

II POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY IN THE HELLENISTIC AGE

The main theme of Leo's analysis was that of the literary form of ancient biography, or rather of the sequence and development of the different literary forms. The centrepiece of his survey of Hellenistic biography included the thesis of a 'Peripatetic' biography, employed both to describe the lives of poets, philosophers and others from the intellectual walks of life as well as of men of action. Though Leo's thesis has been subjected to many modifications and some outright attacks, the view that there existed a widely popular branch of political biography in the Hellenistic age went largely unchallenged; the exceptions from this rule will be discussed below.

The present investigation does not concern itself with the possible literary form of these political biographies, nor with the exact meaning and usefulness of Leo's distinctions between the different sorts of biography, 'Peripatetic' and 'Alexandrian'; it is the very thesis of the existence of political biography in the Hellenistic age that will be challenged in the present chapter.

We may follow Leo's lead and start the discussion of the history of biography in the Hellenistic Age with an analysis of the celebrated passage in the introduction to Jerome's *de viris illustribus* reflecting on the subject-matter of the work:

Hortaris, Dexter, ut Tranquillum sequens ecclesiasticos scriptores in ordine digeram et, quod ille in enumerandis gentilium litterarum viris fecit illustribus ego in nostris hoc faciam, id est ut a passione Christi usque ad quartum decimum Theodosii imperatoris annum omnes qui de scripturis sanctis memoriae aliquid tradiderunt, tibi breviter exponam. Fecerunt quidem hoc idem apud Graecos Hermippus peripateticus, Antigonus Carystius, Satyrus doctus vir, et longe omnium doctissimus Aristoxenus musicus. Apud Latinos autem Varro, Santra, Nepos, Hyginus, et, ad cuius exemplum provocas, Tranquillus.

Though the passage is famous and has been the subject of endless discussions, it seems possible that a number of useful points can still be made in connexion with it.

It has been long recognised that the list of the four Greek writers derives from Suetonius¹ and that there is no reason to assume that

¹ U.v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Antigonos von Karystos* (Phil. Unters. IV, Berlin 1881), 27.1; cf. L. Vossen, *De Suetonio Hieronymi auctore* (Bonn 1912), esp. 79; E. Bickel, *Diatriben in Senecae Philosophi Fragmenta*, I (Leipzig 1915), 136.1.

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Jerome himself was acquainted with these authors². Yet the very derivativeness of the list does not necessarily deduct from its authority, as the scholarly Suetonius was certainly in a position to survey the particular field of learning here discussed, both on the Greek and the Latin side³.

The first and most important point that has to be stressed about the passage is the fact that the whole discussion is an account of the history of literary biography. The authors enumerated are all authors of Lives of literary men ('gentilium litterarum viris . . . illustribus'), who thus may provide a precedent for Jerome, about to engage on a series of biographies of ecclesiastical authors ('ecclesiasticos scriptores'). Nor is this surprising, considering that it derives from the preface to Suetonius' work that bore the same character: the very need for emphasizing such an obvious fact is due to the numerous instances when the issue has been evaded⁴. Of course this does not mean that the same authors could not have composed political biographies as well — after all, Suetonius himself is best known to us as the author of the Lives of the Twelve Caesars. Indeed, in the following such a possible aspect of the careers of the Greek writers, above all Hermippus and Satyrus, will have to be considered. In the passage under discussion, however, they are mentioned *qua* authors of literary biography, and literary biography only, so that there is no justification for adducing them in support of a thesis concerning political biography.

As is well known, it is this passage that provided Leo with the most powerful argument for connecting the rise of biographical writing with the Peripatetic school. To assess the correctness of that opinion, a bone of contention with Leo's critics, is beyond the scope of the present investigation, although one aspect must be dwelt on here. Peripatetic biography according to Leo produced Lives of both literary and political figures. The present passage cannot be adduced as evidence for the latter half of that assertion, so that its validity or otherwise will have

2 On Jerome's acquaintance with Greek authors, see P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, Mass. 1969), 58 ff.

3 For Suetonius' learning, see Plin. *ep.* 1.24; 10.94.1; Lyd. *mag.* 1.34, p. 35Wö; *Suda* 4.581, 19 Adler.

4 The reference to literary biographies was first noticed in passing by Wilamowitz, *Antigonos* 27, and clearly by Leo, *Biographie* 102, who seems however to evade the issue at p. 130; an evasive stance is taken also by Dihle, *Studien* 70 f. and Momigliano, *Development* 73 f.; but in *Second Thoughts on Greek Biography* (Medelingen Konink. Ned. Ak. Wetenschappen 34.7, 1971), 4 he finds that he 'must emphasize the point'. Barbu, *Procédés* 25, while criticising Leo, seems to have missed the issue.

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to be demonstrated by the actual remains attributed to the writers in question rather than by a categorical assertion. Furthermore, even in the narrower context of literary biography, the list should be taken as that of outstanding examples rather than of necessarily the first ones in the genre (and the list is, of course, not chronological)⁵, or even more a list aiming at any measure of exhaustiveness. This has been recognised even by Leo⁶ who, quoting another passage of Jerome⁷, admitted our ignorance of some apparently quite basic facts of the history of ancient biography. It is, indeed, well nigh impossible to know what exactly Jerome did with Suetonius' list, the more so as Jerome's rather hazy acquaintance with Greek literature has been fully demonstrated⁸. Moreover, not only is the passage excluded as evidence for political biography in the Hellenistic Age, but, on the contrary, it can even be taken as positive proof for the view that at least Jerome, for whatever it is worth, and most probably Suetonius, dealt with literary biography separately and in no sort of conjunction with political biography. If, as is reasonable to assume, Suetonius listed his Greek and Latin predecessors in the field of literary biography this may serve as some sort of indication at least for Suetonius dealing with literary biography as a species distinct from political biography. Another aspect of the passage, the relevance of brevity to literary biography, has been discussed in the preceding chapter. Jerome may well have derived the notion from Suetonius – and in that writer there exists a very clear-cut difference in length between his literary and political biographies. It would be idle to speculate whether it was Suetonius who introduced and emphasized the distinction in size between the various forms of biography and whether such a distinction may have been intended as polemical against some predecessors by means of involving the authority of others. Be that as it may, again Jerome characterises one aspect of literary biography as a separate genre.

Thus, the introduction to Jerome's *de viris illustribus* is clearly exposed as a blind avenue, as far as the exploration of political biography

5 Cf. A.J. Woodman, *Velleius Paterculus. The Tiberian Narrative* (2.94–131) (Cambridge 1977), 32.2: "According to Jerome . . . Varro Santra and Nepos were the first Roman biographers." Is it quite as difficult as that to observe the line between fact and interpretation? Similarly, B. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, 101: "According to Jerome, the first biographers of Rome were Varro, Santra, Hyginus and Nepos" (sic).

6 *Biographie* 17.

7 *ad Desid. ep.* 47 (PL 22.413): scripsi librum de illustribus viris . . . imitatus Tranquillum Graecumque Apollonium; we cannot even be sure which Apollonius is meant.

8 Cf. n. 2 supra.

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9 Woldemar Gr. *Plutarchischer*

10 Review in *Hi* 1956), 356 f.

11 N. Barbu, *Le graphies de Pl*

12 See the review ff.; a note of 84 (1956), 35

in the Hellenistic Age is concerned. The next approach will lead us to the survey of the positive arguments that have been put forward in defence of the theory; only after showing these to be inconclusive will an attempt be made to bring forward and discuss a number of negative indicators as to the existence of Hellenistic political biography.

The existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age has been an accepted fact with scholars at least since Leo, so much so that little attempt has been made to state and argue the case. Only two dissenting voices were heard, but their protests were easily dismissed; nevertheless, they contributed to the issue indirectly in a positive way in that they caused one of their opponents to state in clear and unequivocal terms the case, such as it is, for the existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age.

The first dissent, a Habilitationsschrift written with perhaps too great confidence, came from Uxkull-Gyllenband in 1927⁹. The book, which drew sharp criticism from Felix Jacoby¹⁰, maintained a schematic approach to Plutarch's sources, denying that any of them belonged to the biographical genre. Though it is not necessary here to discuss his arguments, which, indeed, take an oversimplistic view of the problems of the sources of Plutarch and of his methods of composition, it should be mentioned that Uxkull-Gyllenband drew attention to the fact of Nepos' and Plutarch's isolation as authors of political biographies and of the absence of any straightforward evidence for titles or authors of their biographical sources (108).

In 1934 N. Barbu argued¹¹ that in the Alexandrian period historiography satisfied the needs of those interested in the scandals surrounding political personages and that no need for political biography arose in that age. His thesis, like Uxkull's, met with a largely negative response¹². While Uxkull denied the existence of political biography for the time preceding Polybius, it is noteworthy that Barbu went even farther and denied its existence for the whole Hellenistic period, preferring to connect its rise with the influence of Posidonius. No attempt will be made here to defend, or revive, the theses of these two scholars,

⁹ Woldemar Graf Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Plutarch und die griechische Biographie. Studien zu Plutarchischen Lebensbeschreibungen* (Stuttgart 1927).

¹⁰ Review in *Hist. Zschr.* 139 (1928), 168 f. = *Abh. z. gr. Geschichtsschreibung* (Leiden 1956), 356 f.

¹¹ N. Barbu, *Les procédés de la peinture des caractères et la vérité historique dans les biographies de Plutarque* (Paris 1934; repr. Roma 1976).

¹² See the reviews of D.R. Stuart, *AJP* 58 (1937), 356 ff.; W. Ax, *Gnomon* 13 (1937), 142 ff.; a note of approval was sounded by M. Cary, *CR* 49 (1935), 32 f.; cf. also H. Erbse, *H* 84 (1956), 399.1.

since the present argument will run on largely different lines. Their greatest merit for the present discussion lies in the fact that they provoked W. Steidle to face the challenge and state boldly the case and assemble all the conceivable arguments for the existence of Hellenistic political biography¹³, the only attempt of the sort known to me. Steidle offered eight arguments in support of his thesis: since this is the only full statement of the case of political biography in the Hellenistic Age, any discussion of the issue should commence with a review of his points.

1. Steidle's first argument is the 'direct evidence' of Nepos, *Epam.* 4.6:

plurima quidem proferre possimus, sed modus adhibendus est, quoniam uno hoc volumine vitam excellentium virorum complurium concludere constituimus, quorum separatim multis milibus versuum complures scriptores ante nos explicarunt.

This does not constitute evidence, direct or otherwise. Nepos' basic intention is to distinguish between the brevity of his own Lives and the extensiveness of his sources. It does not necessarily follow that these sources belonged to the same category of writings as his own production. On the contrary, it could be pointed out that these would have included such works as, e.g., Xenophon's *Agesilaus* — not a *vita* by the criteria established in the previous chapter and presumably not one according to Nepos' own definition. Still, Nepos' language would allow the assumption that it is to biographies that he refers; it is practical considerations that militate against such a view. Certainly the very length of the sources referred to should warn us against identifying them with biographies. In all probability it must have been historical, rather than biographical works that ran to the length of several thousand verses each¹⁴. But the main argument against Steidle is this: though

13 W. Steidle, *op. cit.*; the attempt to refute Uxkull and Barbu is at 140 ff.

14 This note takes its departure from the assumption, perhaps distasteful to some scholars, that when an ancient author says 'many thousand verses' he means just that. Nepos' Lives, typically (e.g., *Milt.* and *Them.*), are about 200–250 verses each, though they can be as short as the *Aristides* (55 verses), or as long as the ca. 400 verses of the *Eumenes*; the long *Life of Atticus* does not exceed 550 verses. Plutarch's Lives are between just short of a thousand verses (e.g., *Aem. Paul.*) and up to two and a half thousand verses in such a long *Life* as the *Alexander*. The best preserved of Hellenistic biographies, Satyros' *Euripides*, indicates a shorter span with the three tragedians to one book; F. Leo, *Satyros βίος Euripiδου*, *Nachr. Gött.* 1912, 286 (= *Kl. Schr.* II.379) estimates the length of the book as similar to the *Menon*, the *Euthydemus*, or perhaps *Phaedros* and *Symposium*. On the other hand, historical works of course could run to a great number, sometimes scores, of books. On the whole subject, see also T. Birt, *Das antike Buchwesen* (Berlin 1882), 157 ff.

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we do have a fairly good general picture of Nepos' sources (see below), none of which is known to have been a biography, we are asked to abandon these and to prefer a host of unnamed, unknown, unattested and unidentified biographical sources – all this on the strength of a pedantic, and probably incorrect, interpretation of the passage in Nepos' work. It seems almost like a demonstration of the methods that gave *Quellenforschung* a bad name in some quarters – the rejection of sources explicitly named in the text in favour of hypothetical works inferred by ingenuous modern theories. Moreover, the choice of Nepos' Greek characters – all with the exception of Eumenes, where he certainly depended on the *historian* Hieronymus of Cardia¹⁵, from the annals of classical Greece – does not seem to support the suggestion that his sources were Hellenistic biographers, writing in a period when contemporary history seems to have been of paramount interest. In conclusion, this argument can be rejected without qualification.

2. Steidle collects what positive evidence he can find for biographies in the Hellenistic Age: Nicolaus of Damascus' *Life of Caesar* (Augustus), Polybius' *Philopoemen*, as well as those Latin biographers discussed in Schanz-Hosius I⁴ 615.

Among these, Nicolaus need not detain us here, as it is readily acknowledged that he wrote a biographical work – in a period where such works cannot, and should not, be disputed. Nevertheless, the question may be raised whether Nicolaus should not be taken as a late representative of an earlier existing genre, as Steidle suggests. There is no evidence for assuming that Nicolaus may have been influenced directly by Nepos; but as at the time a considerable biographical activity can be shown for Rome (see below, Ch. III), it would be unreasonable to insist tying Nicolaus to supposed earlier practitioners of the genre¹⁶.

Neither is there reason to dwell for long on Polybius' *Philopoemen*: the best and most straightforward interpretation of the evidence assigns it to the encomiastic genre¹⁷ which has been excluded from the

15 Cf. now J. Hornblower, *Hieronymos of Cardia* (Oxford 1981), 67.

16 For Latin influences on the Greek literature of the period, cf. G. Williams, *Change and Decline. Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1978), 118 ff.

17 Plb. 10.21.5–8. P. Pédech, Polybe et l'éloge de Philopoïmen, *REG* 64 (1951), 82 ff. (now in German in *Polybios*, eds. K. Stiewe and N. Holzberg, Wege der Forschung, Darmstadt 1982), followed by H. Homeyer, Beobachtungen zu den hellenistischen Quellen der Plu-

present investigation. It is perhaps not necessary to restate the various arguments concerning the exact nature of that work, though one question that does not seem to have been formulated in this way may be put forward here: why did Polybius not employ the word *βίος* for the description of his work, if this was the best-fitting word and if it was in currency for a genre describing the lives and actions of generals and politicians? It is this supposed discrepancy that renders Walbank's discussion in his Commentary uncharacteristically ambiguous. While asserting that Polybius' *Philopoemen* was a Life, he again and again makes reference to it as to an *encomium*, unable and unwilling to avoid the designation of the text. This reader at least could not make up his mind whether Walbank insists on the distinction between biography and encomium, or, on the contrary, is trying to blur it. Another point that to my knowledge has not entered the discussion should be added here. It has been remarked that biographical writing, as a rule, was produced in series, while *encomia* were written each as opportunity arose: on the available evidence, this, too, would argue for the *Philopoemen* being an *encomium*¹⁸. An analogy may be not inappropriate: Polybius' treatment of *Philopoemen* in the History stood perhaps in the same relation to the encomium as did Xenophon's description of Agesilaus in his *Hellenica* to that in the *encomium* of the king.

As for the Romans, in part the reference is to works that cannot be described as biographies, in part to Nepos himself and his contemporaries: all these will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. Steidle himself concedes that his next argument is not strictly relevant, since it deals with *encomium* rather than with biography. Nevertheless, it may be discussed – and dismissed. The evidence is contained in the passage of Cic. *de orat.* 2.341:

Ipsi enim Graeci magis legendi et delectationis aut hominis alicuius ornandi quam utilitatis huius forensis causa laudationes scriptitaverunt; quorum sunt libri, quibus Themistocles, Aristides, Agesilaus, Epaminondas, Philippus, Alexander aliique laudantur.

tarch-Viten, *Klio* 45 (1963), 155, prefer chronological encomiastic biography to *encomium*; clear distinction between *encomium* and biography is maintained by Leo, *Biographie*, 226 f.; the distinction is blurred by R.M. Errington, *Philopoemen* (Oxford 1969), 232 ff. H. Achleitner, Polybios' Philopoimen-Biographie als Quelle des Livius, *H* 110 (1982), 499 ff. refers to the work throughout as if a biography.

18 Paus. 8.49–51, the so-called 'biographical' treatment of Philopoemen, shows definite connexions with Polybius (Errington, *op. cit.*, 238 ff.), but the nature of the section, evenly spread out over all the periods of Philopoemen's life, suggests that the work in question was the History.

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Since the list is given in a chronological order, continues Steidle, it follows that the *alii* were chronologically subsequent to Alexander, viz., Hellenistic kings, statesmen and generals; the whole passage is taken as evidence for a 'rich biographical-encomiastic tradition'.

As for the first argument: *non sequitur*. Though the list is chronological, this does not suggest, let alone prove, that the *alii* must have been successors in the same order; on the contrary, the names given are the most prominent and famous examples, while others belonging to the same times may have been passed over in silence and included under the blanket of *alii*; certainly Steidle is wrong in asserting that this is the only possible meaning of the passage (können . . . nur . . . verstanden werden). To turn the argument around: Where would Cicero, according to Steidle, have to put the word *alii* if he wanted to add to the list other people not in a chronological sequence? As for the Diadochs, it will be shown in the following pages that as far as we know the works that were devoted to them were historical monographs rather than biographies.

Another point is Steidle's blurring the distinction by speaking about a 'biographisch-enkomiasische Tradition'. The *encomia* are attested both as a separate branch of prose and so dealt with by writers polemicising against historians with certain attitudes towards their heroes, the existence of political biographies in this period is still in need of proof. On the other hand, it is not quite clear to what extent a distinction can be made based on *delectatio* and *utilitas*. While Cicero lists the encomiastic works as written with a view to please the audience, Polybius insisted on the usefulness of his *Philopoemen*.

Certainly Polybius' views regarding his encomium fit his well-known attitude to 'pragmatic' historiography: but it is quite possible that writers of *encomia* were divided among themselves on the question of utility just like the historians. Cicero, at any rate, speaks about the lack of forensic usefulness of the *encomia*, which does not necessarily mean that they were devoid of moral purpose.

4. According to Steidle it is inconceivable that Nepos' work had no predecessors or that previous series did not include political biographies. He also denies the possibility that Nepos would have made the effort to seek out historical sources for each and every one of his Lives. This argument will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

5. The next argument in Steidle's array concerns the pronouncements of Plutarch, Nepos and Polybius on the differences between the bio-

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graphical and the historical genre. According to Steidle's view these pronouncements presuppose a theory of biography, and in fact of biography of political personages. Nepos' and Plutarch's statements (to which Steidle adds Plu. *Nic.* 1.5f; *Galba* 2.5) have been discussed in the foregoing chapter. It must be maintained, however, that Steidle adds confusion to the matter when he passes back and forth between biography and political biography in his analysis. True, in Nepos *hoc genus scripturae* does refer to biography, as Steidle argues; but his apology for applying it to *summi viri* is best understood if this application was a novelty: the matter of Nepos' innovation will be taken up at some length in the next chapter. But even without that focus on Nepos' innovativeness, one is very hard pressed to understand the reason behind the argument, that if something existed at a given time it is a sure sign that it must have existed before.

Thus, while proving that biography did exist before Nepos — a fact that has never been questioned — no advance has been made as far as political biography is concerned. Nor is it easy to grasp, by the same logic, why Nepos' differentiating in *Pelop.* 1.1 between history and political biography should be regarded as proof that such a distinction existed, indeed has been long-established, before him. On the contrary, it could be argued that it was the very novelty of the distinction that made it necessary for Nepos to define it. The same considerations apply to Plutarch, only the more so, writing as he was a century and a half after Nepos. Since it is certain that Plutarch used Nepos (only the extent of this use may be a subject of controversy) and since Plutarch certainly used biographers, such as Thræsea Paetus (see below), who belonged to a generation much later than Nepos, one cannot quite see the point of Steidle's assertion. Care should be exercised also in the interpretation of what Steidle calls a theory of biography. If it is to imply that Nepos' and Plutarch's short statements are abbreviations of, or extracts from, a larger body of (presumably written) literary theory, then this assertion should be supported by some positive arguments. There must be an occasion when an assertion is first made: the burden of proof should rest with him, who denies that what appears to be first was indeed such. Moreover, it is a salutary question to ask whether such predecessors as assumed by Steidle are required by any intrinsic logical necessity.

There remains the passage of Polybius: here, as has been stated earlier, the distinction is drawn between history and *encomium* (a branch of prose literature in existence since Xenophon and Isocrates).

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20 Cf. E.L. B.
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If, until now, Steidle's arguments were of a general character and could be dismissed without great difficulty, his last three arguments, treating in the main fragments of lost writers in a detailed fashion, present a much more serious challenge.

6. Against the thesis of Leo, who maintained that the term *ἄνδρες ἐνδοξοί* referred only to literary men, Steidle offers a list of Roman uses of the term which includes also political personalities and, referring back from that use, a number of Greek authors as well. We shall consider these in turn.

There is no denying the correctness of the Roman examples, Nepos, Hyginus and the anonymous author *de viris illustribus* who is linked in the tradition with Aurelius Victor. Nepos and his contribution to the history of political biography will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, where it will be argued that it was his innovation to add political figures to a series of *virii illustres*; if this be accepted, there is no need to investigate the case of Hyginus (which, on the surviving evidence, would, in any case, hardly pay), nor the anonymous author *de viris illustribus*¹⁹.

The case of the Greeks is more difficult, and much more important.

a) Megacles (*FHG* IV. 443; Athen. 10.419A) is known only as the transmitter of an anecdote about M'. Curius from a work *περὶ ἐνδόξων ἀνδρῶν*. As Steidle admits, there is absolutely no indication of date (except, of course, that he must have preceded the publication of the *Deipnosophists*). It has been suggested (Bux *RE* XV. 126f, no. 9) that he may have confronted Greeks and Romans in the manner of Plutarch. Whether this was so or not, a Greek writer recounting anecdotes from Republican history undoubtedly fits better into the Early Empire than the Hellenistic Age (characteristically the anecdote in question has parallels in a number of Latin authors and in Plutarch); and it may perhaps be added that the name, though found once or twice during the Hellenistic Age, would well accord with the classicising tastes of the Early Empire²⁰. But all this is speculation: the date cannot be guessed and the author cannot serve as evidence for either side.

b) Charon of Carthage (*FHG* IV. 360; Suda s.v.) wrote, in addition to a work on the tyrants in Europe and Asia, *βίους ἐνδόξων ἀνδρῶν*

19 See M.M. Sage, *The De Viris Illustribus: Authorship and Date*, *H* 108 (1980), 83 ff.

20 Cf. E.L. Bowie, *Greeks and their Past in the Second Sophistic*, *Past and Present* 46 (1970), 31 f.

ἐν βιβλίοις δ', βίους ὁμοίως γυναικῶν ἐν δ'. Steidle's inference from the fact that Charon devoted equal space to women as to men is that the women, at least, could not have been all poetesses. If not — political figures? Generals? Again, it is as well to abandon speculation and confess our ignorance. Nothing can be said on the date of Charon.

- c) Theseus (*FHG* IV. 518–9). True, frgs. 2 and 3 (*Stob. flor.* 7.70; 7.67) deal with historical anecdotes concerning Spartans, but this is as much — and as little — as we know about them; it is not even safe to assume that these anecdotes do come from his *περὶ ἐνδόξεων ἐν βιβλίοις ε'*. Again, as with Charon, there is absolutely no indication of date.

Thus far the evidence collected by Steidle, which is indeed in itself very far from compelling us to assume that works *περὶ ἐνδόξεων ἀνδρῶν* before the first century B.C. included Lives of political personalities. It may be remembered that other writers of the genre are less suggestive of political biography²¹. Moreover, as Momigliano has warned us²², we cannot even be sure that what we are dealing with are regular *Lives* rather than collections of anecdotes.

7. Steidle refers to the fact that we have a considerable number of titles of 'histories of tyrants and monographies of rulers' which contained a strong biographical element. These works will be discussed later in this chapter, where it will be argued that they constitute evidence against, rather than for, political biography in the Hellenistic Age.

8. Steidle's last and probably strongest argument is that there is evidence for political biography written by Satyrus, as well as in the *Lives of Lawgivers* by Hermippus. This point certainly deserves detailed treatment. Needless to say, ever since the discovery of the papyrus fragments of Satyrus' Life of Euripides this author has been the subject of lively interest for many scholars²³; in antiquity, on the other hand,

21 Amphicrates (*FHG* IV.300), the author of a work *περὶ ἐνδόξεων ἀνδρῶν* tells an anecdote concerning Themistocles (F1 = Athen. 12.576C), though it is far from certain that it belonged to a context in which Themistocles was the main figure (Cf. Jacoby's remark on Themistocles in *Hellenica* in his commentary to Neanthes, *FGrHist* 74, F13). Both the identifications of Amphicrates with a namesake of Sullan times (*Plu. Luc.* 22) and of the Empire ([Long.] *subl.* 3.2) are unfounded; Müller cautiously classed him among historians 'aetate incerta'; see also the *Suda* s.v. on Jason of Nysa.

22 Momigliano, *Development* 71.

23 The first edition was in *POxy* IX.1176 (1912); see also the editions of C.F. Kumaniecki, *De Satyro Peripatetico* (Cracoviae 1927); A. Arrighetti, *Studi classici e orientali* 13 (Pisa 1964); the long-promised edition of F. Wehrli, that was to complete with the *Hermippus*

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his reputation and influence seem to have been small, the only dubious piece of evidence for that reputation coming from Jerome, himself repeating hearsay only (in the passage discussed above); this evidence deals, as will readily be remembered, with literary biography only.

Before turning to the alleged fragments of political biography, it will be as well to see what can be learned for our purpose from the Oxyrhynchus papyrus.

First, title. The subscription of the papyrus reads: *Σατύρου βίων ἀναγραφῆς ὑπὸ Αἰσχύλου Σοφοκλέους Εὐριπίδου*. It has been inferred that *βίοι* or *περὶ βίων* might be the correct title²⁴. The question of the rise and development of the Greek book title is intricate and in need of a full scale treatment²⁵. As far as we know, the title, and even the titles of the individual books, may go back to the author himself. On the other hand, there seems to be no evidence for authors' titles for subdivisions, such as chapters, or, in our case, individual Lives, in our period²⁶. Thus, the reference in frgs. 3–5 to a *βίος Φιλίππου* deserves very little credence, if it is meant to be taken as a title given by the author; on the other hand, if this is a designation accorded by Athenaeus (to whom we owe these quotations) they may be not much more than general descriptions of the main contents, perhaps given with

and *Sotion* his supplements to *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, must now apparently be despaired of; there is still Gallo's edition to be expected in vol. III of his *Frammenti biografici da papiri*; among other notable contributions are F. Leo (above, n. 14); I. Gallo, *La vita di Euripide di Satiro e gli studi sulla biografia antica*, *PP* 22 (1967), 134 ff.; S. West, *Satyrus: Peripatetic or Alexandrian?*, *GRBS* 19 (1974), 279 ff.; H. Frey, *Der βίος Εὐριπίδου des Satyrus und seine literaturgeschichtliche Bedeutung*, diss. Zürich, Gotha s.a.

24 Kumaniecki, *op. cit.*, 15.

25 Some particular aspects have been treated by E. Nachmanson, *Der griechische Buchtitel, einige Beobachtungen* (Göteborg 1941); E. Schmalzriedt, *Περὶ φύσεως, Zur Frühgeschichte der Buchtitel* (München 1970); L.W. Daly, *The Entitulation of Pre-Ciceronian Writings*, *Classical Studies... Oldfather* (Urbana 1943), 20 ff.; K.E. Henriksson, *Griechische Büchertitel in der römischen Literatur* (*Annales Acad. Scient. Fenn.* 10), Helsinki 1956; overview in E. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Oxford 1971), index and 16.1 containing additional bibliography. Now also N. Horsfall, *Some Problems of Titulation in Roman Literary History*, *BICS* 28 (1981), 103 ff.

26 For titles of individual books, see, e.g., Daly, *op. cit.*, 22 f. Of course some parts of Homer were known by individual titles already in the Classical Age (e.g., *τειχομαχία*: Plato, *Ion*, 539b); Plutarch's own references to his *Lives* are much too late evidence; on chapter-divisions, etc., see R. Friderici, *De librorum antiquorum capitum divisione atque summaris*, diss. Marburg 1911; H. Mutschmann, *Inhaltsangabe und Kapitelüberschrift im antiken Buch*, *H* 46 (1911), 93 ff. Apparently it has not been noticed that some of Nepos' *Lives* start with what might be taken as a chapter-heading, viz., the name of the subject not in a syntactical context (e.g., Themistocles, Neocli filius, Atheniensis. huius vitia, etc.); the same phenomenon can be observed later in, e.g., Diogenes Laertius.

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hindsight and disregard for the chronological niceties of Greek literary history. This conclusion is highly relevant for other fragments quoted by the same author. The dispute between Barbu and Steidle²⁷ concerning the question whether *περὶ τῆς Διονυσίου τραγῆς* and *περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου* could have been titles of Satyrus' works seems to be misplaced; but it appears to be highly probable that we should accept these as descriptive titles given by Athenaeus to sections of the work. If this suggestion is accepted it should be connected with the discussion of the nature of the work (below).

Next, the economy of the work. As we have seen, the sixth book contained the Lives of the three tragic poets. Another fragment contains a mention of Diogenes from the fourth book, which thus must have been devoted to philosophers, or to a division of them such as the Cynics. Other philosophers mentioned in the fragments include Pythagoras, Empedocles, Zeno of Elea, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Anaxarchus and Stilpo. It must be left at least an open question whether all these – and presumably others, on whom chance did not preserve fragments – could have been included in one book; nor is it possible to suggest what part may have been apportioned to Alcibiades, Dionysius the Younger and Philip – and what other political worthies, if any, may have been included.

Third, literary form. The discovery of the dialogue-form of the Life of Euripides was no doubt the major surprise of the Oxyrhynchus papyrus (above, Ch. I and n. 17). Albeit the other surviving fragments are too short to prove this, the requirements of literary uniformness render it absolutely certain that this was the form of the entire work. Though one should be wary of absolute statements, it must be clear that such a form seems even more difficult to accord with political than with literary Lives.

All the above considerations lead to the next, and most important one concerning the very nature and literary genre of Satyrus' work. It has been suggested²⁸ that it may have been akin to the so-called *problemata* literature²⁹, and, though a warning has been sounded against the inclusion of statesmen in the same category³⁰, it seems perfectly

27 Barbu, *op. cit.*, 25 f.; Steidle, *op. cit.*, 144.2.

28 A. Dihle, *op. cit.*, 105.1, adducing the authority of K. Latte.

29 There is no exhaustive treatment of the subject; see Gudeman, s.v. *Λύσεις*, *RE* XIII.2511 ff. and F. Wehrli in his discussions of some Peripatetics, e.g., Straton of Lampsacus frg. 149, p. 83; Dicaearchus frg. 90–93; Heraclides Ponticus frg. 171–5; Chamaeleon, pp. 75 ff.

30 West, *op. cit.* (supra, n. 23), 281.8.

probable that it should be the one extant in Plutarch's *πολυποσίας*. Satyrus with if the biographical *bibl.* 190 1 *ζητητικὸν* a with *ζητήμα*

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31 *Ibid.*, 282, ti, *Satiro*).

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probable that the fragments of Satyrus belonged to that genre. If so, it should be envisaged that it was similar in its main characteristics to the one extant example of the genre known to me, viz., the πρόβλημα in Plutarch's *συμποσιακά προβλήματα* I.6 (623D) *περὶ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου πολυποσίας*. Another note of caution³¹ warns us against identifying Satyrus with other holders of the name since it was very popular: but if the biographer can be equated with the Satyrus mentioned in Phot. *bibl.* 190 151b21 as Ἀριστάρχου γνώριμος, ζῆτα ἐκαλεῖτο διὰ τὸ ζητητικὸν αὐτοῦ he may well have been the author of works dealing with ζητήματα i.e. προβλήματα³².

But whatever the contentions of various commentators, a frank assessment of the five fragments in question alone cannot prove with any degree of certainty their pertaining to the one or the other literary genre. Cannot, that is, to an objective enquirer without strongly held prejudices as to the history of the literary genres themselves. Of course, if one is convinced of the existence of political biography at the period in question and actually on the lookout for an example of a literary form whose existence is axiomatic, there may be little difficulty in fitting in these fragments in supposed Lives of Alcibiades, Dionysius or Philip; if, on the other hand, one does regard the question as still in need of a satisfactory solution, one will have to admit that these fragments, constituting as they do the most important single piece of evidence for the case, are far from compelling³³.

Nor is the case for Satyrus strengthened by the addition of Hermyppus 'the Callimachean'³⁴, designated a Peripatetic only by Jerome³⁵. The great majority of his fragments belongs to literary biography and interpretations of literature. Certainly his biographies of the Lawgivers

31 *Ibid.*, 282, repeating her similar doubts from *Gnomon* 38 (1966), 546 (review of Arrighetti, *Satiro*).

32 The identification has been doubted by Wilamowitz, *Lesefrüchte*, *H* 34 (1899), 633 f., but it seems entirely possible chronologically, if we do accept the identification of Satyrus with the author of the treatise 'On the Demes of Alexandria', written, as it now appears from the new papyrus finds, under the reign of Ptolemy V and Cleopatra I between 193 and 180: cf. E.G. Turner in *POxy* XXVII (1962), 2465, p. 119. It should be mentioned, however, that H. Strasburger, *Umblick im Trümmerfeld der griechischen Geschichtsschreibung*, *Historiographia Antiqua* (Commentationes Lovanienses in honorem W. Peremans, 1977), 49, regards Satyrus' 'Life of Philip' as 'the first sure biography of a statesman'.

33 Cf. D.A. Russell, Plutarch's 'Alcibiades' 1-16, *PCPS* 12 (1966), 37.5: 'There is no good reason for thinking that Satyrus' anecdotes about Alcibiades (Athenaeus 534) come from a formal life'.

34 Most easily accessible in *Supplementband 1* of Wehrli's *Die Schule des Aristoteles* (1974); but see the severe criticism of I. Gallo, *Frammenti biografici da papiri I* (Roma 1975), 215, joined by S. West, *Gnomon* 51 (1979), 425n.

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belong to the same genre. Incidentally, the fact that these non-political biographies were epitomized together with Satyrus by Heraclides Lembus³⁶ only makes the political character of Satyrus' fragments more dubious. Nor should the series 'On those who passed from Philosophy to Tyranny and Reign'³⁷ be interpreted as anything but a specialised work on Lives of Philosophers — perhaps not unlike in conception from classes of philosophers such as those belonging to a certain school, etc.

In conclusion, Steidle's arguments, as a whole, though very short of positive proof, should not be altogether dismissed. In all fairness, it must be conceded that on the whole they do include some indicators, notably the fragments of Satyrus, which can possibly be harmonised with the view that there existed a political biography in the Hellenistic Age. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the evidence assembled by Steidle is apparently *all* that can be put forward in support of such a view. Considering the strength of the conviction of the great majority of scholars, this is amazingly little indeed.

Yet the case should not rest here: as will presently be demonstrated, a host of other considerations must be given due hearing; at their conclusion, it may confidently be predicted, the weight of the evidence will strongly favour the more sceptical view.

These considerations were not entirely hidden from Steidle, though he saw, apparently, only the tip of the iceberg. After his attempt to refute Uxkull-Gyllenband and Barbu, Steidle acknowledged the added difficulty presented by the absence of any straightforward indication of the existence of Hellenistic predecessors in Plutarch's Lives. This, however, constitutes only a very small part of the evidence that can be assembled against the case represented by Steidle. First, as will be seen presently, the *argumentum e silentio* embraces far more than the Greek biographies of Plutarch; secondly, the *argumentum e silentio* does not exist in a void, but is surrounded by a surprising wealth of positive evidence.

Before surveying that evidence in detail a general note of principle concerning the argument from silence will perhaps not be out of place here, since it is always easy to make light of this sort of evidence and since it will be employed to a considerable degree in what follows.

36 *POxy* 1367, edited by Gallo (above, n. 32), no. 1 with introduction, commentary and translation.

37 Frag. 89–90 Wehrli (from *Acad. Phil. Index Herc.* and *Stoic. Ind. Herc.*) *περὶ τῶν ἀπὸ φιλοσοφίας εἰς τυραννίδας καὶ δυναστείας μεθεστηκότων.*

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Though silence may well be an absolute and objectively defined term of general application, it is the environment that decides the importance that is to be attached to the absence of sound. The silence on the moon is not comparable to a silence in the jungle; and midnight silence in a town may indicate a state of affairs quite different from that implied by silence at noon. In our case it is not the total silence of the grave that we encounter and which can be interpreted as hiding the dead voices of any number of imaginable beings: it is rather the clearly audible echoes of a powerful choir from which only the part we are seeking is absent, a fact best explained by supposing that it never was there in the first place. Though much of what we know about Antiquity we owe to the chances of survival, these are neither the only factor nor totally unpredictable. In certain areas of study any piece of information is a boon, nothing can be predicted on the basis of the absence of information. In other fields and periods, again, the puzzle may be clear enough for it to be necessary to account for every missing piece. The following part of our study sets as its aim the description and evaluation of the different kinds of evidence that might have been expected to testify to the existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age. It is only the combined value of these expectations as opposed to the negative outcome that establishes the inherent force of the argument from silence.

Before discussing this evidence in some detail a brief survey, suggestive of its scope, may be welcome. The evidence is both positive and negative. On the one hand there exists a wealth of information relating to literary genres closely connected — in the minds of modern scholars at least — with political biography. Obviously this wealth of evidence renders less attractive the hypothesis that the absence of positive testimonies for the existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age is entirely due to the chances of survival. Indeed, one would be tempted to require from the believers in the existence of Hellenistic political biography some explanation of this, apparently strange, state of affairs. Thus literary biography and Lives of philosophers abound, according to our evidence, in the period in question; on the other hand, political personages are dealt with both in traditional *encomia* and in histories centred around the figure of a great ruler or general. Again, the number of attested works belonging to these two genres is too impressive to explain away the difference between the evidence for them and the absence of traces of political biographies. The positive evidence is rounded off by inference of the negative side. We are not informed about the existence of political

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biographies, although in a number of contexts such information seems to be required and its absence is in need of explanation. Polybius, the historian most critical of his predecessors and rivals, never refers to biographers among them. Neither are we able to detect biographical sources among the predecessors of Nepos and Plutarch, the places where one would most obviously expect them. Finally, the discoveries of papyri have not yielded – so far – any clear evidence of political biographies from the Hellenistic Age. We shall have to discuss now these points one by one.

Let us start with the positive evidence. This consists, in the main, of two literary genres well attested in the Hellenistic Age. On the one hand there exist abundant fragments, titles of works, etc. of the historical genre concerned with the deeds of a single personality, a king, ruler or general; on the other hand we possess a wealth of information about biographies of poets, philosophers and other intellectual personalities from the same age: it is only political biographies that remain unattested. Thus, two sides of the triangle are fairly well lit while the third is in complete shadow: one is tempted to demand that the burden of proof be transferred to those who believe that there *is* something hidden in that shadow. Moreover, consideration must be given to the very nature of our evidence. Not only do we possess the names of a fairly large number of authors and titles, and sometimes some fragments, of an even greater number of works, but also we can see quite clearly that most of these authors wrote many works in a variety of different fields and genres. This renders the loss of political biography hypothesis even more tenuous. We are invited not only to believe that it was the evidence for one particular type of work that was lost, but also that either a) political biography was written by authors known to us by name and some works, and in all cases it was the evidence for this type of writing that disappeared, or b) that political biography in the Hellenistic Age was composed by authors not interested in other branches of literature. A third alternative, viz., that political biography, too, was written by polygraphs, and that all evidence for both writers and titles disappeared, perhaps stretches the probabilities beyond the measure acceptable even to propounders of the theory here under discussion. Against this theory should be measured the working hypothesis here proposed, viz., that in the Hellenistic Age biography was still considered an appropriate literary genre only for persons from the realms of the intellect, while those better known for their deeds were to be dealt with in historical monographs.

And now this evidence in some more detail.

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1. *Historical monographs*. Naturally the exploits of kings, statesmen and generals formed a major focus of interest in an age that abounded in conquerors, political adventurers and powerful dynasties complete with intrigue, family alliances and dissensions, with coups d'état in a Greek world whose boundaries expanded now to the very limits of the *oikoumene*. Moreover, the interest the Greeks showed in foreign peoples is well attested for their historical literature: Jews, Hannibal of Carthage and assorted Hellenised and semi-Hellenised princes and princelings figure at the side of Greeks and Macedonians in the remaining fragments.

Can it be mere chance that our entire, not inconsiderable, knowledge concerned with these exploits has as its theme 'The deeds of', 'History of' and the like, never the lives proper of the heroes? Felix Jacoby's monumental oeuvre, fragmentary as it is, has taught us all that the remnants of Greek historiography adequately reflect the lost works and that the general outlines, at least, of what has not survived are still perceptible. It does not follow from all this that there are no blind patches in our field of vision. However, the existence of such blind patches should be demonstrated rather than assumed.

The difference between these historical monographs and political biography is, of course, very real. We only have to compare the surviving examples of the genre with the extant biographies³⁸. Arrian's *Anabasis*, though late, is the only perfect surviving example; Curtius Rufus, a century earlier³⁹, lacks the two first books, while a third example, Jason of Cyrene's History of Judas the Maccabee⁴⁰, we know only by means of its epitome, *II Maccabees*. Particularly a comparison of the structure of Arrian's history with that of Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, written only a generation earlier, clearly shows the differences between historical and biographical writing. To mention only one issue, Arrian, by starting his work with the accession of Alexander, despite the rich material available on the hero's parentage, birth, childhood and youth — components *sine quibus non* in any biographical treatment worth its salt — indicates an approach wholly foreign to that of biography (see Ch. I, n. 24). That this is not just a

38 On the structure of historical monographs, cf. the remarks of P. Stadter, *op. cit.*, 63.

39 For the date of Curtius Rufus, see J.E. Atkinson, *A Commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' History of Alexander Books 3 and 4* (Amsterdam 1980), 21 ff. and bibliography cited there; cf. also A.M. Devine, 'The Parthi, the Tyranny of Tiberius and the Date of Q. Curtius Rufus', *Phoenix* 33 (1979), 142 ff.; idem., 'Tacitus' rubrum mare and the Date of Q. Curtius Rufus', *LCM* 4 (1979), 159 f.

40 Most probably the title was τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἰούδαν τὸν Μακκαβαῖον; Jacoby (*FGrHist* 182) is hesitant.

matter of starting the history with Alexander's elevation to the throne is evidenced by the fact that these issues are never mentioned in 'flash-backs': thus, e.g., Arrian does not avail himself of the opportunity to describe the taming of Bucephalas when relating his death (5.14.4; cf. 5.19.5-6).

It would be otiose here to survey the existing evidence for historical monographs in the Hellenistic Age, as the task has been already performed by Jacoby in *FGrHist* B II. One example, however, the most extreme of its kind, will be adduced to demonstrate our point. It is to be hoped that it will be enough to enable us to draw from it conclusions *a fortiori* as to the other possible subjects of political biographies.

No subject could rival the fascinating figure of Alexander the Great, a youthful hero whose unparalleled life and achievement has never failed to excite the imaginations of every generation and whose romance lures into dangerous pitfalls even modern biographers and classical scholars. Though the major surviving sources — Plutarch's *Life*, Arrian's *Anabasis* and Curtius Rufus' *Histories* — date from the Early Empire (to which one should add Diodorus, writing in the first century B.C.), we do possess a fairly good picture of the lost Alexander-literature⁴¹. L. Pearson has aptly named his critical evaluation of this literature 'The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great'⁴². The total absence of evidence for biographies of Alexander in the Hellenistic Age should have been adequate warning to scholars who as a matter of course assumed the existence of political biographies in this period: if such a genre existed no subject could have emulated the attractions of Alexander. This is not presented as, or instead of, positive proof: but the assumption that all evidence both of Lives of Alexander and the rest of the political biography of the age was lost involves the hypothesis of a very high degree of coincidence indeed. The detailed analysis of the 'Lost Histories' shows beyond any reasonable doubt that all our evidence points to works that bear the titles and characteristics of 'Histories of Alexander', 'About Alexander' and the like⁴³, but never

41 For the fragments, see Jacoby, *FGrHist* IIB, nos. 117 ff.

42 L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (Am. Phil. Ass. Monogr. XX, New York and Oxford 1960).

43 Onesicritus (*FGrHist* 134) is no exception. Pearson's suggestion (*op. cit.*, 89 f.) to change what appears to be the title from πῶς Ἀλέξανδρος ἤχθη to ἀνήχθη has not found favour (E. Badian, *Gnomon* 33 (1961), 663 [= *Studies*, 254]; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, LVII, n. 1), possibly rightly so. But the remaining fragments contain no reference to events preceding the expedition; the supposed parallelism between Onesicritus' work and the *Cyropaedia* depends solely on Diog. Laert. 6.84; that passage, however, asserting that Xenophon joined

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46 See n. 39 abo

'Life of Alexander'⁴⁴. It is interesting to note that such a late writer as the rhetor Potamon, who came to Rome in 47 B.C. and lived until the reign of Tiberius (*FGrHist* II B 147) still wrote *περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μακεδόνα*: as he was also the author of *encomia* of Brutus and Caesar (Augustus?), we can be fairly certain that he never employed the biographical genre proper. His contemporary, the Augustan geographer and historian Strabo of Amaseia, wrote *τὰς Ἀλεξάνδρου πράξεις*⁴⁵.

An even later text to be considered in this connexion is Sen. *n. q.* 3 *praef.*, written in 62–3 A.D.

Consumpsere se quidem, dum acta regum externorum componunt quaeque passi invicem ausique sunt populi: quanto satius est sua mala extinguere quam aliena posteris tradere? Quanto potius deorum opera celebrare quam Philippi aut Alexandri latrocinia ceterorumque, qui exitio gentium clari non minores fuere pestes mortalium quam inundatio, qua magna pars animantium exaruit?.

In the sequence Seneca goes on and gives examples from writers of the histories of Hannibal. It is remarkable that such a late writer as Seneca still regards writers of histories of Philip and Alexander rather than authors of biographies as characteristic. Since the protracted argument concerning the date of Curtius Rufus seems now to favour a date of composition under the reign of Claudius⁴⁶, one could perhaps, with due caution, suggest that Seneca may be referring to him.

the expedition of Cyrus as Onesicritus joined the expedition of Alexander, and the former wrote the *Cyrupaedia* as the latter πῶς Ἀλέξανδρος ἤχθη, implies that Diogenes Laertius never read the *Cyrupaedia* (thus already T.S. Brown, *Onesicritus. A Study in Hellenistic Historiography* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1949], 13). And what indication have we that he read Onesicritus? There are no grounds whatsoever to believe that Onesicritus' work was basically different from that of other historians of Alexander. Remarkably, no fragment refers to events earlier than 331 in Marsyas' (of Pella or of Philippi, *FGrHist* 135–6) τὰ περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου (Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀγωγή). The work of Nicanor (*FGrHist* 146) is referred to as Ἀλεξάνδρου βίος in Fla, but as *res gestae* in Flb: all we know about its chronology is that it is mentioned by Varro – Nicanor could have been a close contemporary. Nor are we better informed about other rulers: nothing is known besides the title about Lysimachus' (*FGrHist* 170) περὶ τῆς Ἀττάλου παιδείας; Nicholas of Damascus lies outside the chronological limits of the present discussion.

44 Only in an uncharacteristically careless remark can Pearson (p. 33) speak of Callisthenes' work as 'encomiastic biography rather than history'; elsewhere he has no doubts as to the literary character of the tradition. Cf., e.g., his excellent remark, p. 242: 'It was just because so many writers had written about the 'deeds' instead of the 'character' of Alexander that Plutarch found it difficult to write his kind of biography'.

45 Strabo 2.670. This is not to decide categorically a very complex issue debated by, among others, v. Gutschmid, Ed. Schwartz and Felix Jacoby; see *FGrHist* 91 F3 with commentary IIB p. 292 where further references are brought.

46 See n. 39 above.

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Be this as it may, he referred to Romans as writers who composed *acta regum externorum*.

It is not that the implicit inferences of Jacoby and Pearson were accepted without dissent. There have been those who postulated an otherwise unattested Hellenistic biographical source for Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*⁴⁷ along with those who assumed that such a biography constituted a common source for Plutarch and the *Alexanderroman*⁴⁸. Yet these attempts only relegate the problems one step back instead of solving them. They possess the fallacy common to theories involving *Mittelquellen* in that they sidestep the issues and do not face the facts as they appear from the evidence, presumably because that evidence contrasts with their preconceived theories. Referring the problem of the emergence of political biography from existing Lives to presumably lost ones is not unlike that other favourite design of Alexander-*Quellenforscher*, namely, the explanation of mixed attitudes to Alexander by assuming favourable and hostile sources: apparently mixed views are possible only in extant works; lost writers were always perfectly monolithic in their attitudes.

Closely allied to the genre of histories of single rulers, generals, etc. are the histories of countries by means of series of rulers. Characteristically, such works seem to have their origins in political polemics: Idomeneus on the Athenian Demagogues on the one hand, and Pha(e)nia, Hermippus, Baton and Charon on assorted series of tyrants on the other hand, will hardly have had biographical notions when devising such works more than did later practitioners of the genre writing on, e.g., the kings of Judaea⁴⁹. Though there are no extant works of the genre available for discussion, some profit may be derived from the surviving *Lives of Galba* and *Otho* from Plutarch's biographical series of the Emperors from Augustus to Vitellius. Some of the differences

47 J.E. Powell, *The Sources of Plutarch's Alexander*, *JHS* 59 (1939), 229 ff.; as David Lewis long ago pointed out to me, Mr. Enoch Powell, in this paper, was a victim of the same fallacy that was later to guide him in politics, viz., that very complex problems – in our case the sources of Plutarch's *Alexander* – have perfectly simple solutions.

48 R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans*² (Zetemata 9², München 1977), 46.

49 Idomeneus: *FGrHist* 338; Pha(e)nia: Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* IX; see also Stuart, *Epochs*, 132 ff. who thinks him at least as important as Aristoxenus in the development of biography; on Hermippus, see n. 34 above; Baton of Sinope: *FGrHist* 268; Charon of Carthage: *FHG* IV.360; see also Euagoras of Lindos (*FGrHist* 619); Nicandros of Chalcidion (*FGrHist* 700); Menander of Ephesus (*FGrHist* 783); Timagenes of Alexandria (*FGrHist* 88); Athenaeus of Naucratis (*FGrHist* 166); authors of Jewish histories: Justus of Tiberias (*FGrHist* 734); Demetrius (*FGrHist* 722); Eumolpus (*FGrHist* 723).

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52 Cf. J.M. Edn the earlier pa 53 E.g., Ar. *EN* 4

between that series and the later one of the *Parallel Lives* may be ascribed to the biographer's lack of experience at a time when his technique has not yet achieved perfection⁵⁰, others must have their roots in the proximity of the series to the historical genre. True, at *Galba* 2.5 Plutarch is at pains to set forth the differences between biography and 'pragmatic' history; significantly, though, the subject is not expanded and emphasized as in the later *Alexander* (see below). However, the similarity of subject-matter of the biographical series of Emperors and the historical narrative centred around rulers is clearly brought to light in the distribution of the relevant material. Not only is the detailed treatment of descent, birth, childhood, etc. reduced here to a minimum, but the very boundaries of the biographies fade away in favour of the continuous historical narrative. Though the *Life of Otho* starts with his ascent to the throne, yet he is already at the centre of attention from *Galba* 19 on, when his role in the succession starts to be prominent⁵¹.

2. *Intellectual biography in the Hellenistic age.* Here we are somewhat less fortunate than with historical monographs, as no exhaustive collection of the remains of *Lives* of poets, philosophers, etc. from the Hellenistic Age has yet been attempted. However, it is not exhaustiveness we are aiming at. It is the very wealth of the evidence that should render the argument more weighty and add to its cumulative force.

Pride of place belongs here to the Peripatetics. Whatever the truth or otherwise in Leo's theory, it is clear that there was great interest in biography among the Peripatetics: Wehrli's *Schule des Aristoteles* conveniently provides us with the lion's share of the evidence needed.

Interest in personality in the Peripatetic school is already attested for Aristotle's successor Theophrastus, whose extant *χαρακτῆρες* show a progressive personalisation of the different characters⁵². He was the first to treat the Aristotelian theme⁵³ of the different ways of life in

50 On the date of Plutarch's *Caesars*, see J. Geiger, *Zum Bilde Julius Caesars in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, *Historia* 24 (1975), 444 ff.; R. Syme, *Biographers of the Caesars*, *MH* 37 (1980), 104 ff (= *Roman Papers* III [Oxford 1984], 1251 ff).

51 It has been suggested to me, that Cicero's letter to Lucceius (fam. 5.12), with its emphasis on historical monographs (§2), mention of the *Agesilaus* of Xenophon (§7) and total disregard of biography, may also indicate the non-existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age. However, it is doubtful whether there was a call for mentioning biography in the letter; furthermore, it is quite possible that *Lives* of people still alive, of any sort, were not yet known (see below, Ch. III).

52 Cf. J.M. Edmonds in the Introduction to his Loeb edition, p. 4: 'What was Anyman in the earlier parts of the book comes to be Somebody in the later'.

53 E.g., *Ar. EN* 4.1123ab.

a work *περὶ βίων*: one of its ten books⁵⁴ may have been the *περὶ γάμου* dealing with the question *εἰ γαμητέον τῷ σοφῷ*⁵⁵.

No doubt the most important Peripatetic in this connexion was Aristoxenus of Tarentum⁵⁶. The praise heaped on Aristoxenus by Jerome — *longe omnium doctissimus Aristoxenus musicus* — has already been shown to be second-hand, and surely it is justified by Aristoxenus' reputation as a writer on music, and perhaps his standing in the Peripatetic school, and is not in itself evidence for his preeminence as a biographer. Nevertheless, there may be some basic truth in Leo's evaluation of Aristoxenus as having received the field of biography in Aristotle's parcelling out of the fields of learning⁵⁷. If so, it is the more remarkable that Aristoxenus' interest in biography was strictly limited to men of standing in the world of the intellect, while no shred of evidence points to his dealing with persons of political significance. The question if and to what extent this interest was motivated by the Pythagorean tradition and the animosities among Aristotle's disciples as suggested by Leo and Momigliano⁵⁸ is beyond the scope of the present investigation; nor can the suggestion that he may have been the first to introduce anecdote into biography be regarded as more than speculation.

Next to Aristoxenus, the most important figure in the theories concerning the foundations and the development of Peripatetic biography was Dicaearchus of Messene⁵⁹. His *περὶ βίων* in at least two books dealt, in the first book, with Plato⁶⁰, and also with Pythagoras⁶¹, possibly the Seven Sages⁶², and Socrates⁶³. Some of these fragments, at least, seem to suggest that the incidents from the Lives of these men were meant to demonstrate the superiority of the *πρακτικός* as opposed to the *θεωρητικός βίος*, the main bone of contention between

54 D.L. 5.42.

55 Cf. Bickel, *Diatriba*, 219.

56 *FHG* II.269 ff.; Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* II² (Basel 1967); idem, *RE Suppl.* XI, 336 ff.

57 Leo, *Biographie*, 102 ff., followed in the main by Momigliano, *Development*, 74 ff.; Stuart, *Epochs*, 129 ff. believes that Aristoxenus' influence has been exaggerated and stresses the rival claims of Pha(e)nias.

58 *loc. cit.*

59 *FHG* II.225 ff.; Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* I (Basel 1944); idem, *RE Suppl.* XI, 526 ff.

60 Frg. 40W.

61 Frg. 33–37W.

62 Frg. 30–32W.

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Dicaearchus and Theophrastus; his famous βίος Ἑλλάδος is beyond the scope of the present investigation (see above, Ch. I).

Clearchus of Soli's⁶⁵ *περὶ βίων* in at least eight books may have been written in dialogue⁶⁶. It seems to have belonged to the widespread Peripatetic genre of works dealing with the different types of life as demonstrated by examples⁶⁷, though it is quite possible that the preeminence of the fragments concerned with the subject of *τροφή* is disproportionate owing to the fact that the majority of the remnants derive from Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*. His *encomium* of Plato seems to have been connected with Speusippus' *encomium*, and may possibly have contained denials of the charges made by Aristoxenus⁶⁸. Most importantly, no sign of interest in history or in historically significant personages can be detected in our information about Clearchus.

Most revealing is the case of Demetrius of Phalerum⁶⁹. Despite his own famous political career, his interest in history and his various historical writings⁷⁰ – these often connected – there is no hint that he tried to adapt and blend Peripatetic biography and historiography to produce Lives of statesmen⁷¹.

Of Strato of Lampsacus⁷² we only know that, like other Peripatetics, he wrote a work with the title *περὶ βίων*⁷³.

Aristo of Keos⁷⁴ wrote *Lives* of philosophers⁷⁵.

Another writer *περὶ βίων* was the prodigious Heraclides Ponticus⁷⁶: the title is included in the systematic list of his works under the heading of *φυσικά*⁷⁷. As other Peripatetics, he, too, wrote a great number of works concerned with the poets and their poetry; his *χαρακτήρες*,

64 Frg. 25 (= Cic. *Att.* 2.16.3).

65 F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* III (Basel 1948); L. Robert, *Comptes Rendus Ac. Inscr.* 1968, 421 ff.

66 Wehrli on frgs. 38; 41; 50–51; 56.

67 R. Joly, *op. cit.* (quoted Ch. 1, n. 8).

68 Frg. 2a–b; cf. Momigliano, *Development* 77; Wehrli, p. 45.

69 *FGrHist* 228; Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* IV² (Basel 1968).

70 Frg. 123–155W; F1–7 Jacoby.

71 The list of works of Demetrius handed down by Diogenes Laertius (5.80 = frg. 74W) contains a number of titles with the names of eminent personalities, such as Aristides, Artaxerxes, Dionysius, etc. There is absolutely no indication of the contents of these works: they may well have been dialogues, as suggested, e.g., by Wehrli.

72 Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* V (Basel 1950).

73 D.L. 5.59.

74 Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* VI (Basel 1952), 31 ff.

75 Frg. 28–32W.

76 Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* VII (Basel 1953).

77 D.L. 5.86.

known only by title⁷⁸, again must have fitted a Peripatetic line going back to Theophrastus. His works included treatises on Piety, Valour, Justice, Happiness, etc. These may well have included historical anecdotes illustrative of the virtue in question, like the two concerning Pericles⁷⁹.

A prolific Peripatetic writer concentrating on books on different poets was Chamaileon⁸⁰.

Pha(e)nia of Eresus⁸¹, considered above in a different context, showed more conventional Peripatetic biographical interests in works such as the *περὶ Σωκρατικῶν*⁸².

Biographical interests were prominent also with writers whose connexions with the Peripatetic school were more tenuous. Among these, Satyrus and Hermippus were discussed above in the review of Steidle's arguments supporting the existence of political biography. Most importantly, both were very fertile in the field of intellectual biography. It is this fact, above all, that makes the impossibility to prove that they wrote political biographies as well so significant.

A third writer associated with the Peripatetic school was Sotion⁸³. He was perhaps the first author of *Diadochai of Philosophers*, a literary form that was to become highly popular and is represented by the extant compilation of Diogenes Laertius⁸⁴.

Of course writing on poets or lives of poets, philosophers, lawgivers or artists was never a monopoly of the Peripatetics. As early as the sixth century, Theagenes of Rhegium wrote on Homer⁸⁵, and the line continues through Antigonus of Carystus' *Lives*⁸⁶ to Philo of Larissa, the last undisputed head of the Academy, also attested as a writer *περὶ βίων*⁸⁷.

All this by way of demonstration⁸⁸. Again, it should be emphasized, it is the cumulative effect of the evidence that provides its edge. Was it

78 D.L. 5.88.

79 Athen. 5.533C (frg. 59) from the *περὶ ἡδονῆς* and Plu., *Per.* 35 (frg. 47W) from the *περὶ εὐσεβείας*; see Wehrli, *ad loc.*; Stuart, *Epochs*. 125 ff.

80 Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* IX (Basel 1957), 49 ff.

81 *Ibid.* 9 ff.

82 Frg. 30–31W.

83 Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles, Suppl.* II (Basel 1978).

84 For the exact title see Wehrli, 8 f. See also W.v. Kienle, *Die Berichte über die Sukzessionen der Philosophen in der hellenistischen und spätantiken Literatur* (diss. Berlin 1961), 79 ff.

85 Diels, *Vorsokr.* 6, 51 f., no. 2; R. Cantarella, *Omero in occidente e le origini dell'omerologia*, *PP* 22 (1967), 19 ff.

86 See Wilamowitz (above, n. 1).

87 Stob. 2.7.2, p. 41.7 ff. Wachs.

88 I. Gallo, *Frammenti biografici da papiri II: la biografia dei filosofi* (Roma 1980) contains

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the very same writers who also composed Lives of kings, statesmen and generals, the evidence for all of which is now lost? Was it different writers, who are all ignored by the surviving tradition while so much, relatively, is known about writers of intellectual biographies? One is tempted to maintain that this *argumentum e silentio*, properly illustrated, should in itself be sufficient to destroy what belief one may have held in the existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age. Our argument, however, does not stop here. There are a number of specific places and contexts where we had a right to expect to hear some echoes, at least, of that supposed choir of writers of political biographies, and where again it is silence that rules. We shall have to turn to and discuss these contexts now.

3. *Polybius*. Polybius stands out among ancient historians as both the most reflective on his own practice of his trade and the most critical of his fellow practitioners. In fact, Polybius polemizes, at differing degrees of intensity, against about a dozen earlier and contemporary historians mentioned by name, as well as against an unspecified number of writers referred to anonymously or by hints no longer understood. Not only is the former group composed entirely of writers of history, with not one biographer among them, but also the latter groups, as far as they can be identified by modern scholarship, exhibit exactly the same composition⁸⁹. The conclusion is inevitable: Polybius, as knowledgeable of the historiographical works of earlier and of his own generation as anybody could be, never referred to works of a biographical nature because he never perused such works; and most probably he never perused such works for the simple reason — indeed the simplest reason imaginable — that such works did not exist.

fragments of a Life of Philonides the Epicurean, a number of texts relating to Socrates, various fragments concerning Diogenes the Stoic and a papyrus containing sayings of Aristippus the Cyrenaic and Aesopus; these chance scraps may be perhaps not entirely unrepresentative of the genre.

89 The whole subject of Polybius' criticism of other historians is now exhaustively discussed in K. Meister, *Historische Kritik bei Polybios* (Palingenesia IX, Wiesbaden 1975) with full bibliography; cf. also G.A. Lehmann, Polybius und die ältere und zeitgenössische Geschichtsschreibung: Einige Bemerkungen, *Entr. Hardt XX* (1974), 145 ff. For identifications of the anonymous historians, see especially pp. 153 ff. Neither Meister's own analysis nor his review of earlier conclusions of different scholars contain a hint that any of these writers may have been a biographer. Note, e.g., that a good deal of Polybius' criticism concerns the history of Timoleon, and especially his glorification by Timaeus. If Timoleon, later the subject of Lives by Nepos and by Plutarch, had received biographical treatment before Polybius we might have expected some suggestion on this fact from the historian. Another obvious example is Plb. 3.6, criticism of ἔνιοι τῶν συγγραψόντων τὰς κατ' Ἀννίβαν πράξεις without any hint that βίοι of Hannibal may have been in existence.

4. *The sources of Nepos.* The hypothesis of the existence of a large number of political biographies composed in the Hellenistic Age must perforce assume their use by those who on this theory are regarded as their late followers; indeed, the early proponent of the theory, Ed. Meyer, took his departure from a source analysis of Nepos' and Plutarch's Lives of Cimon⁹⁰. Fortunately, this analysis does not need a detailed refutation anymore⁹¹. Nevertheless, Nepos' sources in his Greek biographies should be ascertained. It will be argued in the next chapter that the book on Greek generals was a possible afterthought in the long biographical series, and I shall not disagree with the prevailing view that many of the evident deficiencies of that book may be traced to haste. This only strengthens the assumption that Nepos must have grabbed at the most obvious and easily available sources for his composition. Nor should we easily dismiss Nepos' familiarity with the literature, since he had by now composed not only such works as the *Chronica*, containing much Greek historiographical material, but also completed already, in all probability, a book on Greek historians in the series of the *de viris illustribus* (see below, Ch. III). Unfortunately we do not have an exhaustive analysis of the sources of the entire book on Greek generals at our disposal: the only large-scale modern study known to me to attack the subject is restricted to about half of the Greek Lives⁹², without a valid explanation of this restriction (except for the normal size of and the reasonable effort one is expected to invest in a doctoral dissertation). Nevertheless, these partial results stand up under scrutiny and may well be indicative of the sources of the remaining Lives as well. The results are revealing: of the nine Lives investigated, all can be shown to have depended on the few major historians of the period with whom Nepos' familiarity seems to be beyond doubt⁹³; and the evidence is furnished – not that it is really needed – for Nepos' opportunities to acquaint himself with

90 E. Meyer, *Die Biographie Kimons*, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte* II (Halle 1899), 1 ff.

91 See Ch. I, n. 3 for the new attitude to Plutarch; a change in our estimate of Nepos should follow from our discarding the hypothesis of Plutarch's Hellenistic sources which, by implication, were also Nepos'.

92 J.R. Bradley, *The Sources of Cornelius Nepos: Selected Lives* (diss. Harvard 1967). The Lives discussed are those of Themistocles; Pausanias; Iphicrates; Chabrias and Timotheus; Epaminondas; Pelopidas; Agesilaus; Eumenes.

93 The main sources, according to Bradley, are: *Themistocles* and *Pausanias*: Thucydides and Ephorus; *Iphicrates*, *Chabrias* and *Timotheus*: Ephorus, also traces of Isocrates' *Antidosis* and Theopompus; *Epaminondas*: multiple sources, tradition of Ephorus; *Pelopidas* from material of *Epaminondas*, also perhaps Callisthenes' *Hellenica*, Ephorus; *Agesilaus* probably from Ephorus and Theopompus; *Eumenes* ultimately from Hieronymus.

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the Greek books under discussion. In fact, the sample of Bradley may be regarded as fairly representative if it is accepted that it reveals not only Nepos' procedure in a number of cases, but that this procedure is symptomatic of his method as a whole. An argument of some weight may be added here. All we know of Hellenistic biography suggests that if there existed political biographies in this period they must have belonged to biographical series rather than to scattered single Lives of generals and statesmen. Yet Nepos' use of historians — and in some cases, like that of the use of Thucydides in the *Life of Themistocles*, it has been admitted by all critics from Ed. Meyer onwards — does not suggest the availability of a ready-made list of heroes with biographies devoted to them. Whatever the ultimate value of Nepos' Lives and the effort invested in their composition, there exists a well-founded impression that he turned for each Life to an obvious and easily available source — viz., the major historian who wrote the narrative history of the hero's times.

In the same vein, an argument from probability: The chance that whole series of biographies devoted to political figures have disappeared without leaving any trails, perhaps identical with a hypothetical *Mittelquelle*, a *biographischer Gewährsmann* filling the gap between the historians and the biographer known to us, is harder to accept than the disappearance of the author of a single biography, or of a number of such authors.

The hypothesis of a whole string of such authors of biographies sharing in a communal disappearing act increases the unlikelihood in a geometrical proportion to the number of writers assumed. Admittedly, even if Nepos' usual method was the excerpting of biographical data from the most commonly read historians of a period, he could easily make an exception if there existed a convenient biographical work that had already done the lion's share of the work for him; but for such a hypothesis to be credible there must be *some* positive evidence, at least, for the existence of such biographical works. The present view is not far removed from a circular argument: it presupposes the existence of Hellenistic political biographies, assumes Nepos' use of them, and proves, in part, the existence of these Lives by the fact that Nepos must have availed himself of them.

Moreover, in the case of Nepos, as in that of Plutarch, the assumption of the existence of biographical *Mittelquellen* is not only uneconomical as a hypothesis, but, in fact, totally unproductive in that it only moves the structural problems of the work a stage back instead of solving them. It should be stated once and for all that analyses of

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existing sources that are designed to transfer problems from extant and known authors to unknown, and often anonymous, ones do a bad service to an important branch of study, unfortunately too often deserving its bad name⁹⁴. After all, what Nepos did, according to the present investigation, is not something impossible in principle; only that scholars insist that such a thing could have been done only by lost, unknown and anonymous authors, by writers about whom any hypotheses can be constructed, and not by an author about whose circumstances – and mental capacities – we are able to form a fairly well-based opinion.

5. *The sources of Plutarch*⁹⁵. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* are the most impressive achievement of ancient political biography, and one of the most important incentives towards the investigation of its antecedents. It is among the sources of Plutarch's Lives, more than in any other place, that the Hellenistic biographies of statesmen and generals should be expected to surface: it is here, more than in any other place, that their *prima facie* absence seems to trouble the propounders of the generally accepted theory. Indeed Steidle⁹⁶, after surveying what he considered to be the positive evidence for the existence of political biography, still found it necessary to discuss the apparent absence of biographies from among Plutarch's sources.

As is well-known, Plutarch's works formed a favourite hunting ground of German *Quellenforschung* in its heyday, and the field of some of its worst excesses. The reversal in trend has often been noticed, the turning point was seen by scholars in Gomme's excellent analysis in the Introduction to his Thucydides⁹⁷: but it is only fair to note that even at the height of the hypercritical fashion, the best minds were not easily led astray⁹⁸. An unprejudiced factual description of the evidence for Plutarch's sources should include two main elements:

a) Even though Plutarch is more generous than most ancient writers in the quotation of his authorities and other earlier writers, there is no

94 And cf. above, p. 50 concerning the methods of Alexander – *Quellenforschung*.

95 Unfortunately there does not exist a modern equivalent for the sources of the Greek Lives to the bibliography of B. Scardigli (quoted Ch. I, n. 3).

96 Steidle, *Sueton*, 144 f.

97 See Ch. I, n. 3.

98 Cf., e.g., Wilamowitz, *Erinnerungen*² (Leipzig 1928), 100: "Dasselbe Prinzip der 'einen Quelle' herrschte in der Historie. Nissen hat es formuliert, aber auch sonst ist die Quellenkritik, wie sie an Plutarch geübt ward, geradezu abstossend, wenn man den Autor leidlich kennt."

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reference in his Greek biographies that seems to point clearly to earlier authors of *Lives* of his heroes;

- b) Nevertheless, it is not to be disputed that many of the writers used by Plutarch are not quoted by name: thus the absence of writers of biographies from the list of authors quoted by Plutarch cannot in itself be accepted as sufficient evidence that such writers were not among his sources.

The easiest solution, and the one most generally employed before the present generation, is the assumption that some of the authorities quoted by Plutarch are referred to at second hand through the agency of various *Mittelquellen*: it is exactly against this tendency that present-day Plutarchean scholarship has turned, realising the width of Plutarch's reading⁹⁹, as well as the absence of any positive indicators for the theory. One should beware from being blind toward the existence of today's fashions while critically discerning yesterday's: but in all probability the present-day conservative trend does our author more justice than the hypercritical attitude once in vogue. It is the more surprising that the implications of the new trend have not been fully perceived: since it is now widely believed that hypothetical *Mittelquellen* should not be assumed without convincing arguments, and since it is only as such theoretical *Mittelquellen* that Plutarch's biographical sources make their appearance, it is difficult to understand the failure to draw from this state of affairs the appropriate conclusions as to Plutarch's biographical sources. Such conclusions have been arrived at, it is true, in a great number of particular cases¹⁰⁰, in each of which it is apparent

99 The evidence is assembled by W.C. Helmbold and E.N. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* (Baltimore 1959).

100 As stated (above, n. 95), there is no up-to-date bibliography on the Greek *Lives*. The general tendency is well argued by H. Homeyer, *Klio* 61 (1963), 145 ff. However, a few examples may demonstrate the various aspects of source criticism of Plutarch's Greek Lives: *Timoleon*: H.D. Westlake, *The Sources of Plutarch's Timoleon*, *CQ* 32 (1938), 65 ff., assumes a biographical *Mittelquelle* between Timaeus and Nepos and Plutarch. N.G.L. Hammond does not concern himself with this supposed stage of transmission in: *The Sources of Diodorus Siculus XVI.II: The Sicilian Narrative*, *CQ* 32 (1938), 137 ff.; M. Sordi, *Timoleonte* (Palermo 1961) is sceptical; most typical is the stance of R.J.A. Talbert, *Timoleon and the Revival of Greek Sicily* (Cambridge 1974); he follows, generally, Westlake, but note the disclaimer, p. 25: "In my view Westlake stresses Plutarch's knowledge of Peripatetic literature too much, and presents a rather weak case for the existence of a specifically Peripatetic biography of Timoleon." Nevertheless, he consequently makes do with the 'vague term' of 'Hellenistic' biography as the only explanation for the correspondence between Nepos and Plutarch. *Dion*: L. Voit, *Zur Dion-Vita*, *Historia* 3 (1954), 171 ff. assumes a Hellenistic biography. *Phocion*: H.-J. Gercke, *Phocion. Studien zur Erfassung einer historischen Gestalt* (Zetemata 64, München 1976), 232 ff. believes that none of the quoted authors is the main source, and assumes, with hesitations, a Hellenistic *vita*.

that the arguments in favour of hypothetical biographical sources are ill-founded; nevertheless, no inferences of general validity have been deduced from these investigations.

As always, the *argumentum e silentio* in itself cannot have decisive force (one must admit this again and again, though realising the danger of boring the reader): two supporting arguments may here be added that have not, it seems, been given due consideration.

- a) Plutarch does not, on principle, hide the existence of *Mittelquellen* on the occasions on which he makes use of them. This was already remarked by Theander¹⁰¹, but apparently has not made a strong enough impression on subsequent scholarship, and has not, at any rate, been emphasized by later scholars. Admittedly, the cases in which Plutarch does admit the use of intermediate sources need not be the only ones of this kind and he may have employed the same method in a number of other places. Yet on this hypothesis the question should be asked, why, with Hellenistic biographies, of all cases, Plutarch seems to have been anxious systematically to avoid any reference to intermediate sources. We cannot provide even a hypothetical answer to such a question — nor should the *onus probandi* be shifted from where it properly belongs.
- b) Not only is there no reason why Plutarch should be reticent about his biographical sources, but, on the contrary, such sources are clearly indicated by him in a number of instances. In the Roman *Lives* he refers to Nepos' biographies as his sources on some occasions¹⁰² and I have suggested some time ago that Nepos' series provided him with the primary guidance in search of the Roman characters of his biographies¹⁰³. In another *Life* the employment of a biographical source is even more apparent. As I have endeavoured to demonstrate in some detail¹⁰⁴ in the *Life of Cato the Younger*, a biographical work by Thræsea Paetus constituted a main — though, contrary to Peter's opinion, not exclusive — source

Epaminondas and *Pelopidas*: Westlake, *The Sources of Plutarch's Pelopidas*, *CQ* 33 (1939), 11 believes that there was a *Life of Epaminondas*, though not one of *Pelopidas*, available. *Aristides*: according to the Introduction to the Budé edition (R.F. Flacelière-É. Chambry, vol. V, 1969), Herodotus was used indirectly, through a Hellenistic mediator. See also P. von der Mühl, *Direkte Benützung des Ephoros und des Theopompos bei Plutarch*, *MH* 11 (1954), 243 f.

101 C. Theander, *Plutarch und die Geschichte*, *Bull. Soc. Roy. Lettres* (Lund 1950–51), 54 ff.

A much more limited list was already assembled by Gomme, *op. cit.*, 1.75.

102 *Marc.* 30; *Comp. Pel. Marc.* 1 = *Marc.* 31, *Luc.* 43; *TiGr* 21.

103 *H* 109 (1981), 95 ff.

104 Munatius Rufus and Thræsea Paetus on Cato the Younger, *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), 48 ff.

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of the Plutarchean *Life*. It is only natural that Plutarch makes no attempt to hide this fact, exactly as he does not hide that he relies on such autobiographical writings as Sulla's *Memoirs*¹⁰⁵. Another example of the same tendency is the writings of Bibulus and others concerned with Brutus¹⁰⁶.

Can it be ascribed to mere chance that such biographical writings as can be discerned among Plutarch's sources with an unprejudiced eye do not antedate Nepos and his time (including the *Commentaries* of Munatius Rufus¹⁰⁷)? Again, the burden of proof should be on those who propose to sustain such a contention.

The assumption of Plutarch's biographical sources rested on the twin foundations of the theory of Hellenistic political biography and of Plutarch's preference for 'ready-made' sources that involved only a minimal effort of research from the biographer. It is now clear that such a view was far too simplistic and did no justice to the author. Even in those very few cases where he seems to have relied on a single source his reworking and arrangement of the material are apparent¹⁰⁸: but it is more important to notice that this employment of a single source seems to be the consequence of necessity rather than of choice; even in such a case as the *Life of Cato the Younger*, where a ready-made and reliable biographical source was at his disposal, he preferred to supplement it, wherever he deemed it necessary, with other sources¹⁰⁹.

To sum up: Plutarch had no reason to be averse to the employment of biographical works for the composition of his *Lives*, and indeed used them on such occasions as they were available; nor was he unaware of the difference between primary and secondary sources – he acknowledged the use of the latter on a number of occasions. Thus, the total lack of any indication relating to biographical sources in his Greek *Lives* is best interpreted as a failure to avail himself of such works. Given Plutarch's width of reading and familiarity with all genres of Greek literature, this failure is best explained if we assume – as indeed we should – that political biography did not exist in the Hellenistic Age.

105 *Luc.* 1; *Mar.* 25; 26; 35; *Sulla* 4; 5; 6; 14; 16; 17; 19; 23; 27; 28; 37; cf. *an seni* 786E.

106 Bibulus: *Brut.* 13; cf. 23; Messalla Corvinus: *Brut.* 40; 42; 45; Volumnius: *Brut.* 48; 50.

107 Though there is no clear indication of when Munatius wrote, it seems most probable that he wrote close to Cato's death and thus several years before Nepos: cf. *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), 48 ff.

108 Cf. D.A. Russell, Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus*, *JRS* 53 (1963), 21 ff.

109 Cf. *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), 48 ff.

The case of Plutarch may be strengthened by that of Pausanias: he too, seems to have relied on the great classical historians of the fifth and fourth centuries, though when composing quasi-biographical descriptions of such heroes as Epaminondas, Aratus and Philopoemen he took recourse to Plutarch¹¹⁰.

6. *Hellenistic political biography on papyri?* Succour for the cause of Hellenistic political biography might have been expected – nor must such expectation be written off as entirely lost – from the sands of Egypt. As Leo had to learn, these constitute an arsenal of Nemesis not less formidable than the Bodleian library according to Housman. However, it is not with the future we are dealing here. Of the supposed wealth of political biographies composed during the Hellenistic Age something may have been expected to turn up in Egypt during the last century. Fortunately there is no need to inspect the whole mass of discoveries: the exhaustive work of Italo Gallo set as its aim the collection of all biographical fragments found on papyri¹¹¹. We already have the fragments assigned to political biography in the first volume of the collection. Apparently it is not easy to assemble biographical material: the editor of a volume on Latin Biography¹¹² had to include a chapter on Plutarch, who did not write in Latin, and one on Curtius Rufus, who did not write biography. Similarly, Gallo's main difficulty – and the one that will concern us here – seems to have been the decision what to include in the volume¹¹³. In the event Gallo edited and discussed seven papyri, which must be taken as the most generous possible count of the evidence. We shall survey these briefly.

110 M. Segre, Pausania come fonte storica, *Historia* (Milano-Roma) 1 (1927), 202 ff., esp. 207 ff., 218 ff.

111 I. Gallo, *Frammenti biografici da papiri 1: La biografia politica* (= *Testi e commenti* 1), Roma 1975 (henceforth = Gallo); II: *la biografia dei filosofi* (Roma 1980); a third volume of Lives of poets and writers is to appear. *POxy* 1800, to appear in Gallo's third volume, contains, besides biographical fragments on a number of poets and writers, also sections on Thrasybulus and the mythical figures Leucomas and Abderus. The text was written in the late II-early III century (thus Grenfell and Hunt, *ad loc.*).

112 T.A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Biography* (Studies in Latin Literature and Its Influence), London 1967.

113 The difficulty, and Gallo's more than generous approach, was noticed by a number of reviewers; see M.J. Costelloe, *Studia Papyrologica* 16 (1977), 58; F. Wehrli, *MH* 33 (1976), 258; S. West, *Gnomon* 51 (1979), 425; R.G. Lewis, *CR* 28 (1978), 71.

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- a) Heraclides Lembos' epitome of Hermippus' *On Legislators* (POxy 1367)¹¹⁴ has been discussed above. At least one reviewer of Gallo¹¹⁵ has noted that this is the only text in the volume that can be categorically identified as biographical in origin – and even here there is nothing that makes it explicitly belonging to political biography. Certainly if manner of treatment defines political biography as much as does the subject of the work¹¹⁶ there is nothing in these fragments that testifies to their political character. Moreover, the joining together, according to the subscription of the papyrus, of the epitomes of the Lawgivers with those of the Seven Sages and Pythagoras should be sufficient to destroy whatever confidence one might have felt in the political character of the work. Nor is this confidence strengthened by the fact that the known subjects of the papyrus include such "political" personages as Cecrops and Buzyges. Indeed, one is tempted to assume that were it not for the generally accepted theory about the existence of political biography in the Hellenistic Age, the inclusion of even this text in a series of political biographies would not have been considered; and the claims of the remaining papyri are clearly inferior to those of Heraclides Lembos.
- b) "Biographical Pinax of the Ptolemies" (P. Haun. 6)¹¹⁷. These short notices concerning members of the Ptolemaic dynasty cannot by any means be dignified by the appellation of biographies. Though close to the genre of histories of countries by means of series of rulers (cf. above), the brevity of treatment does not allow definition of closeness to either history or biography. It should be clear from what has been said above that such short works, apparently devoid of clear narrative characteristics, are better left out of the present discussion.
- c) The fragment attributed by Gallo to a *Life of Alcibiades* (P. Lit. Lond. 123)¹¹⁸ belongs to all appearances to the Roman period and thus is not relevant to the present enquiry¹¹⁹. Nevertheless, the

114 Gallo, 13 ff. The text was included in F. Wehrli, *Hermippos der Kallimacheer* (Die Schule des Aristoteles, Supplementband I), Basel 1974, 33 f.; on this edition, see Gallo's *caveat* in his *Addendum*, 215, joined by Mrs. West, *loc. cit.*, 425 n. Heraclides Lembos was thought by Leo, 135 the creator of 'Suetonian' biography; for criticism of this view, cf. H. Bloch, Heraclides Lembos and his Epitome of Aristotle's *Politeiai*, *TAPA* 71 (1940), 27 and Momigliano, *Development*, 87 f.

115 Costelloe, *loc. cit.*

116 See Lewis' pertinent remarks, *loc. cit.*

117 Gallo, 57 ff.; cf. Steidle, 177, n. 2; Momigliano, *Development*, 85.

118 Gallo, 107 ff.

119 Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxy. P.* III. 32.

words of one critic may be noted¹²⁰: "It is convenient to classify this as biography rather than history, but there is nothing here which a serious historian might not be expected to include." Of course, once the case for political biography in the Hellenistic Age is in serious doubt the convenience of classification disappears.

- d) Similarly, on the fragment attributed to a *Life of Demosthenes* by Gallo (*PSI* 144)¹²¹ the same critic remarks¹²²: "The grounds for regarding this as coming, specifically, from a biography, rather than from a work on grammar or literary criticism, seem insubstantial." Yet another critic raises in this connexion the problems of the definition of biography, and of political biography specifically¹²³. To these doubts – all following, it seems, in the wake of Wilamowitz¹²⁴ – should be added the fact that the text was composed most probably in the second century A.D.
- e) To the same period should be assigned the other fragment concerning Demosthenes (*P. Mich.* 19)¹²⁵, a fragment that cannot, by any reasonable arguments, be described as biographical in character¹²⁶.
- f) A fragment on the travels of Solon (*POxy* 680)¹²⁷, of uncertain literary genre¹²⁸ and time of composition¹²⁹, is too optimistically included in the collection of Gallo, as is
- g) The anecdote on Pyrrhus (*P. Mil.* 2, 48)¹³⁰, which could belong to any of a number of literary genres¹³¹; there is no indication how much – if at all – the composition of the fragment precedes the date of the papyrus, assigned by the editors to II-III century. A

120 West, *op. cit.*, 427.

121 Gallo, 141 ff.

122 West, *ibid.*

123 Lewis, *loc. cit.*

124 Neue Veröffentlichungen der italienischen Gesellschaft für Papyrusforschung, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* (1913), no. 30, pp. 1861 ff.

125 Gallo, 163 ff. For time of composition, cf. W.E. Blake, *TAPA* 57 (1926), 275 ff.

126 Cf. *ibid.*; see also the low estimate of this work by A. Koerte, *Archiv f. Papyforsch.* 10 (1932), 220; J.G. Winter, *Life and Letters in the Papyri* (Ann Arbor 1933), 249 ff. assigns it to Didymus' *περὶ Δημοσθένους*.

127 Gallo, 185 ff.

128 For the various hypotheses, see bibliography quoted by Gallo; certainly his own assigning the fragment to the biographical genre is much too optimistic.

129 See, again, Gallo's Introduction to the papyrus.

130 Gallo, 203 ff.

131 Surely Gallo's concluding paragraph (p. 207) is far too charitable in ascribing the text to the genre of political biography; a number of other prose genres could contain an anecdote of this sort.

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consideration that should be taken into account is the rich historical literature on Pyrrhus¹³².

In all fairness, the limited quantity and fragmentary nature of the evidence does not allow for categorical pronouncements one way or the other as to the literary genre represented. Nevertheless, here, as with the rest of the evidence, the question should not be treated in isolation but rather as part of a broader scene: the relatively much richer biographical material of philosophers, poets, etc. found on papyri seems to correspond to the situation of the fragments of the indirect tradition¹³³.

We are at the end of our survey of the evidence for political biography in the Hellenistic Age. It must be clear by now that all indicators point to the conclusion that such a literary genre did not exist and that the prevailing theory in literary history deserves to be rejected. However, this cannot be the end of our study. The rejection of one theory calls for the substitution of an alternative, more credible one. It is such an alternative explanation of the birth and emergence of ancient political biography that will be put forward in the next chapter.

132 For the literature on Pyrrhus, see *FGrHist* 158 (Zenon); 159 (anonymous); 566 F36 (Timaeus); 703 F4 (Proxenus).

133 Gallo's second, and forthcoming third volume contain not only a much larger number of papyri, but, in the second volume at least, there are far fewer problems of ascription as far as the genre is concerned.

JOSEPH GEIGER

CORNELIUS NEPOS
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