

Renaissance writers). The reception of *Historia Apollonii* is studied by Elizabeth Archibald. Stoneman again writes about Alexander, but now 'the Medieval Alexander'. The 'rediscovery' of Petronius and Apuleius by the humanists is central in a concluding piece by Robert H. F. Carver.

As in any collection of essays, the quality and complexity of contributions differs, although clearly an attempt was made to produce a well-balanced volume that would prove useful to students. Scholars approaching the volume in the hope of finding revolutionary insights or discussions of literary theory will inevitably be disappointed. Those, however, who wish to acquaint themselves with the broad field of Latin fiction will find much in this book that suits them. Most essays are conveniently short and well-structured, and provide readers an easy access to the texts and the main problems concerning them.

One or two desiderata may perhaps be added here. In a volume such as this, a separate essay on the earliest Roman texts, such as the Roman version of the Milesian Tales by Sisenna, would have not have been out of place. After all, Roman fiction does not begin with Petronius. Some remarks on, for example, Roman satire, narrative poetry, and letter writing (one readily thinks of some 'novelistic' letters by Pliny) could have been added as well. The special Roman inspiration of Petronius and, particularly, Apuleius, deserves more attention.

The essay on hagiography is particularly welcome and is well placed in the volume as a whole. It deservedly highlights texts such as the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. But what about the canonical Acts? Or, indeed, of the whole Bible, a book so full of narrative? (This is acknowledged on p. 189: 'The literary influence of this text simply cannot be overestimated'.) Surely, then, a short contribution on the *Vetus Latina* and Vulgate would seem required.

Given the introductory nature of most essays, one would expect clear bibliographical notes referring to the standard editions, commentaries, and (above all, perhaps) translations, but surprisingly this practical information is mostly missing. Few users of the book will have immediate access to texts like Dictys or the *Historia Apollonii*, and more suggestions for reading the primary texts would have been helpful.

Finally, the contributors are distinguished experts and there is hardly room for complaint here. Nonetheless, it is surprising to find no scholars from Groningen among them, although Groningen certainly counts as a centre of ancient novel studies. One wonders whether it was really necessary to have three contributors represented with two essays each.

A collection of essays could always have been better, and there is always still work to be done. But this is a convenient and thorough volume that covers a wide field of Latin texts and will be of use to many students of the ancient novels, particularly those on university courses.

University of Nijmegen

VINCENT HUNINK

WHAT IS BIOGRAPHY?

F. PASCHOUD, B. GRANGE, C. BUCHWALDER (edd.): *La Biographie antique*. (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 44.) Pp. viii + 290. Vanclouvres and Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1997. Cased, Sw. frs. 60.

This volume, in familiar format, collects the eight papers given at the 1997 meeting of

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the Fondation. W. W. Ehlers prepared the papers for publication with exemplary speed and added an introduction.

(1) Stefan M. Maul discusses 'Altorientalische Tatenberichte mit (auto-)biographischen Zügen', i.e. the inscriptions recording a king's achievements inserted in Mesopotamian stonework. (2) Edda Bresciani treats 'L'Egitto antico: il genere autobiografico nell'epoca tarda'. (3) Walter Berschin traces 'Auffällige Formen lateinischer Biographie in Spätantike und Mittelalter (IV–XII Jahrhundert)'—a vast field (Berschin estimates that there may be 10,000 examples). (4) In the most enterprising paper, Mary Beard brings out how subtle an inscriptional career-record can be and how closely attuned to its monumental setting, and shows how careful reading opens up a variety of ways in which the reader/viewer might react to the life-stories. (5) Albrecht Dihle writes 'Zur antiken Biographie', setting out to explore how the changing literary forms might relate to attempts to explore biography 'als Phänomen der Mentalitätsgeschichte' (p. 124). (6) Luigi Piccirilli sets himself a similar agenda in examining 'I testi biografici come testimonianza della storia della mentalità'. (7) Glen W. Bowersock treats 'Vita Caesarum'; along the way he makes a good case for dating Plutarch's *Lives of the Caesars* under Domitian. (8) Richard Goulet writes on 'Histoire et mystère: les Vies de philosophes de l'Antiquité tardive'.

These *Entretiens* are unusual in their cross-cultural perspective. That is to be welcomed wholeheartedly, and gave the collection an opportunity to break new ground. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian material, excellently presented here, challenges our notions of what biography should be. It is fascinating, for instance, that the most 'individual' Egyptian material in one modern sense—that which marks out a quirky, non-stereotypical figure—is found at a very early stage, in the Old Kingdom (p. 56). More is the pity, then, that the classical material closest to those texts is not included, ruled out by the organizers' conception of genre: nothing on autobiography, for instance, or *res gestae*; nothing on the funeral oration; nothing on encomium; very little on the educative 'good ruler' tradition of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

More the pity too that the classical scholars, with the exception of Beard, raise so few questions about that issue of genre. In his introduction Ehlers signals this as a question to address: is the *Neue Pauly* article on biography right to begin with 'Biography as a literary genre'? Or should we view any generic boundaries as shifting and blurred, and find more interest in tracing the types of literature that biography topples into, or comes close to toppling into (my own position)? Should we abandon the notion of 'biography' completely, and talk only of 'the biographical' (pp. 1–2)? Is there a firm boundary between biography and, say, Arrian's account of a great man's war rather than his life? The contributors know there is an issue; in the early discussions they seem to be gearing themselves up to face it (esp. pp. 58–61). But the nearest they come is in half a page on the post-classical material, where Berschin suggests that it may not be a question of keeping to generic rules but of following a particular model, in that case Sulpicius Severus' life of S. Martin (p. 80).

Far too often, indeed, 'biography' is taken as a simple category whose nature we all understand. Dihle excludes Isocrates' *Evagoras* from 'really being a biography', and discusses whether Stesimbrotus' work should be classed as *bioi* or Polybius' *Philopoemen* as biography or encomium (pp. 121, 127–9, 189); but he never faces what *meaning* such a question could have at the times of the works' production. The most extreme case is that of Goulet, who defines 'ideal' biography in a peculiarly clear-cut way—'l'exposé détaillé des épisodes essentiels de la vie d'un individu, le long d'un cadre chronologique identifiable, par un contemporain parfaitement informé, voire par l'individu lui-même jetant un regard impartial sur sa propre vie [as if *that* were

possible!], et ceci afin de fournir une information objective', p. 219—and then traces its 'déformations' along three axes: historical veracity, literary form, and 'ideology'. We are even given a neat three-dimensional graph plotting the coordinates of each work (p. 254). This sort of teleology-in-reverse is deeply misleading: Maul and Beard are surely right (pp. 259–61) to object that this 'ideal' template is modern, and no less culturally determined than those of the other societies explored in the volume. Perhaps the application of a modern model might have value as a thought-experiment (so Beard, pp. 58–9)—but the effect here is not to stimulate good thought. When one reads of 'another bad way of doing biography' (p. 229) or the danger of 'contamination' from the novel (p. 231), a carillon of warning bells should be pealing.

When biography is taken as so simple a phenomenon, it is unsurprising that the classicists miss so many tricks when exploring 'mentality'. The 'Oriental' writers here were more sophisticated—Maul on the lack of 'development of the "I"' (p. 12), Bresciani on the growing pathos and sense of loss (p. 50). But Piccirilli tends to reduce mentality to political outlook: Stesimbrotus emerges as representative of the oppressed islanders, Ion as sharing the aristocratic outlook of his Athenian cronies, Suetonius as typifying the equestrian class, Plutarch as 'philo-senatorial'. Dihle largely interprets it as a matter of a writer's aims, and interprets them rather simply. Thus Plutarch's moral purpose is to produce negative or positive examples (pp. 125–6); even before Tim Duff's *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford, 1999), it should have been clear that there was more to it than that.

Bowersock asks better questions, fastening on the use of sequential biographies to treat a dynasty. This seems to originate in the first century C.E., with Plutarch and then Suetonius. Why did it happen then? And why did Suetonius' form prove more attractive to later generations than Plutarch's? Bowersock may well be right to answer in terms of its suitability for 'the turbulent lives of persons of power, courage, or godliness, persons whose lives were distinctly not quotidian' (p. 207). But how far does that turning away from the everyday reflect a wider phenomenon of the empire? Does the *per species* organization allow a different approach to 'personality', so that characteristics may cluster in less predictable patterns than Plutarch needed to shape a continuous narrative? That could make figures more 'individual'; but individuality can mean many things. Does Suetonius, or anyone else, treat individuals independently from their society? (Piccirilli here does have some interesting remarks, pp. 181–5.) Do they try to *understand* their subjects? Is that what biography is for? And, if we talk of biography's interest in society, what has happened to Dicaearchus' 'Life of Greece' and Varro's *De Vita Populi Romani*? Neither figures in the index. What, too, of interiority, the idea that a person's mental experience may be a defining element in his or her identity? How much continuity is there here between Christian and pre-Christian authors? Is biography less mentally 'biographical' than other genres with (auto)-biographical elements, Horace's *Satires* for instance? M. Aurelius is again a figure one might expect to find in the index of ancient authors; M. Foucault should surely be in the index of moderns; both are not.

Still, one should not be too unwelcoming. Yes, we could have done with a little more vibrancy in some of the papers. But there is still much to be said for the atmosphere which the *Entretiens* breathe: that of a civilized exchange among the indisputably learned, thoroughly at home in each other's languages (in a single question Dihle moves through French, German, and English in response to a paper in Italian, pp. 55–6); of a world where, at least in the published version, scholars can dispute as from memory the precise nuance of a line of Valerius Flaccus (p. 214); of courteous and receptive sharing of expertise, and a readiness, at least in discussion, to ask some of the

bigger questions. And one can almost feel the lake washing below, the smell of a mahogany table, the glimpse of the mountains in the background. Long may the *Entretiens* continue.

University College, Oxford

CHRISTOPHER PELLING

POLITICIZED CRITICS

Y. L. TOO: *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism*. Pp. ix + 326. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-19-815076-8.

This is a problematic book. Its central thesis, that the texts of so-called ancient literary criticism constantly engage in processes of political discrimination and cultural self-definition, offers a fresh angle on the subject, though the novelty is more conspicuous in general assertion than in fine detail. The value of Too's work is impaired, however, not only by shortcomings of argument but also by the worst collection of scholarly errors I have ever encountered from a professional Hellenist.

T. rightly questions views of ancient criticism as essentially 'aestheticist' and apolitical. She believes all criticism, *qua* judgement and regulation of discourse, to have implications for socio-political values, and she maintains that ancient criticism repeatedly foregrounds such concerns through strategies of ideological inclusion and exclusion, always in the interests of cultural élites. She regards such strategies as partly motivated by a fear of 'multiple voices', which she traces back (Chapter I), somewhat portentously, to the motif of the Hesiodic Typhon (*Theog.* 829–35), and which she also finds in Aristophanes (of whom her solemn treatment shows no awareness of the distinctively comic). Unsurprisingly, Plato's *Republic* (Chapter II), with its proposed 'censorship' for the benefit of the community, is paradigmatic for T.'s approach (which here, though, has affinities with the work of, for example, Ferrari, nowhere cited). She discusses the *Republic's* link between poetry and civic identity, its anxiety over psychic fragmentation, and its attempt to embody a discourse of justice in its own philosophical 'poetry'. In Chapter III, more contentiously, T. argues that an 'éliteist ideology' of pleasure (that of the educated male citizen) underlies Aristotle's *Poetics*: she builds her case essentially on *Politics* 8, whose implications for the theatre are, however, more complex (cf. 1342a16–28) than she acknowledges; but she fails to grapple with (or even fully cite) the *Poetics'* own complex series of references to, and implications for, tragic audiences. Chapter IV, which rests substantially on familiar claims about the critical scholarship of Ptolemaic Alexandria (not the only part of the book where T. is over-reliant on paraphrase of others' views), stresses the Alexandrians' 'appropriation' and reshaping of Greek cultural identity for their own situation, 'dislocated' (an overworked favourite of T.'s) in North Africa. Chapter V, on Roman ideas of freedom of speech (where T. rejects a simple equation of Republic/freedom and Empire/oppression, and illustrates different ways in which writers—including Horace, Ovid, and Tacitus—position themselves *vis-à-vis* discourses of power and *libertas*), Chapter VI, on 'Longinus' (whose notion of the sublime involves mental 'transport' from the present into an idealized literary past, thus creating a kind of political community in the mind of appropriately tuned readers), and Chapter VII (on Augustine's adaptation of the pagan 'critical imperative', partly against pagan literature itself, in the interests of the Christian 'city') give wide and varied scope to T.'s conception of criticism. In her final chapter and conclusion, T. posits significant continuities between ancient criticism and modern arguments over, for example,