men for the Muses. He was devoutly religious and, as the dinner party reported by Ion (10) shows, interested in discussion things literary. Lefkowitz demurs, however, pointing out that biographers who mainly consulted literary sources were more likely to have derived the “fact” from a representation in comedy or a dialogue.\(^\text{62}\)

\(^{62}\) Lefkowitz 1981.79.
Note Seven
Nickname “Bee”
(145–156)

145. Life of Sophocles 20 (T 1)

Καὶ ἄλλοι μὲν πολλοὶ μεμίμηνταί τινα τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν ἢ τῶν καθ’ αὐτοὺς, μόνος δὲ Σοφοκλῆς ἄφ’ ἐκάστου τὸ λαμπρὸν ἀπανθίζειν καθ’ ὁ καὶ μέλιτα ἐλέγετο. ἤνεγκε δὲ τὰ μικτὰ· εὐκαιρίαν, γλυκύτητα, τόλμαν, ποικιλιάν.

Many others imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but only Sophocles plucked the brilliance from each. For this he was said to be the Bee. He combined various elements, timing, sweetness, daring, and variety.

146. Life of Sophocles 22 (T 1)

Φησὶ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνης ὅτι “κηρὸς ἐπεκαθέζετο . . . “, ἄλλῃ δὲ “Σοφοκλέους τοῦ μέλιτι τὸ στόμα κεχρισμένου.”

Aristophanes [fr. 580 A Edmonds] says that “a honey comb sat on him . . . ” and on another occasion (147), “Sophocles was anointed on the mouth with honey.”

147. Aristophanes fr. 581 (1.540 Kock) (T 108)

Ὅ δ’ αὖ Σοφοκλέους τοῦ μέλιτι κεχρισμένου ὠσπερ καδίσκου περιέλειξε τὸ στόμα.

He licked the mouth of the dear ballot box.
as if it were Sophocles’ smeared with honey

148. Flavius Philostratos Imagines 3.2 (T 108a)

Ὁ δὲ τῶν ἀηδόνων χορὸς καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὀρνέων μουσεῖα σαφῶς ἡμῖν τὰ τοῦ μελιχροτάτου Σοφοκλέους ἐπὶ γλῶτταν ἀγεῖ·

πυκνόπτεροι δ’
eἰσῳ κατ’ αὐτὸν εὐστομοῦσ’ ἀηδόνες.

The chorus of nightingales and the melodious haunts of the other birds clearly bring to our tongue the words of honey-sweet Sophocles:

Thick-feathered
nightingales sing sweetly within this place (Oedipus at Colonus 17–18).

149. Athenaeus Deipnosophistae 13.598 c

Ἀτθὶς δ’ οἰα μέλισσα πολυπρήωνα Κολώνην
λείπουσ’ ἐν τραγικαίς ἢδε χοροτασίαις
Βάκχον καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα Θεωρίδος Ἡριγόνης τε
ἀς ποτε γηραιῶ Ζεὺς ἐπορεῖν Σοφοκλεί.

How the Attic bee, leaving Kolone of many ridges,
sang in many tragic choruses
of Bacchus and his passion for Theoris and for Erigone
whom once Zeus bestowed upon Sophocles in his old age.
150. Hesychius Milesius de viris illustribus 61 (T 109)

Sophocles, the one of tragedy, was called Bee because of his sweetness.

151. Scholiast to Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus 17 (T 110)

Sophocles greatly excelled in expression [or, turn of phrase] that the comic poets called him Bee.

152. Scholiast to Sophocles Ajax 1199 (T 111)

Sophocles, being the sweetest, reflected his own character in his songs whence he was also called Bee.

153. Scholiast Aristophanes Wasps 462 (T 112)

Of such a character was he that the comic poets called him Bee.
(By Zeus, you wouldn’t have gotten away from them so easily if they had consumed the songs of Philokles)

since Philokles is savage in composing songs. For Sophocles is sweet, and for this reason, he was called Bee.

154. Aristophanes Peace 530–532, 535–538 (T 113a)

Ταύτης δ’ ὀπώρας [sc., ὁζεί], ὑποδοχῆς, Διονυσίων, αὐλῶν, τραγῳδῶν, Σοφοκλέους μελῶν, κιχλῶν, ἐπυλλίων Εὐριπίδου—

...—κιττοῦ, τρυγοίπου, προβατίων βληχωμένων, κόλπου γυναικῶν διατρεχουσῶν εἰς ἄγρον, δούλης μεθυούσης, ἀνατεταμένου χοίως, ἄλλων τε πολλῶν κάγαθῶν.

Peace smells of the prime of life, parties, festivals of Dionysus, flutes, tragedies, songs of Sophocles, thrushes, and the itsy-bitsy verses of Euripides—

.....

—of ivy, straining new wine, lambs ableating, breasts of women dashing across the fields, a tipsy slave girl, and overturned wine jars, and many other good things.

155. Scholiast to Aristophanes Peace 531 (T 113b)

Ὅτι ἡδέα τὰ μέλη Σοφοκλέους.

Because Sophocles’ songs were sweet.
Phrynichus [in Sopihistike Proparaskeue] gives as the standard and measure and paradigm of pure, uncorrupted Attic speech Plato and Demosthenes best . . . , moreover, of the comic poets, Aristophanes, . . . and of the tragedians Aeschylus the loudest, and Sophocles as sweet, and Euripides as all-wise.

COMMENTARY

The author of the *Life of Sophocles* interprets the Bee as referring to Sophocles’ eclecticism in borrowing from others as a bee takes pollen from many flowers.

W. B. Stanford points out how skilled the Greeks were in “describing sounds in terms of other sense-experiences by means of what are now called synaesthetic or intersensal metaphors.” A favourite analogue for pleasant-sounding voices,” Stanford notes, “was honey, meli.”63 In pronouncing the word, Greeks replicated the muscle movements of tasting something sweet.64 Homer draws upon “this kind of kinaesthetic mimesis” to introduce Nestor whose function in the *Iliad* derives from his speech and the soothing-effect it should, but does not always, have on the hot-headed youths around him: “The clear-sweet speaker of the men of Pylos from whose tongue flows a voice sweeter than honey”

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63 Stanford 34.

64 Stanford 109.
(Iliad 1.248–249). With audê (voice), Homer stresses the sounds, that is, the combinations of syllables in words as opposed to the meaning of the words. They flow on the Nestor’s voice and charm the listener. Similarly, the Sirens entrance whoever listens to them with “their clear song” (Homer Odyssey 12.44) and take away his homecoming. It is the sound of the words, not their meanings which vary with the occasion, that ensnares the listener. Sophocles’ lexis, his way of putting words together, flowed smoothly and clearly without the prickly burrs of discordant sounds and so mesmerized the audience.

Poets were said to have honey-sweet lips or mouth by virtue of their craft. The poet Euripides, accused of bad breath, retorted: “Hush, my mouth is sweeter than honey and the Sirens” (Life of Euripides 87–88). Sweetness, then, is independent of the poet’s particular style.
καὶ αὐτὸς ἦρξε τοῦ δράμα πρὸς δράμα ἀγωνίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μὴ στρατολογεῖσθαι.

στρατολογεῖσθαι AVM    στρατολογία G
στρατολογίαν B    τετραλογίαν Scaliger

He himself began competing with a play against a play but in not conducting the levy

As Pickard-Cambridge points out, this sentence does not mean that Sophocles presented one play at the festival of the City Dionysia where tragedians produced plays in groups of four.65

What it does mean, however, is unclear. It seems to be a criticism of Sophocles as a general by asserting that he would rather compete as a poet in the dramatic contests than conduct the duties of a general in recruitment and calling citizens for military service. The jibe could be historical and, in any case concurs with Pericles’ judgment (and apparently Sophocles’ own) concerning his ignorance in military matters (10).

Scaliger (1568) wrote τετραλογίαν in the margin of his text of Sophocles, but Meursius66 first formally suggested emending στρατολογεῖσθαι with τετραλογίαν: "Sophocles began competing play by play but not by a tetralogy." With the emendation, the sentence states that Sophocles began the practice of competing with separate plays complete in themselves instead

65 Pickard-Cambridge 81 note 3.

of plays united by the common theme of the tetralogical format. Evidence for this development, supported *ex silentio* by the plays themselves, rests shakily on this sentence and its emendation.

The corruption of the readily understood τετραλογίαν into στρατολογεῖσθαι boggles the imagination. The term τετραλογία, originally designating a group of four speeches on a single case, is not known to have been used of tragedies until the Alexandrine period. The emendation not only removes the zest of the manuscript reading; it also encounters a historical difficulty. In 472 B.C.E., Aeschylus presented the *Persians*, an individual play having a historical subject, along with three others, *Phineus, Glaukos of Potnia*, and *Prometheus* whose mythological topics were unrelated to it or to one another.
Note Nine
Other Writing
(157–164)

COMMENTARY

The Suda reports that Sophocles “wrote . . . an account in prose of the chorus in rivalry with Thespis and Choirilos.” Wolf Aly points out that “chorus” in the title of Sophocles’ book On the Chorus is an “official term” for tragedy. Sophocles’ treatise would have covered all aspects of tragedy. It is often thought to be the source for Sophocles’ pronouncements on his style such as that paraphrased by Plutarch in Moralia 79 b (107). Nothing can be said with certainty about the content of this work or even that Sophocles composed such a work.

157. Hephaestion Enchiridion 1.5: de correptione interna [on internal shortening]

Ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔπεσι σπανιώτερον, οὕτως ἐστε τό τού Ἀρχελάου ὄνομα Σοφοκλῆς ἐν ταῖς ἐλεγείαις οὐκ ἔμετο ἐγχωρεῖν οὔτε εἰς ἔπος οὔτε εἰς ἐλεγεῖον. φησὶ γοῦν

Ἀρχέλαως: ἦν γὰρ σύμμετρον ἀδε λέγειν.

[The common syllable is] is rarer in dactylic hexameters, so that Sophocles in his elegies did not think the name of Archelāos should be admitted either for hexameter or elegion. At any rate, he says:

of Archeleōs, for it was in good measure to say his name this way.

67 Aly 93 n. 95a.
COMMENTARY

A common syllable is one whose vowel may be made either long or short. For a preceding long syllable to become short, it must be in the same word. Sophocles preferred that the name be pronounced Archeleōs rather than Archelāos, following the Attic tendency to shorten vowels internally.

158. Harpocration *Lexicon of the Ten Attic Orators* 60-61 (Dindorf)

"Ἀρχὴ ἄνδρα δείκνυσι": Δημοσθένης προοιμίως δημηγορικοίς. Σοφοκλῆς μὲν οὖν ἐν ἐλεγείαις Σόλωνός φησιν αὐτὸ εἶναι ἀπόφθεγμα, Θεόφραστος δὲ ἐν τῷ περὶ παροιμῶν καὶ Αριστοτέλης Ἐρικτῆς.

“Ruling shows a man”: Demosthenes relates this proverb in *Proems to Public Speaking* [48.2]. Sophocles says in his elegies that this is a saying of Solon. Theophrastus says the same in *On Proverbs*, and Aristotle that it belongs to Bias [*Nicomachean Ethics* 1130 a 1].

159. Erotianus *Collection of a Glossary of Hippocrates* chi 2

Χάριτες· αἱ χαραί, ὡς καὶ Σοφοκλῆς ἐν ἐλεγείᾳ μέμνηται.

Charites [Graces]: the Charai as Sophocles also mentions in an elegy.

COMMENTARY

Sophocles’ elegies did not fare well in memory. The sources did not necessarily read the works themselves.
160. Inscriptiones Graecae IV 4510. Text that of James H. Oliver, 112.

Sophocles’ Paean

Much-renowned daughter of Phlegyas, mother of the god who wards off pain
. . . . [Apollo] of the uncut hair. I shall begin my loud-cried hymn

- mingled with pipes
- helper of the sons of Kekrops
- may you come . . . the golden-haired

[ ] in him [ ]
[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
[ ] [ ] [ ] Oly[mpian . . .
161. Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 3.17 (T 73a)

Οἱ δὲ ἠδον ψιθύν, ὡποίος ὁ παιὰν ὁ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους, ὃν Ἀθήνησι τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ἄδουσιν.

[The Indians] sang a song like the paean of Sophocles which they sing at Athens for Asclepius.

162. Philostratos, *Imagines* 13

Ἀσκληπιὸς δὲ, οἶμαι, οὕτως ἐγγὺς παιὰν που παρεγγυῶν γράφειν καὶ κλυτομήτης οὐκ ἀπαξιῶν παρὰ σοῦ ἀκοῦσαι βλέμμα τε αὐτοῦ πρὸς σὲ φαιδρότητι μεμιγμένον τὰς παρὰ <σοι> μικρὸν ὑστερον ἐπιχενώσεις αἰνίττεται.

Aesclepius, I think, is nearby, urging you to write a paean. Though renowned for skill, he does not disdain to hear a paean from you. His gaze upon you, mingled with joy, hints at the hospitable reception soon to come in your house.

163. [Lucian] *Praise of Demosthenes* 27 (T 73b)

Οὐδὲ γὰρ τάσκητιῶ μεῖόν τι γέγνεται τῆς τιμῆς, εἰ μὴ τῶν προσιόντων αὐτῶν ποιητῶν ὁ παιὰν, ἀλλ’ Ἰσοδήμου τοῦ Τροιζηνίου ἢ Σοφοκλέους ἄδεται.

No less honor accrues to Asclepius if the paian is not that of his worshippers’ making but one of Troezenian Isodemos or Sophocles is sung.
COMMENTARY

The word _paean_ refers not only to the hymn to a god but to the dance performed for the deity and to the deity himself. As a hymn, the paean was metrical in form and contained the epithets and names of the god or goddess addressee and a narrative of the deity’s deeds, ending with a short prayer. Originally offered to Apollo in his capacity as Healer, the paean was extended to others, particularly, Asclepius and those associated with him.

A fragment of a paean attributed to Sophocles was found in 1932 in the Athenian agora, engraved on Pentelic marble. The stone came from a monument erected in the first half of the third century C.E. by Q. Statius Glauceus in honor of his grandfather, Q. Statius Sarapion, a descendant of a prominent family in Roman Athens. The monument “originally consisted of a large triangular base surmounted by an overlapping triangular cap which supported a tripod, not centered on the monument but located toward the front as appears from the cuttings on the stone.”68 The monument was inscribed on the front with a paean to Asclepius written by Sarapion, on the right side with a catalogue of the singers who sang his paean in his day, and on the left with a hymn entitled “Sophocles’ Paian.” According to _The Suda_, Sophocles wrote more than one paean. The questions arise whether this is a copy of the paean to Asclepius mentioned in the sources and was it _still_ in use in the third century C.E.

According to Flavius Philostratos (b. _ca_. 170 C.E.), Sophocles’ paean was sung at Athens in the late second and early third centuries. His statement, however, does not justify the inference that the hymn had been part of the rites of Asclepius from Sophocles’ time; it could have been revived as part of the contemporary interest in antiquity. Philostratus Lemnius, son-in-

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68 Oliver 92.
law of Flavius, implies that Sophocles called Asclepius *klytomêtis*, “renowned for cunning.” The letters ΟΠΛΑΑΛΙΣΩΔΗΜΟΥ in 163 have been recovered as ὁ παιάν ἀλλ´ Ἰσοδήμου. By reading ἦ (or) instead of the ligature for καὶ (and), the problem of explaining the cooperation between Sophocles and an obscure Troezenian vanishes.  

69 Pseudo-Lucian testifies that two paeans were notable in the second century C.E. and chides modern writers against rivaling the old masters with their own pedestrian attempts.

James H. Oliver, author of the fundamental study of Sarapion’s monument, suggests that Philostratos’ reference to *klytomêtis* indicates that he had in mind, not the paean on Sarapion’s monument, but another paean that was famous at the time. Philostratos, it seems, remembered the adjective used of Apollo in this hymn and applied it to Asclepius who, in turn, brought Sophocles to mind as a famous author of paeans to, and devotee of, Asclepius.  

70 Extant in four copies, the hymn containing *klytomêtis* is best known from the version found at Erythrae and published by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf.  

71 Glaucus would have invited an unsavory comparison, Oliver assumes, had he inscribed next to his grandfather’s paean a famous and time-honored paean by the immortal Sophocles.  

72 Rather, Oliver surmises from another Athenian monument of the period that

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69 Oliver 113—114.

70 Oliver 121—122.


72 Oliver 119.
contains three hymns, each to a different addressee, namely, Asclepius, Hygieia, and Telesphoros, that Glaucus inscribed two paeans on the Sarapion monument, the honoree’s to Aesclepius and a second paean written by someone else for another figure. The opening address,

Sing, youths, Paean renowned for cunning, 
far-darting son of Leto, ie Paean, 
who produced a great joy for mortals, 
after mingling in intercourse with Koronis in the Phlegyian land, 
   ie Paean, Asclepius, 
spirit most renowned, ie Paean,

points to Koronois, mother of Asclepius (Homerica Hymn 16.1–4), as the addressee. According to Pindar (Pythian Ode 3.8–46), Koronis, while pregnant with Apollo’s seed, lies with the Arcadian Ischys, and for this act, Apollo dispatches Artemis to slay her. Unwilling for his son to perish for his mother’s folly, Apollo rescues him from the funeral pyre and entrusts him to Cheiron to rear and educate in healing.

Glaucus may have rightly attributed to Sophocles the paean to Koronis, but, as Philostratus’ confusion indicates, Sophocles’ devotion to Asclepius was legendary. It made him an apt author for a paean to the hero’s mother, especially one for an elaborate and expensive monument.

164. Plutarch Moralia 785 B (T 163)

Τούτῳ δ’ ὁμολογούμενος Σοφοκλέους ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπιγραμμάτιον.

73 Inscriptio Graecae II 4533; Oliver 119.
This by common consent is an epigram of Sophocles:

Sophocles at fifty-five years wrote an ode for Herodotus.

**COMMENTARY**

Sophocles states that he was fifty-five when he wrote his poem for Herodotus. The poem, it has been suggested, may have been a *propemptikon* or poem for a friend who was about to embark on a voyage, perhaps, to Thurii. The two became friends during Herodotus’ stay in Athens, the fruits of which can be traced in their works. *Electra* 417–423,

> There is a story that she [Clytemnestra] saw father’s, yours and mine, second coming into the light. Then, he took the scepter that he used to carry and Aegisthus now does and fixed it at the hearth. From it grew a burgeoning shoot by which all the land of the Mycenaeans became shaded,

is taken to recall Herodotus 1.108.1:

> When Mandane had been married to Cambyses for a year, Astyages had another dream. A vine seemed to grow from his daughter’s genitals, and the vine took hold of all Asia.

There are other intertextualities (e. g., *Oedipus at Colonus* 337–341 and Herodotus 2.35; *Oedipus at Colonus* 698 and Herodotus 8.55; *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1528–1530 and Herodotus 1.32.7), but the most famous, or notorious, one is that between *Antigone* 905–912:

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74 Schmid and Stälin 318.
Not even if I were the mother of children,  
not if my husband were dead and rotting on me,  
would I take up this task in violence of the citizens.  
For the sake of what law do I say this?  
A husband dead, there would be another for me,  
and a child from another man, if I lost this one,  
but with mother and father both hidden in the house of  
Hades, there is no brother who would be produced, ever.  
I honored you [Polyneikes] by such a law;

and Herodotus 3.119.4–5, in which Itaphernes’ wife responds to  
Dareios’ offer: “Woman, King Dareios grants that you may save  
the one of your arrested kinsmen whom you wish” with:

If the king gives me the life of one, I choose of them all my  
brother. Dareios pondered her answer and amazed by what  
she said, sent a messenger and asked: “Woman, the king asks  
you by what opinion do you abandon your husband and  
children and choose him to survive who is more distant than  
your children and less dear than your husband.” She replied:  
“King, there may be another husband for me, and if heaven  
complies, other children, if I should lose these. But with my  
father and mother no longer living, there would not be  
another brother for me. With this opinion I said what I said.”

Those who fervently crave to dagger the passage as spurious are  
thwarted by its inclusion in Aristotle’s text of the Antigone  
(Rhetoric 3.8.9, quoting lines 911 and 912). Sophocles, although he  
borrowed from Herodotus, thoroughly worked the story into the  
warp of his play. These correspondences speak to the closeness

65. Also “custom.”

66. Murnaghan 1986; Tyrrell and Bennett 112–118.
of the men’s friendship and their shared views of the world and religion, especially oracles.
Note Ten
Son and Grandson
(165–184)

A. Son, Iophon (165–173)

165. Life of Sophocles 13 (T 1)
Ἐχων γὰρ ἐκ μὲν Νικοστράτης Ιοφῶντα, ἐκ δὲ Θεωρίδος Σικυωνίας Αρίστωνα, τὸν ἐκ τούτου γενόμενον παιδα Σοφοκλέα τούνομα πλέον ἐστεργε.

Sophocles had a son, Iophon, by Nikostrate, and another, Ariston, by Theoris of Sikyon. Sophocles loved the son of Ariston, also called Sophocles, more.

166. Aristophanes Frogs 71-79 (T 101)

Δι. δέομαι ποιητοῦ δεξιοῦ. οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ’ εἰσίν, οἱ δ’ ὀντες κακοί.
Ηρ. τί δ’; οὐκ Ιοφῶν ζή; 
Δι. τούτο γὰρ τοι καὶ μόνον
ἐτ’ ἐστὶ λοιπὸν ἀγαθόν, εἰ καὶ τούτ’ ἄρα’
οὐ γὰρ σάφ’ οἶδ’ οὐδ’ αὐτό τοῦθ’ ὡς ἔχει.
Ηρ. εἴτ’ οὐ Σοφοκλέα πρότερον ἄντ’ Εὐριπίδου
μέλλεις ἀνάγειν, εἶπερ γ’ ἐκεῖθεν δεῖ σ’ ἄγειν; 
Δι. οὐ, πρὶν γ’ ἄν Ιοφώντ’, ἀπολαξάν αὐτὸν μόνον,
ἀνευ Σοφοκλέους ὁ τι ποιεῖ καῳδανίσσω.
κάλλως ὁ μὲν γ’ Εὐριπίδης πανούργος ὄν
κἂν ξυναποδρᾶναι δεῦρ’ ἐπιχειρήσειε μοι.
ὁ δ’ εὐκολος μὲν ἐντάδ’, εὐκολος δ’ ἐκεῖ.

Dionysus: I need a clever poet.
   “For some are not, and those that are are bad.”
Herakles: What’s this? Is not Iophon alive?
Dionysus: Yes, this is the only good thing left, if it is good.
   I don’t know for sure whether it’s a good thing.
Herakles: You don’t intend to bring up Sophocles if you must
   bring someone up from there? He ranks before Euripides.
Dionysus: No, not until I take Iophon by himself,
   without Sophocles, and test the ring of his poetry.

167. Scholiast on Aristophanes Frogs 73 (Τ 64)

υίός Σοφοκλέους ὁ Ιοφὼν. ἠγωνίσατο δὲ καὶ ἐνίκησε λαμπρῶς
ετι ζώντος τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ.

Iophon was the son of Sophocles. Iophon competed and won
brilliantly while his father was still alive.

168. Scholiast on Aristophanes Frogs 78 (Τ 16)

Νικοστράτης δὲ νίος ἦν. φασὶ δὲ ὅτι καὶ Ἀρίστων τοῦ
Σοφοκλέους νόθος νίος ἐγεγόνει ἐκ τινος Θεωρίδος Σικυωνίας.

Iophon was the son of Nikostrate. They say that Ariston was the
illegitimate son of Sophocles by Theoris of Sikyon.
169. Scholiast on Aristophanes Frogs 78 (T 65)

Κωμῳδεῖται γάρ ὁ Ἰοφῶν ὁ υἱὸς Σοφοκλέους ὡς τὰ τοῦ πατρὸς λέγων. οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς τραγῳδίαις ἐπιγράφεσθαι κωμῳδεῖται, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τῷ καὶ ψυχρός καὶ μακρὸς εἶναι.

Ιοφόν, son of Sophocles, was satirized for saying that his father’s works were his own. Otherwise. Not only was he satirized for inscribing his name on his father’s tragedies but for also being cold-hearted and tedious.

170. The Suda iota 451 (T 17)

Ἰοφῶν, Ἀθηναῖος, τραγικός, υἱὸς Σοφοκλέους τοῦ τραγικοῦ γνήσιος ἀπὸ Νικοστράτης γέγονε δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ νόθος υἱὸς Αρίστων ἀπὸ Θεοδωρίδος Σικυωνίας. δράματα δὲ Ἰοφῶν ἐδίδαξε ν’, ὃν ἀκόμη Αχιλλέως, Τῆλεφος, Ακταίων, Τίλου πέρσις, Δεξαμενός, Βάκχαι, Πενθεύς, καὶ ἄλλα τινὰ μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς Σοφοκλέους.

Iophon, an Athenian, tragedian, legitimate son of Sophocles the tragedian by Nikostrate. A bastard son, Ariston, was also born to Sophocles by Theodoris of Sikyon. Iophon produced 50 dramas, among which are Achilles, Telephos, Aktaion, Sack of Ilion, Dexamenos, Bacchai, Pentheus, and some others with his father, Sophocles.

171. Argumentum II to Euripides Hippolytus

Ἔδιδαχθη ἐπὶ Ἐπαμείνονος ἄρχοντος ὀλυμπιάδι πί’ ἐτεί δ’. πρῶτος Ἐυριστίδης, δεύτερος Ἰοφῶν, τρίτος Ἰων.
Hippolytus was produced during the archonship of Epameinon in the fourth year of the eighty-seventh Olympiad [429/428]. Euripides was first, Iophon second, and Ion third.

Sophocles also held the priesthood of Halon, a hero who with Asclepius at the side of Cheiron . . . founded after his father's death by his son, Iophon.

Sophocles also waged a glorious contest with the Nature of Things in that he produced generously his magnificent works and Nature liberally furnished the time for his works: for he nearly reached his hundredth year, when at the very verge of the transition to death, he wrote his Oedipus at Colonus, a play which by itself snatched the glory away from all those poets who practiced his
craft. His son, Iophon, did not wish for this to go unknown and engraved on his father's tomb what I have reported.

COMMENTARY

Sophocles had a son, Iophon, by the Athenian Nikostrate, and Iophon had a son, Sophocles. Both Iophon and the younger Sophocles became tragedians and presented plays at the City Dionysia. In 401 B.C.E., Sophocles produced his late grandfather's *Oedipus at Colonus*. This remains all that can be said with confidence about Sophocles' family.

Some authorities have accepted the historicity of a second son, Ariston, by the Sikyonian hetaira Theoris. Ariston was supposedly born to an elder Sophocles, and since his mother was a foreigner, could not have been a citizen himself. The younger Sophocles is considered Ariston's son. A son born late in life to an elderly man is not impossible, but the story of Ariston turns on Sophocles' age. To speculate, the younger Sophocles was, let us say, twenty-five when he produced his grandfather's *Oedipus at Colonus* in 401; he would have been born in 426. If his father Ariston were twenty-five years at the time of his son's birth, he would have been born in 451, when his father Sophocles was in his mid-forties, years from the threshold of old age. Without an aged Sophocles, the story loses its raison d'être, and Ariston some, if not all, of his historicity.

There was talk that Iophon depended upon this father and passed off his father's work as his own. It is the kind of defamation favored by comedians, and Aristophanes who probably knew

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75 v. Blumenthal 1042; Schmid-Stählin 321; Lesky 275. On the other hand, Webster insists that "The only members of the Sophocles' family for whom there is any evidence are Iophon and Iophon's son the younger Sophocles" (15).
better was not above any invective (16–19). Iophon appears to have won in 435,76 placed second in 428, and produced some fifty plays. Concerning his relations with his father at the end of Sophocles’ life, Webster observes that Aristophanes’ public admission that Dionysus “wants to see what Iophon can do without his father . . . proves that father and son were working happily together till the end.”77

B. The Lawsuit (174–179)

174. Cicero On Old Age 22 (T 81)

Sophocles ad summam senectutem tragoedias fecit. quod propter studium cum rem neglegere familiarem videretur, a filiis in iudicium vocatus est, ut quem ad modum nostro more male rem gerentibus patribus bonis interdici solet, sic illum quasi desipientem a re familiari removerent iudices. tum senex dicitur eam fabulam quam in manibus habebat et proxime scripserat, Oedipum Coloneum, recitasse iudicibus quaesisseque num illud carmen desipientis videretur, quo recitato sententiiis iudicum est liberatus.

Sophocles composed tragedies until extreme old age. Because of this pursuit, he seemed to neglect his family’s affairs and was summoned into court by his sons so that the judges could remove him from his family estate for incompetence. In much the same

76 *Inscriptiones Graecae* II² 2318: Ἰοφῶν ἐ[δίδασκε] (Iophon produced). For the inscription, see Pickard-Cambridge 105.

77 Webster 15.
way, in our custom fathers who were managing the family estate poorly are wont to be debarred from their property. Then the old man is said to have read aloud to the judges that play which he held in his hands and which he had written most recently, *Oedipus Colonus*, and asked them whether it seem to be the song of an incompetent. After it was read aloud, Sophocles was acquitted by the decision of the judges.

175. Plutarch *Moralia* 785 A (T 82)

Many say that Sophocles, while being prosecuted for senility, read the ode of *Oedipus at Colonus* whose beginning is:

> You have come, stranger, to the best place to live
> in this land far-famed for its horses,
> white Colonus, where
> the melodious nightingale
> ever sings, sheltered
by verdant valleys [668–673].

Because the song seemed marvelous, he was escorted from the court as if from the theater amid the applause and cries of those present.

176. Apuleius Apology 37 (T83)

Sophocles poeta Euripidi aemulus et superstes—vixit enim ad extremam senectam—cum igitur accusaretur a filio suomet dementiae, quasi iam per aetatem desiperet, protulisse dicitur Coloneum suam, peregregiam tragoediarum, quam forte tum in eo tempore conscribebatur, eam iudicibus legisse nec quicquam amplius pro defensione sua addidisse, nisi ut audacter dementiae condemnarent, si carmina senis displierent. ibi ego compuleram omnis iudices tanto poetae adsurrexisset, miris laudibus eum tulisset ob argumenti sollertiam et coturnum facundiae, nec ita multum omnis afuisse quin accusatorem potius dementiae condemnarent.

The poet Sophocles, rival and survivor of Euripides, for he lived to extreme old age, when he was accused by his very own son of senility, as if he were by that time foolish because of his age, is said to have brought forth his Colonus, a superb tragedy, which he happened to be writing at the time, and read it to the judges and did not add anything more as a defense except to say boldly that they were to convict him of senility if the poems of the old man displeased them. I understand that all the judges rose to their feet before such a great poet and, amid marvelous praise, bore him on their shoulders because of the ingenuity of the plot and tragic quality of the language. I also understand that the all judges were not far from condemning the prosecutor of senility.
177. [Lucian] *Macrobius* 24 (T 84)

"Oútoς ὑπὸ Ἰοφῶντος τοῦ υἱές ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ βίου παρανοίας κρινόμενος ἀνέγγιν τοῖς δικασταῖς Οἰδίπουν τὸν ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ, ἐπιδεικνύμενος διὰ τοῦ δράματος ὡς τὸν νοῦν ἕγινε, ὡς τοὺς δικαστὰς τὸν μὲν ὑπερθαυμάσαι, καταψηφίσασθαι δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ μανιὰν.

Sophocles, brought to trial on a charge of senility by his son Iophon at the end of his life, read his *Oedipus at Colonus* to the judges, showing them through the drama that he was of healthy mind, so that the judges were very impressed and convicted his son of madness.

178. Libanius *Oration* 4.3 (T 84a)

"Τί δεῖ . . . νομίζειν τὸ γῆρας ἐν αὑτῷ καὶ τὸ ληρεῖν κομίζειν; ἢ σὺ τολμήσεις εἰπεῖν ὡς ἐλήρης μὲν Πλάτων, ἐλήρης δὲ Ἰσοκράτης, ἐλήρης δὲ Σοφοκλῆς;"

Why it is necessary to think that old age in itself implies being foolish? Or will you be so bold as to say that Plato was foolish, that Isocrates was foolish, that Sophocles was foolish?

179. *Life of Sophocles* 13 (T 1)

"Φέρεται δὲ καὶ παρὰ πολλοῖς ἢ πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν Ἰοφῶντα γενομένη αὐτῶ δίκη. ἔχων γὰρ ἐκ μὲν Νικοστράτης Ἰοφῶντα, ἐκ δὲ Θεωρίδος Σικυωνίας Ἀρίστωνα, τὸν ἐκ τούτου γενόμενον παιδα Σοφοκλέα τούνομα πλέον ἐστεργε. καὶ ποτὲ ἐν δράματι εἰσήγαγε *** τὸν Ἰοφῶντα αὐτῷ φθονοῦντα καὶ πρὸς τοὺς φράτορας ἐγκαλοῦντα τῷ πατρὶ ὡς ὑπὸ γῆρως"
The law-suit against his son Iophon is reported by many. Sophocles had a son, Iophon, by Nikostrate, and another, Ariston, by Theoris of Sikyon. Sophocles loved the son of Ariston, also called Sophocles, more. At one point Sophocles portrayed Iophon in a play as envying him and bringing an action against him before the phratry brothers for mental incompetence due to old age. The brothers fined Iophon. Satyros [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 3.162] says that Sophocles said, “If I am Sophocles, I am not incompetent. If I am incompetent, I am not Sophocles,” and then he read from the Oedipus.

COMMENTARY

Iophon’s lawsuit against his elderly father for incompetence surely derives from the conflict between Oedipus and his sons in the Oedipus at Colonus. Nor is credible that Sophocles depicted Iophon in a tragedy. The source of the lawsuit, Satyros, was given to finding biography in the fantasies of comedians. Sophocles’ pronouncement to his phratry brothers, “If I am Sophocles, I am not incompetent. If I am incompetent, I am not Sophocles,” “has the ring of the Old Comedy.” 78 The whole cast of Sophocles’ family, real and fictitious, apparently appeared in the farce that is modeled after familial disputes over property.

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78 Jebb xli.
C. Grandson, Sophocles (180–184)

180. Life of Sophocles 13 (T 1)

Sophocles had a son, Iophon, by Nikostrate, and another, Ariston, by Theoris of Sikyon. Sophocles loved the son of Ariston, also called Sophocles, more.

181. Heschyius Synagoge θ 446 (T 76)

Theoris: proper noun. Also a viewing. A woman, Sikyonian by birth, Sophocles’ lover.

182. Athenaeus Deipnosophists 13.592 Α (T 77)

Sophokleis d’ ο τραγῳδιοποιός ήδη γέρων ὑπὲρ Θεωρίδος τῆς ἑταίρας. Ἰκετεύων οὖν τὴν Ἀφροδίτην φησίν· κλυθί μεν εὐχαριστεῖν, δὸ δὲ γυναῖκα τήνδε νέων μὲν ἁπαντᾷφαι φιλότητα καὶ εὐνήν, ἡ δ’ ἐπιπερπετεύον πολιορκοτάφοις γέροντοι, ὄν ἢσχὺς μὲν ἀπήμβλυνται, θυμός δὲ μενοινά. ταῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐκ τῶν εἰς Ὀμήρου ἀναφερομένων. τῆς δὲ Θεωρίδος μνημονεῦζε λέγων ἐν τινι στασίμῳ οὕτως: "φίλη γάρ
Sophocles, the writer of tragedies, in his old age loved Theoris the hetaira. He said the following by way of entreating Aphrodite:

Hear me, Nurturer of Youths, as I pray, and grant that this woman spurn the love and bed of young men. Let her commit herself to old men with gray temples whose vigor has dulled but whose desire craves.

This comes from verses attributed to Homer ([Herodotus] Vita Homeri 30). Sophocles recalls Theoris in a stasimon in this way: “Truly Theoris is beloved” [765 Radt; 698 Nauk]. At the setting of his life, as Hugesandros says [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 4 418 f 27], he loved Archippe, the hetaira, and left her as an heir to his estate. When Archippe was with Sophocles in his old age, her former lover Smikrines was asked by somebody what Archippe was doing. He wittily replied, “She sits, like the owls, on his tomb.”

183. Argumentum II to Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus

Τὸν ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ Οἰδίπουν ἐπὶ τετελευτηκότι τῷ πάππῳ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ υἱὸς ὡν Αρίστωνος, ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Μίκωνος, ως ἐστιν τέταρος απὸ Καλλίου.
Sophocles, grandson of Sophocles and son of Ariston, produced the *Oedipus at Colonus* after the death of his grandfather in the archonship of Mikon, who is the fourth from Kallias.

184. *The Suda* sigma 817

Sophocles, Athenian, tragedian and lyric poet, descendant of the old [Sophocles]. He was born after the Pleiades, that is, after the 7 tragedians who were called Pleias.79 His plays are fifteen in number.

COMMENTARY

What is known of this Sophocles comes from the article in *The Suda* and the Argumentum of the *Oedipus at Colonus*.

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79 Pleias is the name used for the seven best Alexandrine poets.
A. Age at Death. Year of Death (185–193)

185. Marmor Parium, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 239 A 64 (T 3)

Ἀφ’ οὗ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ ποιητής βιώσας ἔτη ΓΔΔΔII ἐτελεύτησεν καὶ Κῦρος ἀνέβη, [ἔτη ΗΔΔΔIII, ἀρχ|οντος Αθήνης Καλλίου τοῦ †πρωτέρου.

From when Sophocles the poet, who had lived 92 years, died, and Cyrus went up, [143 years, the arch]on at Athens being Kallias the †first† [406/405].

186. Diodorus Siculus Library 13.103.4 (T 85)

Περὶ δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν χρόνων ἐτελεύτησε Σοφοκλῆς ὁ Σοφίλου, ποιητής τραγῳδιών, ἔτη βιώσας ἐνενήκοντα, νίκας δ’ ἐχων ὀκτωκαίδεκα.

About the same time [406/405], Sophocles, son of Sophilos, composer of tragedies, died. He lived ninety years and had eighteen victories.

187. Argumentum II to Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus (T 41)

Τὸν ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ Οἰδίπουν ἐπὶ τετελευτηκότι τῷ πάππῳ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ ύιὸς ἐδίδαξεν, ύιὸς ὄν Αρίστωνος, ἐπὶ ἀρχοντος
Sophocles, grandson of Sophocles and son of Ariston, produced the *Oedipus at Colonus* after the death of his grandfather in the archonship of Mikon [402/401]. Mikon was the fourth archon from Kallias [406/405] in whose archonship the majority say that Sophocles died. This [date] is clear from the fact that Aristophanes in the *Frogs* in the archonship of Kallias leads the tragedians up to the earth, and Phrynichus (6) in the *Muses* which he brought on stage at the same time as the *Frogs* says the following:

Happy Sophocles, who lived a long time
and died a fortunate and clever man,
wrote many fine tragedies
and ended well without suffering any evil.

188. Scholiast to Aristophanes *Peace* 698 (T 4)

After <this>, he lived 17 years. In this case, how is he an old man?
They say that when Sophocles heard that Euripides had died, he entered the Proagon wearing the dark cloak of mourning and led in his chorus and actors without garlands, and the people burst into tears.

You don’t intend to bring Sophocles if you must bring someone up from there? He ranks before Euripides.

In the consulship of C. Claudius Centho, son of Appius Caecus, and M. Sempronius Tuditanus [240 B.C.E.], the poet L. Livius was the first of all to begin to produce plays at Rome, slightly more than one hundred-sixty years after the death of Sophocles and Euripides.
192. Eusebius *Chronicles* Ol. 93.1 (408 B.C.E.) (T. 6a)

Euripides aput Archelaum et Sofocles Athenis moritur.

Euripides died at Archelaos’ court, and Sophocles, at Athens.

193. [Lucian] *Macrobius* 24 (T 90)

Σοφικλῆς ὁ τραγῳδοποιὸς . . . πέντε καὶ ἑνενήκοντα ζήσας ἕτη.

Sophocles, the writer of tragedies, . . . lived ninety-five years.

COMMENTARY

Athenians celebrated the City Dionysia in Elaphebolion (February/March), and the Lenaia during Gamelion (January/February). The year ended with Skirophorion (May/June). Thus the City Dionysia of 406 was followed ten months later by the Lenaia of 405. Sophocles was alive in Elaphebolion of 406 when he took the occasion of the Proagon to mourn publicly Euripides who had died recently. He died before Aristophanes presented the *Frogs*, and Phrynichus the *Muses*, at the Lenaia of 405.

Sophocles died at ninety years and in his ninety-first year during the archonship of Kallias (406/405 B.C.E.).

The Scholiast to Aristophanes’ *Peace*, presented at the City Dionysia of 421, dates his death to 404. If reckoned inclusively (17 for 16 years), his dating gives 405. The Scholiast is commenting on *Peace* 698 where Sophocles is said to be old (16).

Phrynichos’ *Muses* was presented at the time as Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and apparently included a contest between tragedians, to
judge from a fragment preserved by Harpocration (Lexicon of the Ten Orators 165.6):

Here, take this pebble. The voting urn is there for you, the latter one to acquit, the former to condemn.

In most instances, the biographical statements of the comic poets cannot be considered reliable. The poets followed Thalia, their Muse, in other directions than that chosen by later writers for Kleio. But Aristophanes and Phrynichos addressed an audience who knew Sophocles, if only by reputation and were aware that he had died not long ago. What they say is accordingly reliable to the fact of Sophocles’ death and, at the least, to his reputation and the news of the day.

B. Manner of Death (194 –199)

194. [Sotades] fr. 15.12–16 in Stobaeus 4.34.8 (T 89)

Πουλύποδα φαγὼν ὁ Διογένης ὠμον τέθνηκεν.  
Αἰσχύλῳ γράφοντι <τί> ἐπιπέπτωκε χελώνη.  
Σοφοκλῆς ῥᾶγα φαγὼν σταφυλῆς πνιγεὶς τέθνηκε.  
κύνες οἱ κατὰ Θρᾴκην Εὐριπίδην ἔτρωγον.  
tὸν θεῖον Ὀμηρον λιμός κατεδαπάνησεν.

Diogenes ate a raw squid and died.  
A tortoise fell on Aeschylus while he was writing something.  
Sophocles ate a grape and choked and died.  
Dogs in Thrace mangled Euripides.  
Hunger wasted away the divine Homer.
195. Life of Sophocles 14 (T 1)

Τελευτήσαι δὲ αὐτὸν Ἰστρος καὶ Νεάνθης φασὶ τούτον τὸν τρόπον· Καλλιππίδην ὑποκριτὴν ἀπὸ ἐργασίας ἐξ Ὀποῦντος ἥκοντα περὶ τοὺς Χόας πέμψει αὐτῷ σταφυλίν, τὸν δὲ Σοφοκλέα λαβόντα ὅμην εἰς τὸ στόμα ἐπὶ Ὀμφακίζουσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἄγαν γῆρως ἀποπνιγέντα τελευτῆσαι. Σάτυρος δὲ φησὶ τὴν Ἀντιγόνην ἀναγινώσκοντα καὶ ἐμπεσόντα περὶ τὰ τέλη νοήματι μακρῷ καὶ μέσῃ ἡ ὑποστηγμὴν πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν μὴ ἔχοντι, ἄγαν ἐπιτείναντα τὴν φωνὴν σὺν τῇ φωνῇ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀφεῖναι. οἱ δὲ ὅτι μετὰ τὴν τοῦ δράματος ἀνάγνωσιν, ὅτε νικῶν ἐκηρύχθη, χαρᾷ νικηθεὶς ἐξέλιπε.

Istros [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 334 F 37] and Neanthes [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 84 F 18] say that Sophocles died in this way: Kallippides, an actor, coming from a workshop in Opos around the time of the Festival of the Choes, sent him a cluster of grapes. Sophocles put an unripe grape in his mouth and, because of his advanced age, he choked and died. Satyros [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 3.162] says that he was reading Antigone and coming upon a long passage near the end that did not have a break or a comma to make a pause, he stretched out word after word and lost his life. Others say that after a reading of the play, when he was announced the victor, he departed, overcome with joy.

196. [Lucian] Macrobius 24 (T 90)

Sophoklēς ὁ τραγῳδοτικός ὅμην σταφυλίς καταπιὼν ἀπεπνίγη. . . .

Sophocles the tragedian ate a grape and choked to death. . . .
197. Diodorus Siculus *Library* 13.103.4 (T 85)

They say that the man entered his last tragedy and, when he won, collapsed from unsurmountable joy and died because of it. Apollodorus [*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 244 F 35] . . . says that Euripides also died about this same year.

198. Pliny *Natural History* 7.180 (T 87)

Sophocles and Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, died from joy, each on receiving the news of a victory in tragedy.

199. Valerius Maximus *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri* 9.12. ext. 5 (T 86)

When Sophocles by now of advanced old age had entered a tragedy in the contest, he was troubled for a long time over the doubtful outcome of the voting. Nevertheless, he was declared victor by one vote and received joy as the cause of his death.
COMMENTARY

Lefkowitz characterizes the three ways of Sophocles’ death: “Like Aeschylus’ death, each of these deaths is particularly appropriate for a poet, but at the same time degrading.”80 The ways of Sophocles’ death exceed humiliation: they seek to deny his greatness and his connection with Dionysus, the god of his craft, and with his craft. Sophocles chokes on a grape. An olive pit would have been more credible, but the grape is sacred to Dionysus. Similarly, Aeschylus dies when his head is crushed by a falling tortoise shell, the shell used to make the lyre. Both deaths imply the god’s hostility toward the poet. Sophocles’ death from the loss of breath from reading his victorious Antigone or from joy over it success attributes his demise to his craft, the very thing that made him Sophocles. These stories parallel those of athletes who, after remarkable careers in the period games, commit transgressions. Kleomedes of Astypalaia slays his opponent in a boxing match, goes mad, and kills sixty boys in their school in his home town. Euthykles of Locri, a pentathlete, is executed wrongly for betraying an embassy for his polis. Oibotas of Dyme, a stadion runner, curses his fellow Achaeans to perpetual defeat at Olympia for not rewarding his victory in the games there. Theagenes of Thasos, winner of over a thousand victories in boxing, pankration, and the long race (dolichos), cheated in a contest, was fined, and his image cast into the sea after it killed a man.81 The poets, not the men of violence that are athletes, suffer as deeply by having their god and their craft turn against them as the athlete’s strength and prowess turn against him. Lefkowitz explains: “The explanation lies once again in the Greeks’ ambivalent attitude toward extraordinary achievement. A great man, envied, hated and feared

80 Lefkowitz 1981.86.

81 Fontenrose 73–76.
at the height of his power, becomes loved and respected once he has fallen. The same thinking, the Greek notion of a hero, unites both figures: outstanding good linked to outstanding evil that approaches the divine and demands to be worshiped. Sophocles received the honors of a hero after his death (59) presumably at his grave marked off as a precinct.

C. Funeral and Grave (200–206)

200. Pliny Natural History 7.109 (T 92)

Sophoclem tragici cothurni principem defunctum sepelire Liber pater iussit obsidentibus moenia Lacedaemoniis, Lysandro eorum rege in quiete saepius admonito ut pateretur humari delicias suas. Requisivit rex, qui supremum diem Athenis obissent, nec difficiulter ex his quem deus significasset intellexit pacemque funeri dedit.

Liber ordered the Lacedaemonians who were besieging the walls of Athens to bury Sophocles, the deceased master of tragedy. Their king Lysander was advised in his sleep to allow Liber’s favorite to be buried. The king inquired who had encountered his last day at Athens. Lysander had no difficulty in learning from his informants whom the god meant. Lysander and gave leave for the funeral.

82 Lefkowitz 1981.97.
Sophocles was placed in the paternal tomb which lies along the road to Dekeleia eleven stades from the city wall. Some say that they put a Siren on his tomb, others, a bronze Keledon. Since the Lacedaemonians were fortifying the district with a wall directed against the Athenians, Dionysus appeared to Lysander in a dream and ordered him to allow the man to be placed in the tomb. Lysander paid no attention to the dream. Dionysus appeared to him a second time and issued the same order. Lysander inquired from runaways who it was who died, and when he learned that it was Sophocles, he sent a herald and gave permission for the burying of the man.


Δέγεται δὲ Σοφοκλέους τελευτήσαντος ἐσβάλειν ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν Λακεδαιμονίος καὶ σφῶν τὸν ἤγουμενον ἰδεῖν ἐπιστάντα τινὰς τοὺς Βοιανοὺς κελεύειν τιμαίς, ὡςκα καθεστήσασιν ἐπὶ τοῖς τεθνεώσι, τὴν Σειρῆνα τὴν νέαν τιμᾷν καὶ ὁ τὸ ὄναρ ἔχει Σοφοκλέα καὶ τὴν Σοφοκλέους ποίησιν ἐφαίνετο ἔχειν.
There is a story that after the death of Sophocles the Lacedaemonians invaded Attica. Their leader saw Dionysus standing before him and telling him to honor the new Siren with those rites that were customary over the dead. The dream seemed to refer to Sophocles and to Sophocles’ poetry. Thus even now men still attribute whatever is alluring in poetry and prose to a Siren.

When Lysander the Lacedaemonian was laying siege to Athens, the body of the tragic poet Sophocles was lying unburied. Liber repeatedly advised the leader in his sleep to permit his favorite to be buried. The god did not stop until Lysander, finding out who had encountered his day and realizing what the deity demanded, allowed a truce for the war for such time as rites suitable for a funeral to be conducted.
κρύπτω τῶδε τάφῳ Σοφοκλῆ πρωτεῖα λαβόντα
tῇ τραγικῇ τέχνῃ, σχῆμα τὸ σεμνότατον.

Lobon says that the following is written on the tomb:

I am concealing by this tomb Sophocles who took first place in the tragic arts, a most august figure.

COMMENTARY

The Athenian fleet was finally defeated at Aegisopotami in September 405 B.C.E. by the Lacedaemonian Lysander. Immediately upon the arrival to Lacedaemon of the news of his victory, Pausanias, king of the Lacedaemonians, invaded Attica with an army and camped in the Academy. Within the month, Lysander dropped anchor in the Piraeus and shut off the harbor to shipping. Accordingly, Athens was blockaded by land and sea by the end of September. It fell seven months later in April (Xenophon Hellenica 2.1.1–29; 2.5–9).

When the siege was erected, Sophocles had been dead at least eight months. He died sometime between March of 406 and January of 405. These stories of Sophocles’ funeral illustrate the care of the gods, especially the god of tragedy, for Sophocles even in death.

The specificity of the location of Sophocles’ tomb, eleven stades from the city, and its decorations, a Siren or bronze Keledon, a mythical songstress, leads Lefkowitz to the suggestion that “in late antiquity a tomb was identified as Sophocles’ and pointed out to tourists.”83

83 Lefkowitz 1981.86.
205. Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri* 8.7 ext. 12 (T 168)

Sophocles quoque gloriosum cum rerum natura certamen habuit, tam benigne mirifica ille opera sua exhibendo quam illa operibus eius tempora liberaliter sumministrando: prope enim centesimum annum attigit, sub ipsum transitum ad mortem Oedipode ἐπὶ Κολωνῶν scripto, qua sola fabula omnium eiusdem studi poetarum praeripere gloriam potuit. idque ignotum esse posteris filius Sophoclis Iophon noluit, sepulcro patris quae retuli insculpendo.

Sophocles also waged a glorious contest with the Nature of things in that he produced generously his magnificent works and Nature liberally furnished those times for his works: for he nearly attained his hundredth year, when at the very verge of the transition to death, he wrote his *Oedipus at Colonus*, a play which by itself snatched the glory away from all those poets who practiced his craft. His son, Iophon, did not wish for this to go unknown and engraved on his father’s tomb what I have reported.

206. [Simonides] *Palatine Anthology* 7.20 (T 88)

Εσβέσθης, γηραιὲ Σοφόκλεε, ἀνθὸς ἀοιδῶν,
οἰνωπὸν Βάκχου βότρυν ἔρεπτόμενος.

Revered were you, aged Sophocles, flower of poets,
and garlanded with the dark cluster of Bacchus.

COMMENTARY

Fairweather observes concerning the biographer’s practices:
The epitaph is the type of inscription most frequently found in the Lives. To quote an epitaph after one’s account of a man’s death was a neat way of rounding off a biography and this became standard practice among Greek biographers.84

Pseudo-Plutarch’s Lycurgus offers an egregious example of the biographer’s ingenuity that has the Athenian Lycurgus descended from Erechtheus, son of Gaea and Poseidon (Moralia 843 E). We cannot expect historicity in the epitaphs given in the sources. Lobon of Argos (3rd B.C.E.?) wrote a book On Poets in which he attributed his verses to literary figures. Most likely he is the author of this epitaph as is Pseudo-Simonides of the epitaph in the Palatine Anthology. Valerius Maximus cites Iophon as the author of an epitaph he neglects to quote.

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84 Fairweather 254.
207. Life of Sophocles 19 (T 1)

Συνηγωνίσατο δὲ καὶ Αἰσχύλῳ καὶ Εὐριπίδῃ καὶ Χοιρίλῳ καὶ Ἀριστίᾳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς καὶ Ιοφώντι τῷ νίῳ.

He competed against Aeschylus, Euripides, Choirilos, Aristias, and many others, including his son Iophon.

208. Dio Chrysostom The Fifty-Second Discourse 3 (T 50)

Σοφοκλέους μὲν πρὸς Αἰσχύλον νέου πρὸς γέροντα καὶ πρὸς Εὐριπίδην πρεσβυτέρου πρὸς νεώτερον ἀγωνιζομένου μετέσχον τινές; Εὐριπίδης δ’ ἀπελείφθη κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν Αἰσχύλου.

Some shared the experience of Sophocles’ competition against Aeschylus, a young man against an old man, and his competition against Euripides as an older man against a young man. Euripides was completely removed from the life span of Aeschylus.

COMMENTARY

Euripides first received a chorus in 455 B.C.E., but first prize at the City Dionysia eluded him until 441 (92). He surely competed against Sophocles on numerous occasions. The first that is known came in 438 when he placed second behind Sophocles with Kressai, Alcmaion in Psophis, Telephos, and Alcestis (95). In 431, he
won third prize with Medea, Philoctees, Dictys, and Theristai behind Aeschylus’ nephew Euphorion, first, and Sophocles, second (96).

209. Life of Euripides 44–47 (T 54)

Λέγουσι δὲ καὶ Σοφοκλέα ἀκούσαντα ὅτι ἐτελεύτησεν, αὐτὸν μὲν ἰματίῳ φαίῳ προελθεῖν, τὸν δὲ χορὸν καὶ τοὺς ὑποκριτὰς ἀστεφανώτους εἰσαγαγεῖν ἐν τῷ προαγώνι, καὶ δακρύσαι τὸν δήμον.

They say that when Sophocles heard that Euripides had died, he entered the Proagon wearing the dark cloak of mourning and led in his chorus and actors without garlands, and the people burst into tears.

210. Vatician Gnomology 517 (T 57)

Sophocles, the poet of tragedies, on hearing that Euripides had died in Macedonia, said, “The whetstone of my poems has perished.”

COMMENTARY

The public mourning by Sophocles and the people for Euripides at the Proagon of 406 B.C.E. is commonly accepted as historical. Still, it could be a biographer’s invention meant to confer a heroic death upon Euripides. Sophocles’ description of Euripides as his
“whetstone” may also hold some truth. Sophocles could have used Euripides as an inspiration to sharpen his own composition.

211. Scholiast Euripides *Phoenician Women* 1 (T 56)

Παλαιὰ τις φέρεται δόξα ως Σοφοκλῆς μὲν ἐπιτιμήσειεν Εὐριπίδη ὅτι μὴ προέταξε τούτοις τοὺς δύο στίχους, ὁ δὲ Εὐριπίδης ὅτι μὴ προέταξεν ἐν Ἡλέκτρᾳ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς τὸ “ὡ τοῦ στρατηγήσαντος ἐν Τροίᾳ ποτέ.”

An ancient report has it that Sophocles criticized Euripides, saying that he surely did not put those two verses at the beginning of his play [*Phoenician Women*]. Euripides replied that Sophocles surely did not put “Of him who once was general in Troy” at the beginning of his *Electra*.

COMMENTARY

The exchange over first lines begins with Sophocles’ observation. He seems to have been aware and interested in the technical aspects of his craft and eager to express his views. Some scholars have attributed this type of anecdote to Sophocles’ work *On the Chorus* (Note Nine), others to comments voiced to friends that were somehow recorded.

212. Stobaeus *Forilegium* 2.30.10 (T 59)

Εὐριπίδης ὁ ποιητής, ἐπει ὁψυνούντος αὐτοῦ ἐπελάβετο τις λέγον ὅτι Σοφοκλῆς τούτο διὰ δούλου ποιεῖ, “τοιγαροῦν” <ἔφη> “Σοφοκλῆς ἐσθείη ὄψαν ὅποιον τῷ οἰκέτῃ αὐτοῦ ἀρέσκει, ἐγὼ δ’ ὅποιον ἢν ἔμοι.”
When someone accosted the poet Euripides who was buying fish and remarked that Sophocles had a slave for that task, Euripides retorted, “Yes, and so he eats the fish that satisfies his servant, and I eat whatever satisfies me.”

**COMMENTARY**

This anecdote comments upon the ways that the tragedians were imagined to make their dramas. A slave buys Sophocles’ fish. A slave depends upon his master’s favor for his survival and comfort and is eager to please him. Sophocles, it follows, gives his audience what he thinks his audience wants and delights them with fare that does not challenge their assumptions. As Sophocles’ slave is unlikely to bring home strange fish, Sophocles does not serve up strange characters, that is, he shows his audience men as they ought to be without the warts of reality (108–109). That Euripides, on the other hand, buys his own fish implies that he is too poor or feckless to manage a proper household and must go to market himself. This is the man of the cave who composes facing the sea to avoid the demos and gives them what he sees fit, whatever the consequences.

213. [Euripides] *Epistle* 5.5 (T 60)

Καὶ μὴν εὐμετάβολον γέ με οὔτε εἰς τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα οὔτε εἰς ύμᾶς τοὺς φίλους καὶ οὕς ἦσσον εἰς τοὺς ἐχθροὺς σκοπῶν εἶποι τὶς ἂν, οἷς ἄπασιν ἐκ νέου μέχρι τοῦ νῦν τοῖς αὐτοῖς κέχρημαι πλὴν ἕναν ἀνδρός, Ἡσσοκλέους· πρὸς γὰρ δὴ τούτον μόνον ἱσσοὶ με τάχα σου όμοίως άεί τὴν γνώμην ἔχοντα. ὃν ἐγὼ ἐμίσησα μὲν οὐδέποτε, ἐθαύμασα δὲ άεί, ἐστερέξα δὲ σου όμοίως άει, ἄλλα φιλοτιμότερον μὲν τινα εἶναι ποτε δόξας ύπειδον, βουλθέντα δὲ διαλύσασθαι τὰ νείκη προθυμότατα ύπεδεξάμεν. καὶ ἄλληλους μὲν, ἐξ ᾧ οὗ συνέβη, στέργομεν τε
καὶ στέρξομεν, τοὺς δ’ ἐμβάλλοντας ἠμῶν πολλάκις τὰς ὑπονοίας, ἵνα ἐκ τοῦ ἡμῶν ἀπεχθάνεσθαι τὸν ἐτερὸν θεραπεύοντες αὐτοὶ πλεῖον ἔχωσι, διαβεβλήμεθα.

Someone on observing me, may say that I am unchanging regarding my habits and toward you, my friends, and no less toward by enemies, everyone with whom I have had relations from my youth until the present, with the exception of one man, Sophocles. Regarding him alone, they know that I am not always of the same opinion. I have never hated him. While I have always admired him. I have not always been equally fond of him. Yet, I would sooner suspect anyone of being ambitious for glory. I accepted most eagerly when he wanted to reconcile our differences. From the time that happened, we have been and will remain fond of one another. We discredit those who cast suspicions on us in order that from our personal enmity, they themselves may gain something by paying court to one or the other of us.
Note Thirteen
Number of Tragedies and Victories
(214–217)

214. Life of Sophocles 18 (T 1)

Ἐχει δὲ δράματα, ὡς φησιν Ἀριστοφάνης, φα', τούτων δὲ νενόθευται ἰζ'.

He has, as Aristophanes says, 130 plays of which 17 are spurious.

COMMENTARY

According to The Suda (sigma 815), Sophocles' oeuvre consists of 123 plays, while the Life, citing the authority of Aristophanes of Byzantium, gives the number as 130, of which seventeen are spurious. By emending ριγ' (123) to ριγ' (117) or, the paleographically easier change ἰζ' (17) to τζ' (7), the Life can be made to agree with The Suda.

215. Life of Sophocles 8 (T 1)

Νίκας δὲ ἔλαβε κ', ὡς φησι Καρύστιος, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ δευτερεία, τρίτα δὲ οὐδέποτε.

He won 20 victories, as Karystios says [Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 4.359], and frequently took second place but never third.
210 Electronic Antiquity 9.1

216. Diodorus Siculus *Library* 13.103.4 (T 85)

Περὶ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον ἐτελεύτησε Σοφοκλῆς . . . νίκας δὲ ἔχων ὀκτωκαίδεκα

About this same time [406/405 B.C.E.], Sophocles died . . . having eighteen victories.

217. Inscriptiones Graecae II² 2325

Σοφοκλῆς ΔΓΙΠ

[Soph]ocles 18.⁸⁵

COMMENTARY

*The Suda* sets the number of Sophocles’ victories at 24, and the *Life* at 20. Diodorus and the inscription listing victors at the City Dionysia and Lenaia agree at 18. The difference between the totals has been explained by privileging the number given by the inscription and assuming, despite the unimportance of the Lenaia for the performance of tragedy, that the discrepancies are victories gained at the Lenaia.

There are titles for more than 123 plays, the number Aristophanes pronounced as genuine. Two titles for the same work swell the number, *Plynthriai* rather than *Nausikaa* and *Mykenaiiai* instead of *Atreus* may be the actual title, if Sophocles followed Aeschylean practice in naming dramas after the chorus. Grammarians became another source of double-titles by referring to a play by the name of a character to distinguish like-titled works by different

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⁸⁵ Pickard-Cambridge 112.
Tyrrell *The Suda’s Life of Sophocles* 211

dramatists. Fragments range from the extensive remains of the *Ichneutai* (Trackers), a satyr play from Sophocles’ early career, to a dozen to twenty lines, individual lines, phrases, and single words. The myth treated in the lost plays can usually be identified but not how Sophocles treated it in his plot.

Albrecht von Blumenthal lists 123 titles of lost plays, A. C. Pearson, 125, and William Nickerson Bates, 109. The following outline condenses that of Pearson who organized the titles of Sophocles’ plays according to the sequence of myths developed in the fifth century. Pearson points out that of the 112 plays included in the outline forty-three or about thirty-eight percent belong to the Trojan cycle, a percentage that underlines Sophocles’ penchant for finding subjects in Homer (105).

I Theogony or Birth of the Gods
   c. *Triptolemos*; spreading knowledge of grain throughout the world.
   d. *Thamyris*; plot unknown.
   e. *Ixion*; plot unknown.

II Sons of Deucalion
   a. *Oineus*; uncertain whether Sophocles wrote a play by this name.
   b. *Meleager*; plot unknown.

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86 Pearson xviii–xxi.


88 Pearson 1. xxviii–xxxii.
c. Hipponoos: king of Olenus attempts to have his pregnant daughter Periboea slain.
d. Sisyphos, plot uncertain.
e. Athamas: two plays of the same name; plots unknown.
f. Phrixos: plot unknown.
g. Salmoneus: plot unknown.
h. Eumelos: plot unknown.
i. Lemniai: women of Lemnos murder Argonauts.
j. Amykos (satyr play): king of Bebrycians in Bithynia defeated in boxing match by Polydeuces during the Argonauts’ quest.
k. Phineus: two plays; perhaps follow the outline at Antigone 966–987.
l. Tympanistai (Tambourine Players): plot unknown; perhaps part of Phineus myth.
o. Skythai: expedition of the Argonauts; slaying of Aspertos, Medea’s brother.

III Sons of Inachos

a. Inachos: plot unknown; may have concerned Io.
b. Akrisios: Akrisios’ death at hands of grandson Perseus
c. Danae: Danae’s casting of Perseus into the sea.
d. Andromeda: plot unknown.
e. Larisaioi: death of Akrisios at the hands of Perseus during athletic games.

IV Herakles, son of Amphitryon, son of Perseus

a. Amphitryon: plot unknown.
b. *Herakleīsdos* (satyr play).
c. *Heraklēs epi Tainarōi* (*Herakles at Tainarum*)
   (satyr play)
d. *Trachiniai* (*Trachinian Women*), extant.

V. Europa, daughter of Agenor and mother of Minos
   b. *Kamikoi* (*Men of Kamicus*): plot unknown; death of Minos at Camicus in Sicily on his search for Daedalus.
   c. *Minos*, probably an alternative title for *Kamikoi*.
   d. *Polyidus* or *Manteis* (*Prophets*): Polyidus restores Minos’ son Glaucus to life and saves his own.

VI. Cadmus, brother of Europa, founder of Thebes and its dynasty
   b. *Niobe*
   c. *Oedipus Tyrannus*, extant.
   d. *Oedipus at Colonus*, extant.
   e. *Amphiaraos*: plot unknown.
   f. *Antigone*, extant.
   g. *Epigenoi* or *Eriphyle*: second expedition against Thebes.
   h. *Oicles*: plot unknown. Oicles, father of Amphiaras and participant in Herakles’ expedition against Troy where he was killed.
   i. *Alcmeon*: plot unknown.

V. Arcadian Myths
   a. *Aleadai*: Telephus’ slaying of his mother Auge’s brothers; first play in a *Telephaia* trilogy.
b. Telephos, satyr play in a Telepeia trilogy.

VI. Attic Myths
   a. Tereus: plot unknown.
   b. Prokris: plot unknown.
   c. Kreusa: daughter of Erechtheus and wife of Xuthus; plot probably similar to that of Euripides’ Ion.
   d. Aigeus: plot probably similar to Euripides’ Aegeus; arrival of Theseus to Athens, recognition as Aegeus’ son, thwarting of Medea.
   e. Theseus: plot unknown.
   f. Phaidra: plot probably similar to Euripides’ Hippolytus Crowned.

VII. Myths of Sons of Tantalus
   a. Tantalos: plot unknown.
   b. Oinomaus or Hippodamia: plot unknown.
   c. Atreus: plot unknown; perhaps another title for a Mykenaiai.
   d. Thyestes: three plays by this name plots unknown.

VIII. Trojan Myths
   a. Alexander: plot unknown; perhaps similar to that of Euripides’ Alexander.
   b. Eris (Strife): strife may be that introduced by golden apples at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis.
   d. Momos: plot unknown.
e. Helenês Gamos (Marriage of Helen): plot unknown.
f. Odysseus Mainomenos (Odysseus Madden): plot unknown; Odysseus' feigning of madness to avoid the expedition to Troy.
g. Achaiôn Syllagos (Muster of Achaeans): plot unknown; story that of Telephus and Achilles.
h. Iphigenia: plot unknown; bringing of Iphigenia to Achilles.
i. Syndeipnoi (Banqueters): feast of chieftains before Troy when Philoctetes is bitten by serpent.
j. Poimenes (Shepherds): plot unknown; a shepherd first sees Greeks arrive at Troy.

IX. Iliou Persis (Sacking of Troy)
a. Laocoon: plot unknown.
b. Sinon: plot unknown.
c. Priamos: plot unknown.
d. Antênoridai: plot unknown; fate of Antenor and his sons during and after the sacking of Troy; leopard skin on Antenor's house as sign that it was to be spared (Strabo Geography 13.1.53).
e. Locrian Ajax: ploy unknown; son of Oïleus.
f. Aichmalôtides (Captives): plot unknown.
g. Aegisthos: title based on two doubtful fragments.
h. Electra, extant.
i. Aletes: son of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.
j. Erigone: plot unknown; daughter of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.
k. Chryses: plot unknown; son of Chryseis and Agamemnon.
l. Hermione: plot unknown; daughter of Helen and Menelaus.
m. Tyndareus: plot unknown.
o. Teucer: plot unknown; return home to Telamon’s anger over Ajax’s absence; banishment of Teucer.
p. Eurysaces: plot unknown; son of Telamonic Ajax.
q. Odysseia: a trilogy to which belong Nausikaa and Phaeaces (Phaeacians).
r. Telegonia: a trilogy to which belong Euryalos and Odysseus Akanthoplêx (Odysseus Stung by a Fish Bone); events leading to Odysseus’ death.
Sophocles was an Athenian, son of Soophilos who was not, as Aristoxenos says, a carpenter or bronze smith or, as Ister claims, a manufacturer of knives and swords by trade, but Sophilos owned slaves who were bronze smiths or carpenters. It was not likely that someone born of such a father would be thought worthy of a generalship with Pericles or Thucydides, the first men of the polis. Sophocles would not have been left unscathed by the poets and free of their abuse, [had he been of low birth], seeing how they did not restrain from attacking Themistocles. Ister must not be believed when he says that Sophocles was not an Athenian but a Phliasian. Even supposing that he was originally from Phlius in Argos, it is not possible to find this claim in anyone else except Ister. Sophocles was an Athenian, of the deme Kolonos, distinguished for his life and his accomplishments. He was well educated, raised amid prosperity, and proven in the exercise of his citizenship and embassies.
2. Γεννηθῆναι δὲ αὐτόν φασιν οα΄ Ὀλυμπιαδὶ κατὰ τὸ δεύτερον ἐτος ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Αθήνησι Φιλίππου. ἤν δὲ Αἰσχύλου νεώτερος ἕτεσιν ζ', Ἐυριπίδου δὲ παλαιότερος κδ'.

They say that Sophocles was born in the second year of the seventy-first Olympiad in the archonship of Philippos at Athens. He was seven years younger than Aeschylus and twenty-four years older than Euripides.

3. Διεπονήθη δὲ ἐν παισὶ καὶ περὶ παλαίστραν καὶ μουσικήν, ἐξ ὧν ἀμφοτέρων ἐστεφανώθη, ὡς φησίν Ἰστρος. ἐδιδάχθη δὲ τὴν μουσικὴν παρὰ Λάμπρῳ, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐν Σαλαμίνι ναυμαχίαν Ἀθηναίων περὶ τρόπαιον ὄντων μετὰ λύρας γυμνὸς ἀληλιμμένος τοῖς παιανίζουσι τῶν ἐπινικίων ἔξηρχε.

Sophocles applied himself among the boys in the palaestra and in the study of music and, according to Ister, received crowns in both. He was educated in music by Lampros. After the naval battle at Salamis, while the Athenians were at the victory monument, he, naked and anointed with oil, led the victory songs for those singing the paean, while accompanying himself on the lyre.

4. Παρ’ Αἰσχύλῳ δὲ τὴν τραγῳδίαν ἐμάθε. καὶ πολλὰ ἐκαινούργησεν ἐν τοῖς ἁγώνισι, πρώτον μὲν καταλύσας τὴν ὑπόκρισιν τοῦ ποιητοῦ διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν μικροφωνίαν (πάλαι γὰρ καὶ ὁ ποιητής ὑπεκρίνετο αὐτός), τοὺς δὲ χορευτὰς ποιήσας ἀντί ἰβ’ ἢς καὶ τὸν τρίτον ὑποκρίτην ἔξευρε.

Sophocles learned tragedy from Aeschylus. He introduced many innovations in the contests. He was first to separate the role of actor from that of poet on account of his weak voice, for in olden
times, the poet himself performed as actor. He increased the number of choristers from twelve to fifteen and invented the third actor.

5. Φασὶ δὲ ὅτι κιθάραν ἀναλαβὼν ἐν μόνῳ τῷ Θαμύριδι ποτε ἐκιθάρισεν, ὁθὲν καὶ ἐν τῇ ποικίλῃ στοᾷ μετὰ κιθάρας αὐτὸν γεγράφθαι.

They say that he took up the cithara and played in Thamyra alone, and that, for this reason, he was depicted among the cithara players on the Stoa Poikile.

6. Σάτυρος δέ φησιν ὅτι καὶ τὴν καμπύλην βακτηρίαν αὐτὸς ἐπενόησε. φησὶ δὲ καὶ Ἰστρὸς τὰς λευκὰς κρητίδας αὐτῶν ἐξευρηκέναι, αἷς ὑποδεσμεύονται οἱ τε ὑποκριταὶ καὶ οἱ χορευταί· καὶ πρὸς τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν γράψαι τὰ δράματα· ταῖς δὲ Μοῦσαις θίασον ἐκ τῶν πεπαιδευμένων συναγαγεῖν.

Satyros says that he designed the crooked staff himself, while according to Ister, he invented white boots that the actors and choristers wore, and that he wrote plays with a view to the nature of the actors and that he organized a thiasos for the Muses from cultivated people.

7. Καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν τοσαύτη τοῦ ἡθους αὐτῶ γέγονε χάρις ὡστε πάντῃ καὶ πρὸς ἀπάντων αὐτὸν στέργεσθαι.

Simply put, there was such charm to his personality that he was beloved everywhere by everyone.
8. Νίκας δὲ ἔλαβε κ', ὡς φησὶ Καρυστίος, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ δευτερεία, τρίτα δὲ οὐδέποτε.

He won twenty victories, as Karystios says, and frequently took second place but never third.

9. Καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ αὐτὸν ξέ ἔτων ὄντα στρατηγὸν εἵλοντο πρὸ τῶν Πελοποννησιακῶν ἐτεσίν ζ', ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ἄναιοὺς πολέμῳ.

Athenians elected him general in his sixty-fifth year (in the seventh year before the Peloponnesian War) in the war against the people of Anaioi.

10. Οὕτω δὲ φιλαθηναίοτατος ἦν ὥστε πολλῶν βασιλέων μεταπεμπομένων αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠθέλησε τὴν πατρίδα καταλιπεῖν.

Sophocles was such a lover of Athens that, although kings summoned him, he was unwilling to leave his fatherland.

11. Ἔσχε δὲ καὶ τὴν τοῦ Ἀλκώνος ἱεροσύνην, δς ἦρως μετὰ Ἀσκεπιάου παρὰ Χείρωνι... ἱδρυνθεὶς ὑπὸ Ἰοφώντος τοῦ υἱοῦ μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν.

Sophocles also held the priesthood of Alkon, a hero who with Asckepias at the side of Cheiron... founded after his father’s death by his son Iophon.

12. Γέγονε δὲ καὶ θεοφιλής ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ὡς οὐκ ἄλλος, καθά φησιν ἱεροσύνην... περὶ τῆς χρυσῆς στεφάνης, ταύτης γὰρ ἔξ ἀκροπόλεως κλαπείσης κατ’ ὄναρ Ἰοφώντος ἐδήλωσε
Sophocles was devout as no other, as Hieronymos says about the episode of the golden crown. After the crown was stolen from the Acropolis, Herakles appeared to Sophocles in a dream, telling him to look for a house on his right as he was walking where the crown had been hidden. He revealed crown to the demos and received a talent, the reward decreed before this event. He took the talent and founded a shrine for Herakles the Revealer.

The law-suit against his son Iophon is reported by many. Sophocles had a son, Iophon, by Nikostrate, and another, Ariston, by Theoris of Sikyon. Sophocles particularly loved the son of Ariston, also called Sophocles. At one point he portrayed Iophon in a play as envying him and bringing an action against him before the phratry brothers for mental incompetence due to old age. Some of the brothers fined Iophon. Satyros says that Sophocles said, “If I am Sophocles, I am not incompetent. If I am
incompetent, I am not Sophocles,” and then he read from the *Oedipus*.

14. Τελευτήσας δὲ αὐτὸν Ἰστρός καὶ Νεάνθης φασὶ τούτον τὸν τρόπον: Καλλιππίδην ὑποκριτήν ἀπὸ ἐργασίας ἐξ Ὀπούντος ἣκοντα περὶ τοὺς Χώας πέμψει αὐτῷ σταφυλὴν, τὸν δὲ Σοφοκλεά λαβὸντα ὅγα εἰς τὸ στόμα ἐτι ὁμφακίζουσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἄγαν γῆρως ἀποπνιγέντα τελευτῆσαι. Σάτυρος δὲ φησι τὴν Ἀντιγόνην ἀναγινώσκοντα καὶ ἐμπεσόντα περὶ τὰ τέλη νοήματι μακρῷ καὶ μέσῃ ἡ ὑποστιγμὴν πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν μὴ ἔχοντι, ἀγαν ἐπιτείναντα τὴν φωνὴν σὺν τῇ φωνῇ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀφεῖναι. οἱ δὲ ὅτι μετὰ τὴν τοῦ δράματος ἀνάγνωσιν, ὅτε νικῶν ἐκηρύχθη, χαρᾷ νικηθεὶς ἐξέλπη.

Istros and Neanthes say that Sophocles died in this way: Kallippides, an actor, coming from a the workshop in Opos around the time of the Festival of the Choes, sent him a cluster of grapes. Sophocles put an unripe grape in his mouth and choked because of old age and died. Satyros says that he was reading *Antigone* and coming upon a long passage near the end that did not have a break or a comma to make a pause, he stretched out word after word and lost his life. Others say that after a reading of the play, when he was announced the victor, he “left,” overcome with joy.

15. Καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πατρῶν τάφων <εἰς τὸν τάφον> ἐτέθη τῶν παρὰ τὴν ἐπὶ Δεκέλειαν ὅθεν κειμένων πρὸ τοῦ τείχους ια’ σταδίων φασὶ δὲ ὅτι καὶ τῷ μνήματι αὐτοῦ Σειρήνα ἐπέστησαν, οἱ δὲ Κηληδόνα χαλκήν. καὶ τούτου τὸν τόπον ἐπιτειχιστῶν Λακεδαιμονίων κατὰ Αθηναίων Διόνυσος κατ’ ὄναρ ἔπιστας Λυσάνδρῳ ἐκέλεσεν ἐπιτρέψαι τεθήναι τὸν ἄνδρα εἰς τὸν τάφον· ως δὲ ἀλλιγώρησεν ὁ Λυσάνδρος, δεύτερον
Sophocles was placed in the paternal tomb which lies along the road to Dekeleia eleven stades from the city wall. Some say that they put a siren on his tomb, others, a bronze Cheledon. Since the Lacedaemonians were fortifying the district with a wall directed against the Athenians, Dionysus appeared to Lysander in a dream and ordered him to allow the man to be placed in the tomb. Lysander paid no attention to the dream. Dionysus appeared to him a second time and issued the same order. Lysander inquired from runaways who it was who died, and when he learned that it was Sophocles, he sent a herald and gave permission for the burying of the man.

Lobon says that the following is written on the tomb:

I am concealing by this tomb Sophocles who took first place in the tragic arts, a most august figure.

Istros says that the Athenians passed a decree to offer sacrifice to Sophocles annually because of his virtue.
18. Ἐχει δὲ δράματα, ὡς φησιν Ἀριστοφάνης, φα’, τούτων δὲ νενόθευται ἢ’. 

He has, as Aristophanes says, 130 plays of which 17 are spurious.

19. Συνηγωνίσατο δὲ καὶ Αἰσχύλῳ καὶ Εὐριπίδῃ καὶ Χοιρίλῳ καὶ Αριστίᾳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς καὶ Ιοφόντι τῷ γίγαρ.

He competed against Aeschylus, Euripides, Choirilos, Aristias, and many others, including his son Iophon.

20. Τὸ πᾶν μὲν οὖν Ὁμηρικῶς ῥόμαζε· τοὺς γὰρ μύθους φέρει κατ’ ἱδρυν τοῦ ποιητοῦ· καὶ τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν δὲ ἐν πολλοῖς δράμασιν ἀπογράφεται. παρετυμολογεῖ δὲ καθ’ Ὅμηρον καὶ τούνομα τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως:

οἱ ὃς δ’ Ὀδυσσεύς εἰμ’ ἐπώνυμος κακῶν·
pολλοὶ γὰρ ἦδυσαντο δυσμένεις ἐμοί.

῾ηθοποιεῖ τε καὶ ποικίλλει καὶ τοῖς ἐπινοήμασι τεχνικῶς χρήται, Ὁμηρικὴν ἐκματτόμενος χάριν. ὅθεν ἔπειν Ἡπακίνον τιναῖς μόνον Σοφοκλέα τυγχάνει Ὁμήρου μαθητήν. καὶ ἄλλοι μὲν πολλοὶ μεμίμηνται τινα τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν ἢ τῶν καθ’ αὐτούς, μόνος δὲ Σοφοκλῆς ἀφ’ ἐκάστου το λαμπρὸν ἀπανθίζει καθ’ ὃ καὶ μέλλει αὐτότι έλέγετο. ἓνεγκε δὲ τὰ μικτά εὐκαιρίαν, γλυκάτητα, τόλμαν, ποικιλίαι.

He generally used the language of Homer and fashioned his plots in the footsteps of that poet. In many of his plays, he drew upon the Odyssey. He gives the etymology of the name Odysseus in the Homeric way:
Rightly for my sufferings am I called Odysseus, for many unfriendly men have caused me pain.

He delineated characters, embellished diction, and skillfully introduced solutions external to the plot, attaining the charm of Homer. From this a certain Ionian said that only Sophocles was Homer’s student. Many others imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but only Sophocles plucked the brilliance from each. For this he was said to be the Bee. He combined various elements, timing, sweetness, daring, and variety.

21. Οἶδε δὲ καὶ χρόνον συμμετρῆσαι καὶ πράγματα ὡστε ἐκ μικροῦ ἡμιστιχίου ἢ λέξεως μιᾶς ὅλον ἡθοποιεῖν πρόσωπον. έστι δὲ τούτο μέγιστον ἐν ποιητικῇ, δηλούν ἡθος ή πάθος.

He knew how to proportion timing and events so that from a small half-line or a single speech, he constructed a whole character. This is the most important aspect of the poet’s art, namely, to reveal character or suffering.

22. Φησὶ δὲ Αριστοφάνης ὅτι “κηρὸς ἐπεκαθέζετο . . .”, ἄλλῃ δὲ “Σοφοκλέους τοῦ μέλιτα τὸ στόμα κεχρισμένου.”

Aristophanes says that “a honey comb sat on him” and “Sophocles was anointed on the mouth with honey.”

23. Φησὶ δὲ Αριστόξενος ως πρῶτος τῶν Ἀθηναίων ποιητῶν τὴν Φρυγίαν μελοποιῶν εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἄσματα παρέλαβε καὶ τοῦ διθυραμβικοῦ τρόπου κατέμιξεν.
Aristophanes says that he was the first of poets from Athens to introduce Phrygian melody into his songs and mix in the dithyrambic style.
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