VGThaum	Gregory of Nyssa, *De Vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi/Life of Gregory Thaumaturgos*
Vit.	Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum/Lives of Eminent Philosophers*
VMacr.	Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae/Life of Macrina*
VP	Porphyry, *Vita Plotini/Life of Plotinus*
VP/Bo	*Vita Pachomii Bohairice scripta/Life of Pachomius* (Bohairic version)
VP/G	*Vita Pachomii Graeca/Life of Pachomius* (first Greek version)
VP/S	*Vita Pachomii Sahidice scripta/Life of Pachomius* (Sahidic version)
VPaul	Jerome, *Vita Pauli/Life of Paulus*
VPyt	Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae/Life of Pythagoras*
VS	Eunapius, *Vitae philosophorum et sophistarum/Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*
VSoph.	Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum/Lives of the Sophists*

Introduction

Biography and Panegyric

TOMAS HÄGG AND PHILIP ROUSSEAU

DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

Two hundred years of cultural translation, ca. A.D. 250–450, and two genres, biography and panegyric, provide a formal frame for the texts to be discussed in this volume. The "translation," of course, was that of ancient Hellenism into Christian Hellenism, as expressed in literature. Our contributors, from their different angles and with different emphases, show how literary works with the lifespan of an individual as their ordering principle (rather than an idea or a chain of events) help to reveal that transition to us. The topoi and rhetorical strategies were largely inherited and shared, as was the basic narrative structure of a "life"; but the selection and combination involved, and the uses those means of expression were put to, made the portraits distinctly different, in accordance with the worldviews they conveyed.

To speak of two genres, however, is to ask for trouble. It would be more appropriate, for the period we are studying, just to call them two sets of texts, one overtly panegyrical in form, the other biographical: for it is precisely the transgression of the boundaries between them, their interaction and coalescence, that is most in evidence. After all, that is what makes it meaningful to treat both sets within the same covers and address the same questions to them. Much of the discussion here will appeal both to the essence of each genre and to the traditional or actual differences between them, in order to characterize the individual texts themselves more accurately.

ORIGINS

It is arguable that biography—to use the modern term rather than the ancient *bios*—is the broader concept, which includes panegyric as one of its possible forms. Historically, however, the beginnings of the two genres in the fourth century B.C. were distinct. Isocrates, in the introduction to his *Evagoras* (ca. 370 B.C.), a homage to the dead Cypriot tyrant, makes it plain that he was the proud inventor of the *prose encomium of contemporary persons*—each component of the generic designation being essential, he knew, if his claim were to be upheld. The epideictic speech is, as it were, the "home base" of this innovation, and it remains so for "pure" panegyrics. This rhetorical setting guarantees for the panegyrical genre a number of constant topoi and strategies.[1] Biography, on the other hand, as a typically bookish product, is much more versatile—and elusive. The point is not that panegyrics were necessarily performances, but that they pretended to be. Biography, to find a corresponding natural home, sometimes masqueraded as a letter.[2]

Isocrates starts off with an interesting piece of metapanegyric: what is he doing, he asks; why is he doing it; and is his talent equal to the task (*Evagoras* 1–11)? Calculated reflection on the art of praise remained a part of the genre, as also its professed twofold object: to praise, and to set an example for emulation. A third aim, to enhance the speaker's own reputation, was not similarly spelled out, but is plain in Isocrates' whole manner of dwelling on his own achievement as the first prose panegyrist of contemporaries. As we shall see in Frederick Norris's contribution to the present book, these concomitant ambitions—"your honor, my reputation"—are still operative in

1. The modern handbook of ancient panegyric is Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, with extensive bibliography. For the late antique period, see also Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*. On the term *panegyric*, see Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, 1–3. For a stimulating discussion of Isocrates and the nature of panegyric, see Rewa, *Reborn as Meaning*.

2. Leo, *Griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer litterarischen Form*, the old standard work on ancient biography, is still indispensable; also useful is Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*. Of modern studies, the works by Steidle and Dihle (see References below) are particularly important, and see also Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*. The brilliant essay by Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, is only a torso; it stops where the real fun begins. With regard to the biographical genre in general, there is no shortage of literary critical studies—see Rollyson, *Biography: An Annotated Bibliography*—but works of a more theoretical nature are rare; see, however, Shelston, *Biography*; Madelénat, *Biographie*; and Nadel, *Biography*.

what is perhaps the most accomplished piece of panegyrical oratory to survive from late antiquity, Gregory of Nazianzus's funeral speech for Basil of Caesarea (*Oratio* 43)—a speech with a central place in our collection.

A speaker addresses an audience, and he is standing in person (we are to believe) before that audience. His own reputation is palpably at stake. The writer of a biography may, if he so wishes, hide behind his text. Where is Mark in his Gospel? What role is left to Xenophon in his *Memoirs of Socrates*, or to Athanasius in his *Life of Antony*, once the prefatory considerations have given way to narrative and impersonation? The paramount influence they still exert on their representation of a great figure is controlled in other ways. There is never the same open competition for attention as there is between a speaker and the object of praise. Instead, without our noticing it, the biographical subject often merges with the biographer's own persona and agenda into one ideal whole: Socrates becomes the spokesman for Xenophon's morality, and Antony for Athanasius's view of asceticism.[3]

Like panegyric, Greek biography started in the fourth century B.C.; but it was born formless. The impact of Socrates' personality gave rise to a series of biographically focused writings, but none of them endeavored to follow the master's life stage by stage.[4] The masterpiece among them, Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, has the form of forensic oratory and completely disregards chronology as an ordering principle. The *Phaedo* ends as a perfect biography, but happens to have covered only the last day of that life. Xenophon's *Memoirs of Socrates* is a string of conversations, again without chronological structuring or regard for any progress in the philosopher's thinking or behavior. What order there is may be found in the successive coverage of Socrates' various interests and opinions. To find a firm structure, Xenophon steps into Isocrates' domain and writes his *Agesilaus*, an encomium of the Spartan king. But he brings with him from his biographical practice two habits, those of hiding behind his object and, after telling the life story proper, of dwelling systematically on the traits of his hero's character. Although the actual terms were not used until much later, of course, this invention—the partition of a

3. On this phenomenon, which some call "transference," see, e.g., Edel, *Writing Lives*, 65–92, and Clifford, *From Puzzles to Portraits*, 99–112.

4. See, in particular, Dihle, *Studien zur griechischen Biographie*.

work into *bios*, "life," and *politeia*, "way of life"[5]—dominated part of the subsequent biographical tradition, becoming standard practice in Christian hagiography. Some detect it also in the other text central to our collection, the *Life of Antony*, written in the mid fourth century A.D.[6] Having in the first part followed the events of Antony's spiritual career in the order of their occurrence, Athanasius starts, in the second part, to group his material systematically: healing, arbitration, discussions with philosophers. It may be that this is less an inherited literary device than a natural answer to a biographer's need to pause and organize, once the subject of the biography has reached a plateau in life. With the account of Antony's old age and death, the chronological thread is found again and followed to the end.

From his Athenian master and his Spartan hero, Xenophon moved on to Cyrus the Great, and thus from contemporary Greece to historical Persia. His *Education of Cyrus* shows another aspect of biography's potential. The childhood and formative years of the figure come to the fore, and from this new emphasis there follows, almost necessarily, a liberation from historical bonds in favor of creative imagination. The childhood of a future celebrity is, naturally enough, almost never known in any detail, and biographers choose various expedients to fill the vacuum.[7] Athanasius, for instance, provides the proleptic variety, letting Antony as a child prefigure his career as a hermit and ascetic. Xenophon lets his imagination loose to paint a detailed picture of the education of his ideal leader. Biography is, from the start, a vehicle for ideas and for the embodiment of ideals, not—as some would have it—the poor relative of historiography, with historicity as its high but sadly unattainable goal.[8]

Here lurks one of the essential differences between our two genres. It is usual to regard panegyric as less reliable, because of its professed aim to praise, and to think of biography as (ideally) more historically based. This is indeed what most biographers, including Athanasius, claim in their prefaces. But whereas encomiasts openly advertise their aim, biographers tend to have a hidden agenda. Orally performed panegyrics enjoy a control that biography lacks—the control, that is, exerted by their immediate audience against the blatant lie. Panegyrists exaggerate and also sin by omission, but everyone accepts this and expects them to select their material for the occasion. Biographers have the extra option of sinning by addition and invention: a reading public, spread out in time and space, will not be able to detect distortion or exchange criticism to the same extent as a present audience.

5. Cf. the similar distinctions between πράξεις and ἐπιτηδεύματα/ἀρεταί/ἦθος; for discussion of these terms, see Pernot, *Rhétorique*, 163–73, 210–14.

6. E.g., Reitzenstein, *Des Athanasius Werk über das Leben des Antonius*.

7. On such temporal "gaps" in the biographical material, and how they may be filled, see Kendall, *Art of Biography*, 18–21.

8. For example, Fornara, *Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, speaks of biography as "a genre . . . dominated by alien interests and predisposed to gross characterization and fraudulent exposition" (189). A classification of the genre according to the degree of historicity is attempted by Kendall, "Biographical Literature," 197f. For further examples and discussion, see Hägg, "Socrates and St. Antony," 83f.

These were some preliminary propositions prompted by the first surviving specimens of Greek biographical and panegyrical writing, but with relevance for much of the ancient tradition they launched as well. The discussion will continue presently, with the texts of late antiquity more specifically in focus and with closer attention to their particular historical and religious environment. First, however, we shall review, in chronological order, the corpus of texts to be treated in our collection, still with the issue of genre principally in mind.

THE TEXTS DISCUSSED

Biography started, as we have observed, with the Socratic portraits presented by Plato and Xenophon—"portraits" rather than chronologically structured "lives." Philosophic biography, probably in a more *Life*-like form, continued in the second half of the fourth century B.C. with Aristoxenus. His lives of Socrates, Pythagoras, and others have, however, survived only in fragments—perhaps the most deplorable loss in the history of Greek biography.[9] What interests us here, however, is the new prospering of philosophic biography in the third and fourth centuries A.D.[10] Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (ca. A.D. 220) is the earliest full-scale work to survive that dresses a Pythagorean ideal in biographical guise.[11] It was followed

9. See Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, 73–89, 103.

10. On this insufficiently studied genre, see Hadas and Smith, *Heroes and Gods*; Alexander, "Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography"; Talbert, "Biographies of Philosophers and Rulers as Instruments of Religious Propaganda in Mediterranean Antiquity"; Dillon and Hershbell, *Iamblichus*, 6–14; and Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*.

11. See, most recently, Anderson, *Philostratus*; Koskenniemi, *Der philostrateische Apollonios*; and Flinterman, *Power, "Paideia" and Pythagoreanism*.

at the end of the century or the beginning of the next by two works that gave preeminence to the divine Pythagoras himself. We should note how the distance between biographer and subject was thus increased. Aristoxenus was already at a couple of generations' remove from Socrates; Philostratus a century and a half from Apollonius; and now Porphyry and Iamblichus eight hundred years from their subject. Here, once again, is the freedom that biography may enjoy, in contrast to genuine panegyric.

Now, as Gillian Clark reminds us in her contribution to this book, neither Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* nor Iamblichus's *On the Pythagorean Life* were written as separate biographies. Porphyry's life is the surviving part of a four-book work on philosophic history from Homer to Plato; but its didactic aim does not prevent the author from using the successive stages and varying geographical scenes of Pythagoras's life as a skeleton upon which the doxographical pieces can be hung. Iamblichus's work, as the title suggests, is designed to portray a "way of life," and it served as the introduction to a ten-book course for aspiring Pythagoreans. The ideal Pythagorean life, then, borrows its individual features from the "actual" life of the master; but this "actual" life, in its turn, is an amalgam of history and legend. Aristoxenus stood at an early and presumably crucial stage of this tradition; Apollonius of Tyana (first century A.D.), as the putative author of another lost biography of Pythagoras, at a later juncture.[12]

Another biographical text by Porphyry, his *Life of Plotinus* (ca. A.D. 301), exhibits a close relationship to Iamblichus's *On the Pythagorean Life*. Each is the protreptic introduction to the writings of its subject and, as Clark stresses, they share an apologetic purpose, trying to avert the attacks directed against the status of those writings. In other words, they are lives designed to vindicate the authenticity and inner unity of their subjects' oeuvres. Yet there is an important difference: Porphyry, as a biographer, has the additional advantage of being able to advertise himself as a follower of Plotinus and a direct witness to his life. Eyewitness credentials, whether real or faked, help to lend authenticity as well as immediacy to biography. The author of the Fourth Gospel understood these mechanisms well (John 19.35, 21.24), just as Porphyry did.

12. His authorship of the lost work is disputed; see Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*, 130–34, and Dillon and Hershbell, *Iamblichus*, 9f.

From a formal point of view, the *Life of Plotinus* is the enfant terrible among ancient biographies, starting with the fatal illness and death of its hero, and, as Mark Edwards shows in his contribution, playing hide-and-seek with the date and place of his birth. A comparable emphasis on the master's death, combined with the elimination of his begetting, characterizes the Gospel of John and is among the common features that allow Edwards to describe Porphyry's work as a Neoplatonic gospel. The reluctance among theologians to acknowledge the gospels as specimens of ancient biography receives no support from ancient literary practice. Just as they had their generic forerunners,[13] so also they attracted later emulators. Sharing a powerful literary form, Christians, Pythagoreans, and Platonists engaged in intricate competition, as well as in polemics more tacit than the apologetic genre would allow.

Historical or political biography is in short supply in this period. The only substantial example, Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* (published shortly after the emperor's death in A.D. 337), is notorious, not only for problems of date and authenticity, but also for difficulties in defining its literary form. It is a hybrid work, as Averil Cameron observes, with "Life" in its conventional title, but actually a mixture of documentary history and imperial panegyric. Whether this is the result of a prolonged writing process with shifting aims, or the deliberate creation of an author who knew what he was doing, is a matter of discussion. Cameron, in chapter 3, prefers to let the formal characteristics emerge from a comparison with that model biography, written only some twenty years later, Athanasius's *Life of Antony*—also, indeed, a political work, although in a less restricted sense.

In Cameron's reading, certain rhetorical strategies typical of biography emerge, such as a selective focus on the individual rather than on the historical events he is part of—although with an emperor in the spotlight, the distinction is obviously less clear-cut than with a spiritual hero. In addition, as Cameron shows, Eusebius, like Athanasius, develops certain biographical topoi, notably the emphasis on the hero's physical charisma, lasting through life, and the elaborate description of his illness and death, including the obsequies. In Antony's case, we may note, the biographer emphasizes that the place of his

13. See Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*

burial was kept secret (*VA* 90–92), in contrast to the mausoleum that received Constantine's body.

Philip Rousseau's analysis makes clear the interaction between the narrated life of Antony as a model and his very "words" as a teacher—marked by Athanasius as such and quoted at length. By using direct speech as extensively as he does in Antony's long sermon (actually a quarter of the whole text), the author performs a delicate balancing act on the tightrope of trust: when do we hear Antony's voice, when that of his ghostwriter? Such "impersonation" is the biographer's privilege, not shared, at least on that scale, by the panegyrist. The audiences described in the book are made to listen, react, and engage in discussion, acting as models for readers to identify with and guiding them in their own act of reception. A model life without such a social context would have been less instructive, as Athanasius well knew. He makes Antony leave his isolation more often than not, to mix with disciples and representatives of the world.

With the *Life of Antony*, we are in the late 350s. The next fifty years saw an explosion of high-class, biographically oriented literature, mostly but not exclusively Christian, and with both our genres active separately or in various forms of combination. Some of these works serve, in Samuel Rubenson's chapter 5, to illuminate further the problem of Antony's educational position—now, in particular, the Abba's own relationship to classical education, as his biographer chooses to represent it. Among the biographies proper, the most important foil to the *Life of Antony* is the *Life of Pachomius*, in its first Greek version (the *Vita prima*, ca. A.D. 390). There is literary as well as ideological rivalry between the two great figures of early Egyptian monasticism. Biography is used in both cases to embody the ideals of the anchorite and the coenobite respectively; but, as Rubenson observes, the methods are different. The compiler of the *Life of Pachomius* is less concerned than his colleague with fusing his sources into one rhetorical whole. He is content—is this deliberate?—to leave them side by side to create a documentary impression. His subject is presented more as an individual in his historical context than as a model for emulation; and, like such persons in real life, he is surrounded and succeeded by other figures of the Pachomian movement, who also get their share of biographical attention—all traits that, through contrast, help us define the artfulness (some would say the artificiality) of the *Life of Antony*.

The most conscious continuator of the *Life of Antony* tradition, however, wrote in Latin. In his *Life of Paul the First Hermit* (ca. A.D. 375), as in his later *Life of Hilarion* and *Life of Malchus*, Jerome's main motivation, Rubenson contends, was to tell interesting stories. Whereas Athanasius wrote one *Life* only, in which he personified his ideal, Jerome used the form more light-heartedly to present a remarkable series of portraits, availing himself freely of motifs current in ancient lore and fiction. He set out, according to Rubenson, not so much to convince as to entertain. Again, the unique élan of the *Life of Antony* and the "asceticism" of its art become evident in comparison with these inheritors of its outer form.

A very different ethos meets us in the roughly contemporary biographical works by Gregory of Nyssa. All three, as Rubenson notes, are individual creations, which do not imitate or compete with the *Life of Antony*, even if it is probable that Gregory—like his namesake Gregory of Nazianzus—had read it; and they are very different from one another. His first essay, the *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgos*, is closest to standard biography in structure, following the future saint from school to bishopric, while stressing biblical prefiguration all along. His *Life of Macrina* is formally a letter commemorating his elder sister, in which he dwells in biographical detail on family, education, character revealed in action, and finally death and lasting importance—a model life. In his *Life of Moses*, by contrast, Gregory uses the biographical form for the incidental reason that the Genesis text to which he applies his philosophical exegesis happens to be biographically structured. One has the impression that Gregory in each case let his immediate aim shape his writing.[14]

This cannot very well be said of Gregory of Nazianzus. His funeral speech on Basil (*Oratio* 43, ca. A.D. 381), here approached from various angles by Frederick Norris, David Konstan, and Jostein Børtnes, has all the formal characteristics of a professional panegyric. Yet it transcends the formality of that form in several ways, some of which might be described as openings toward a more typically biographical attitude. Some of its grand dimensions, as well as its modulated personal tone, may be the result of Gregory's later "polishing" for

14. There is no systematic treatment of Gregory of Nyssa as a biographer; see however, Momigliano, "Life of St. Macrina by Gregory of Nyssa," and the studies collected in Spira, ed., *Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa*.

posterity to which Norris refers. So it is a book to be read rather than a speech to be performed—a transformation well established in the history of epideictic oratory.[15] The object of praise becomes not so much a model for emulation as a living person whose virtues are tested along the road, with his relationship to the speaker as the crucial touchstone. Gregory draws a portrait, a poignant image of his hero; for a hero Basil remains, in spite of Gregory's occasional complaints: the ideal bishop that Gregory himself never became, but also, through the prominence allotted to their shared student's life in Athens, a powerful alibi for Gregory's own love of Hellenic *paideia* (even if the nuances in their attitudes are allowed to appear also).

Comparing *Oratio* 43 with Gregory's eulogies of other persons—his father, his brother Caesarius, his sister Gorgonia, Athanasius, Cyprian—Norris shows how careful Gregory is, in spite of his dedication to the panegyrical form, to shape his speeches according to the individual virtues of his subjects and the historical facts of their lives. Silence is at times a respectable expedient to avoid unpleasant detail,[16] but he refrains from filling in the actual blanks in a life with conventional matter. The rhetoric of friendship that he employs in his speech for Basil, here analyzed by David Konstan and Jostein Børtnes, is a prime example of the selection and personal adaptation of conventions that characterizes an accomplished rhetorician. No topos is found "pure" in such a speech; fusing and hybridizing is the rule. Moreover, the use of topoi in itself has no bearing on the question of historicity: a speaker may resort to a conventional form to give expression to a genuine emotion or recount an actual occurrence.

If the hero is described as the author's friend, notes Konstan, biography threatens to dissolve into autobiography, eulogy into boasting. The fact that Gregory's speech on Basil is more often looked upon as autobiographical than as boastful reveals the fusing of genres at work. A eulogy of quite another brand is that pronounced over Basil by his own brother, Gregory of Nyssa. If we compare this speech with that of the other Gregory, as Konstan does, it appears that the latter's insistence on the friendship between himself and the object of his praise is a key to understanding how his speech functions: it enfolds its subject in the human sphere; it is Gregory's tribute to his

15. See Pernot, *Rhétorique*, 465–75.
16. On omission as an expedient recommended by the theorists, see ibid., 258f.

friend as a friend. Since this friendship is not an asymmetrical one, not a master-disciple or father-son relationship, but—as Børtnes shows in detail—a love between equals, the speech exhibits an intimacy not often encountered in panegyrics. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *epitaphios*, marches off in the other direction: he even omits the conventional topoi of country, lineage, and family, depicting his brother as a man of God from the start, placing a barrier where Gregory of Nazianzus, a year or two later and perhaps (as Konstan suggests) as a deliberate reaction, remains much more personal and open.

The Constantinople that saw Gregory of Nazianzus fail as its bishop in 381 received Themistius as urban prefect in the middle of that decade. Mastery of the rhetoric of praise links the two in a more fundamental way. A "very adaptable" pagan in the service of Christian emperors, as Robert Penella notes in chapter 9, Themistius is mostly known for his imperial panegyrics; but there are encomiastic pieces or passages in his so-called private orations as well. In his *epitaphios* on his father, he compares him to Socrates and Heracles in his pursuit of philosophy and virtue, much as our Christian panegyrists use the great biblical figures as models and prefigurations. He omits several of the encomiastic topoi expected, such as family, birth, upbringing, and physical glory, to concentrate on his father's mature *paideia* and character, intriguingly promising fuller details in a planned biography. Are we to infer that he regards the lifespan structure and the topoi that theorists like Menander Rhetor prescribe for panegyric as more proper for biography? Or is the reason rather the brevity that the occasion demanded (making the *epitaphios* more like an authentic funeral speech)? Perhaps, as Penella suggests, the answer is that Themistius found it inappropriate to provide so much family detail in what he intended to be the portrait of a true philosopher. Similar considerations made Gregory of Nyssa omit the very same topics in praising his deceased brother Basil as a man of God.

In the last years of the fourth century, another form of biography appeared that was to attract several distinguished practitioners in the centuries to follow: collective biography. There was a tradition behind this form, diverse and tenuous though it might seem—Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, and Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists*. There now appeared almost simultaneously an anonymous travel book, the *History of the Monks in Egypt*, and Eunapius's *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists*. For

all their differences—in the organization of the miniature biographies they contain, and in their rhetorical ethos—they have interesting traits in common, some of which, as Patricia Cox Miller demonstrates, may be attributed to the conditions of the biographical collection as a literary form. The description of several individuals in the same discourse usually builds on the interplay of the similarities that inspired the collection in the first place, and the contrasts that make it alive and instructive. Plutarch's pairs display this double function, sameness and difference, most clearly. With their multiple portraits, Eunapius and the author of the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* were well aware of the challenge, and they comment on their methods in their own prologues. They both stress their emotional involvement with the people they describe. One relates, in the form of a travelogue, his conversations with holy men, recording the process of his own edification in order to provide for the gradual edification of his readers. As Arnaldo Momigliano defined the task in another context, he mediates "the intimacy between saint and reader by asserting the intimacy between saint and biographer."[17] Eunapius, for his part, as Cox Miller notes, conjures intimacy by presenting himself as the last link in the chain of Platonic philosophers whose lives he narrates, and by using erotic imagery to account for his writing. He too has as his aim the benefit of his readers, although his religion is Neoplatonism. In fact, it has been suggested that his collection was a pagan answer to the hagiographical boom of the late fourth century. Ancient biography that had been translated into Christian hagiography now became pagan hagiography. Cox Miller argues, however, that collective biography, when used for hagiography, by Eunapius as well as by the author of the *Historia monachorum*, shows an important innovation: the many lives narrated in a serial fashion are in fact only variants of one life, the holy life, Neoplatonic or Christian, which is impressed more firmly upon the reader's mind by this very multiplicity. Sameness takes precedence over diversity; or diversity is in the descriptive detail, sameness in the core. Each of these hagiographies wants to define the authentic human being.

So far, it has been a question of intralingual cultural translation and retranslation, the interactive and innovative use of traditional

17. Momigliano, "Ancient Biography and the Study of Religion in the Roman Empire," 177.

literary forms among pagan and Christian writers. With the last text discussed in the present collection, the *Life of Rabbula* (ca. A.D. 450?)—regardless of whether it was originally written in Greek or in Syriac—we have an example of the interlingual translation of Greek Christian culture into Syriac Christian culture by means of biography. This is a sharp reminder (and attention to Latin sources would have reinforced the impression) that Christian literary endeavor, perhaps more than anything, enabled ancient genres to transcend their original confines. In his portrayal of the bishop of Edessa, the anonymous author presents, as his prologue puts it, an icon in words, to serve as a model for imitation. The painting metaphor, as Glen Bowersock points out, is traditional in Greek biography, but is used here in intensified form. The author then follows the usual biographical pattern from birth to death, coloring his description of the saint's career with the favorite Christian imagery of contest and triumph. The stadium, with its technical vocabulary of acclamation, appropriated to the spiritual victories of the Christian hero, may be seen as an emblem of the cultural translation taking place in late antiquity, filling established forms with novel meaning.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS: THE ISSUE OF REALISM

Biographies and panegyrics offer a vividness of portraiture analogous to the almost tangible and vibrant images on the mummy cases of Roman Egypt.[18] They make it seem possible to envisage the parade of ancient life, even its sounds, and the details of daily experience, of dress and gesture, of buildings, food, and entertainment. Even more, they invite us to believe we might gain access to the motives and sentiments of the subjects, their images of themselves, their ideals of behavior, their passionate ambition.[19] Such impressions are dangerously misleading, partly because the authors had points to make about themselves (or truths to hide), but also because their texts, operating as we have seen within a tightly controlled tradition, were

18. The "reality" of representation in the case of funerary art is as problematic as in literature; see Bierbrier, ed., *Portraits and Masks*.

19. In Brown, "Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," for example, the textual model of saintly mediator is made to serve as a reflection of economic relations.

carefully designed to modify the attitudes and conduct of those who read them.

So we are not presented with a peephole through which to observe an unsuspecting society. Both biography and panegyric acted as conscious mediators between admirers and heroes, whether living or not. On the one side, they pointed to their subject—the emperor, the man or woman of exemplary character and action. On the other side, they addressed an audience—challenged, shamed, excited, and instructed. The subjects, dead or alive, were brought vividly before the mind's eye only because biography and panegyric were acts as well as descriptive texts. That may not be difficult to recollect in the case of panegyrics, but is more easily forgotten in the case of biographies. In both instances, the "writer" was a dramatist, creating movement, posture, and costume, just as much as dialogue. We are faced with choreography, as well as syntax—a quality that was fundamental, prior to any consideration of what each genre may traditionally have demanded.[20] In the best exponents of this ancient skill, persona came before topos.[21]

THE RELATION BETWEEN AUDIENCE AND SUBJECT

These very observations serve to illustrate the enduring differences between the two enterprises. Putting it in the most basic terms, subject and audience were differently placed in relation to each other. There are a variety of ways in which we can expand upon that judgment. In the case of panegyric, the subject was "outside" the speech or the written text. The words of praise or recollection made sense, carried full weight, only because the audience could see the orator standing among them, and also (very often) the subject, the independent figure to whom the orator's words referred. It was in that sense that panegyric added to the personality of a subject, and brought them "honor." In the case of biography, however, the hero

20. The theatricality of public life controlled its reflection in literary form. The text, presented orally, made a gesture on the public stage and became, when written, a crafted symbol of virtue and ambition.

21. Typology and narrative meld in a brilliant example—the meeting between Basil of Caesarea and the emperor Valens, as described by Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 43.47f.

was almost totally "interior" to the text. Biographies created their subjects. It scarcely mattered whether they had ever existed, or certainly whether they had existed as portrayed. It was portraiture in the abstract that gave weight to the text. The text itself became the de facto exemplar, serving to bring about in readers the moral change it appeared to describe in subjects.[22] Nothing so clearly distinguishes the potential deceits of our genres.

So the judgments passed upon Basil, as explored by Frederick Norris, David Konstan, and Jostein Børtnes, were governed to some degree by the audience's knowledge—perhaps of Basil himself; certainly that he was a real person, and that what was said by Gregory bore a verifiable or convincing relation to Basil's career and personality.[23] When we look, however, at the portraits examined by Patricia Cox Miller, Philip Rousseau, and Samuel Rubenson, or by Averil Cameron and Glen Bowersock, the existence of the subject (of Antony, certainly, and other ascetics; perhaps even of Constantine and Rabbula) might have been useful as a reinforcement to admiration, but it was not the accuracy of the portrait that gave the text that force in readers' hands and hearts—not least because, as we have said, they were often in no position to detect sleight of hand or even outright fiction.

Matters are complicated by the fact that, from the outset, biography and panegyric were interwoven. Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* retained many characteristics of an ancient biography, with Eusebius's typical addition of supporting documents: yet it was written of a figure scarcely dead, and, while distinct from Eusebius's orations in honor of the emperor, was designed to praise as well as recommend. That interweaving introduced a special tension into the experience of a reader, and it reflects also upon the motives of writers. The obligation to preserve a memory and the invitation to emulate an ideal each contributed energy to the other, which goes far to explain the idiosyncratic quality of Christian hagiography. If Averil Cameron is correct in her analysis—making Constantine almost a saint—it is re-

22. When Antony emerges from his place of long retreat like a "mystic initiate" (*VA* 14.2), for example, the description is abstract and theological, priming the emotions and imagination of the reader. See Barnes, "Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate?" and the comments of Philip Rousseau in chapter 4 and Samuel Rubenson in chapter 5 below.

23. Gregory's delay in delivering his eulogy was an admission that such checks had to be accommodated: *Orat.* 43.2; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 19.

markable that so early an example of Christian literary experiment should have been prompted by an emperor. In the Cappadocian context, on the other hand, the pairing is reversed: our fullest "biography" of Basil—Gregory of Nazianzus's speech—survives in panegyrical form, yet without a funerary context, since it was almost certainly written some years after Basil's death. The delicacy called for was considerable, as the contributions already mentioned well declare: the impossibility of self-effacement; the exposure of intimacy; the proprietorial claim laid upon a reputation. We might imagine that any audience would have felt embarrassed, seeming to stumble upon a unique privacy. The importance of the memories appears at times peculiar to Gregory himself; the desirable degree of imitation is ambiguously defined: yet, for all the apparent candor of the text, there is more demanded of the reader than of Basil himself.[24]

THE RELATION BETWEEN AUDIENCE AND TEXT

That leads us to a second difference of relationship. In some instances, subject, author, and audience could engage with one another in a shared space. The sense of a subject's presence engendered or respected in panegyric (and even in some *consolationes*) might foster an immediate and shared awareness, which could then become a feature of the place where the words were spoken—the city, for example, that had recently witnessed the *adventus* of an emperor, or a monastery coming to terms with the loss of a founder or guide. The address would continue to reverberate within the scene of celebration, affecting the subsequent status and behavior of all who had heard it. The *Life of Constantine*, once again, has an oddly liminal character in this regard, since it speaks of the emperor almost as one still living.[25]

In other instances (and biography might seem a more obvious example), the text could achieve, or at least depend upon, a marked distance between its subject and its audience—a distance that might apply to the author as well, in spite of his role as mediator between the two. The text became the means whereby heroes could be transported, so that they were able to operate with effect in settings they

24. For the later creation of Basil's image, see also Momigliano, "Life of St. Macrina by Gregory of Nyssa."

25. The tone had already been set within living memory—for example, in Trier (where self-confidence endured for a century): *Panegyrici latini* 8, 10, and 11.

themselves had never experienced. So the Latin *Life of Antony*, described by Augustine in the *Confessions* (8.6.15), transports Antony, the star of the Egyptian desert, to the tranquil suburbs of Trier. Conversely, an audience could be invited, at least in their imaginations, into a space beyond their normal ken.[26] This "textual mobility" seems particularly characteristic of ascetic texts. That makes it dangerous to assume that the *Life of Antony* or the *Historia monachorum* were designed for a narrow ascetic audience entirely familiar with the milieux depicted in the texts. Features highlighted by Patricia Cox Miller, Samuel Rubenson, and Philip Rousseau need to be assessed in relation to such possibilities, which were at least sometimes envisaged by the biographers themselves. The standard topos that a hero's memory should be preserved contained within itself the powerful implication that that memory should be awakened with new effect in new situations. Moreover, we should observe how a text that was spatially contained in the first instance might become mobile later: indeed, this potential dynamism in a text's life seems an essential feature, which does much to explain how the specifically Christian genres of panegyric and biography developed. It was their proper nature to slip in this way beyond the sophisticated cliques that conceived them in the first place, colonizing the worlds of enchiridion and homily.[27]

It is true that a biography, at least in its earliest version, could be governed substantially by the intentions of its author; and the author could choose to operate within a close circle. It seems likely that Rabbula's biography, for example, was directed in such a way: Glen Bowersock's analysis makes clear why it is so appropriate to extract from such a text, not only general reflections on virtue and religion, but also specific information about Edessa. Robert Penella, in his study of Themistius, is not initially surprised by an apparent narrowness of reference—even though it is quickly made evident how subtly readers were invited to lift their eyes to more general values. Every text examined in this book has that local element, which results, in the best examples, in vivid detail of setting and behavior.

26. Where they might experience the tension between the *étrangeté* of the ascetic and their own *espace urbain*, explored thirty years ago in Patlagean, "Ancienne hagiographie byzantine et histoire sociale"—still a study of fundamental importance.

27. A classic example in Greek would be the *Apophthegmata patrum*. The abstractions of religious biography are discernible behind many a pithy anecdote. See, e.g., the "portrait" of Abba Pambo provided in *AP* 12: his face shone like that of Moses at Sinai, and he sat like a king enthroned.

Nevertheless, the intentions of authors are always betrayed as abstract in the end. The technique of ambiguity involved we shall examine shortly. What demands attention here is the way in which the collusion of the audience was necessary in order to achieve, not simply a transition from particular to general, but rather an enduring symbiosis of the two. Each enhanced the other, so that descriptive precision became the guarantee of universal relevance, while the moral improvement of multiple readers fed upon the sharply defined image of the model. In this respect, the enthusiasms of the distant made their own demands. The privileged restlessness of pilgrims, the hunger of philosophers for novel transcendence combined with authentic tradition, the demand for a coherent and effective college of patrons and exemplars in the court of heaven: all such urgencies defined the market for the texts examined here, and imposed upon authors constraints as powerful as those inherent to their genres.

TASTE AND EXPECTATION

Expectations naturally affected readings also. Our ability to discover traditions in this literature, the persistence of themes and methods, reflects only the extent to which writers sized up the tastes of those whom they addressed and catered for what they saw. It would be both naïve and dangerous to suppose that panegyric and biography were haughty and optimistic gestures made by an enlightened cadre, who hoped thereby to perfect or polish dependent admirers. Texts survive much more because of "public demand" than because of elevated righteousness among those who produce them. Because of such pressures, we can catch texts out—detect them affronting their subjects, who may have borne little resemblance to their surviving portraits. Plotinus and Antony may have identified goals and achieved results in their own lives quite different from the goals and results their biographies were designed to aim at or achieve in the lives of others.[28] We have little way of telling, of course, how many "holy men," for example, failed the test of textuality: how many were unable to live up to the ideals imposed upon them by literary convention and audience demand. Heroes did not function like texts. But the potential divorce between image and reality limits rather drastically the use we can make of biography and panegyric as keys to social experience.[29]

28. The inability or unwillingness of Plotinus to leave a written legacy for his followers offered an ironic comment on the telltale prolixity of Porphyry, his Boswell; and Antony's declared hope that no one would venerate him after death was undermined by the very text that recorded it.

There must, nevertheless, have been limits of coherence and intelligibility beyond which no author could stretch the credence of his readers. Portraits had to be believable in order to be useful. Problems associated with reception, in other words, may imply that usefulness governed belief: people were willing to believe what they found useful; willing to welcome a model that would reinforce behavior they already valued. This has a particular importance in relation to miracles, which would, in this view, be less a symptom of superstition and more a measure of the lengths to which people would go in order to ratify patterns of leadership and authority they found acceptable on other grounds. The alternative notion—that they began to value certain types of behavior because the portrayed authority of models forced them to a certain level of belief—is less in tune with our own experience of hero-worship and propaganda.[30]

ENDURING MODELS AND VIRTUES

When discussing an author's purpose or an audience's expectations, we are dealing in part with the group of values that biography and panegyric were designed to recommend. There had been ideal heroes in more ancient times, a broadly shared view of virtue and morality, conventional interpretations of ambition and public service. An individual text—Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, the *Life of Antony*—might select and adapt, omitting some features and shifting the emphasis on others; but a heritage of literary habit imposed a fair degree of restriction. It is unwise, however, to rest content with types enshrined in, say, Pliny the Younger's panegyric on the emperor Trajan, or the portraits provided by Theopompus and Plutarch. The real issue in re-

29. The "literature of repentance"—anecdotes about sinful or lethargic ascetics, and about the corresponding tolerance of the virtuous—seems, on the face of it, more "realistic."

30. Antony's discussion with the "philosophers" shows that an understanding of this economy of credence could mark the surface of the texts themselves. Antony (like the Pachomians in the comparable account) had already been recognized as a figure of note; and his own definition of *logos* (including belief in wonders) simply identified the better grounds upon which others should accept his authority. See *VA* 73 f. and the discussion by Rousseau in chapter 4 below.

lation to any one text is always a second set of considerations—what has been heightened and what has been ignored. Here the demands of circumstance make themselves more evident—Porphyry's bid to capture from Iamblichus the authority to interpret the significance of Plotinus, for example, or the need to harness the reputation of an obscure and perhaps otherwise unimportant eccentric like Antony to an Alexandrian and episcopal concern with orthodoxy and clerical interest.[31]

Such considerations compel us to complicate further our assessment of a hero's role. Having acknowledged the immediate influence of both audience and author, we have to bear in mind the writer's need of a figure to portray. Recurrent topoi are made possible only when a tradition has been set in train; and one has to ask how steadily this or that genre might have evolved had it not been for the existence of "great" figures to set the ball rolling in the first place—Socrates, Alexander, Jesus. Moreover, deflecting the flow of reference—the process of selecting and adapting already referred to—depended on the intrusion or availability of new models, perhaps genuinely innovative in themselves, or at least seized upon by the champions of innovation—Plotinus, Constantine, Antony. In other words, we should not allow ourselves to be depressed or misled by the apparently repetitious conformity of our writers, but recognize more the dynamism that made for change at the heart of most literary traditions—within which true art resided in making new points without seeming to do so.[32]

When we catalogue the values that the texts discussed here were designed, as it seems, to uphold, encourage, or encapsulate, we find ourselves dealing chiefly with notions like "man of god" and "philosopher," as well as "emperor." This is where the analyses of Mark Edwards and Gillian Clark acquire their greatest significance. We have to recognize that the quality "Christian" (as in "Christian man of god," "Christian philosopher") is problematic: what it may add or subtract, what shift in the tradition it may represent, cannot be taken for granted. The very appropriation of such labels (if appropriation is the right word) signals a valued durability in the roles, as well as a more recent desire to redefine them. Several of our contributors hint

31. See Blumenthal and Clark, eds., *Divine Iamblichus;* Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul;* and Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism.*

32. See Clover and Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity;* and Roberts, *Jeweled Style.*

at the ways in which pagans and Christians argued with one another within these texts; and that dialogue was made possible only because the figures and ideals represented, not just a common vocabulary, but also shared beliefs and ambitions. Cultural expectations in this transitional period were like the smooth boards of a dance floor, across which partners could glide from one configuration to another. Concentrating too much on traditional definitions of "virtue" or "skill," *aretē* and *technē*, would be to ignore more particular disagreements: the way in which a holy man's example, rather than his verbal prescription, might be treated as the hallmark of his leadership; the exaltation of military prowess in an emperor at the expense of his philanthropy.[33]

We have to consider also the issue of *imitatio*, especially given the potentially different "placing" of subject and audience. For all their attachment to traditional morality, how many of these texts were expected to generate reproductions of their heroes? Is it immediately obvious or credible that the authors of the *Life of Antony* or the *Life of Rabbula* wished to promote the growth of more Antonys and Rabbulas? If the answer is no, it gives us further pause for thought as to what heroes were for, and what texts were designed to achieve.

NEW CHAMPIONS OF "HOLINESS"?

When we tackle more specifically the problem of "Christianization" in these texts, we seem to be faced with a development of the notion "holy." Something akin to holiness operated within the pagan sphere, certainly—the sphere of the *theios aner.*[34] Scholarly discourse on the survival of this concept, reaching back as it does to Homer himself, is familiar enough; but we cannot be blind to the major novelties that Christian (not to mention Jewish) tradition injected into this affirmation of a link with the divine. Notions of freedom and responsibility, and of inspiration and incarnation, made a marked alteration of perspective inevitable. As portrayed, Constantine and Antony simply operated, as human beings, differently from Trajan and Plotinus, and

33. For example preferred to instruction, see *Apophthegmata patrum,* Poemen 174. Themistius, in an age of military danger, was skillful at managing the balance: see Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court.*

34. The classic exposition—Bieler, *Theios Aner*—is still inspiring. Apollonius of Tyana came to be a representative figure: see Dzielska, *Apollonius,* and Anderson, *Philostratus.*

within a cosmos differently conceived. No Christian biographer or panegyrist could entirely escape the apostle Paul's evocation of the "new man"—especially since the idea was linked with "putting off mortality and putting on immortality." The shift in emphasis worked, therefore, from the inside outwards: differences in behavior or in moral recommendation flowed from a more deeply seated understanding of what it meant to be a creature, made in God's image, and destined for paradise, with all that that implied about human capabilities and aspirations.[35]

Even more arresting is the question of whether this new image of humanity reflected the presence of "new men" on the ground. Had the hallowed *parrhēsia* of the classical world, the freedom to speak, been commandeered by social groups previously condemned to silence—social groups that aped the articulate and powerful of an older system, but in the cause of destroying what the older system stood for? When one makes explicit the alternative possibility—that existing cadres of privilege had begun to express themselves in different ways (this being, therefore, one of the things that "Christianization" might have meant)—the complexity of the issue immediately becomes more apparent.[36]

There is a broad field of historical debate that addresses the relations between provincial élites and imperial systems and ideologies, between center and periphery; but more is being claimed here, namely, that within the provinces themselves, new channels of influence and models of authority were being set in place, heralding a subversion of existing hierarchies, a shift in the balance between religious and civic identities, and between city and countryside, townsman and peasant—indeed, between men and women.[37] Signs of such change can be detected in the texts examined here; and the impression might have been strengthened if there had been more reflection on such later texts as Palladius's *Lausiac History* or the *Historia religiosa* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus—further sets of multiple portraits like

35. The theme of likeness to God is central to Cappadocian spirituality: see Meredith, *Cappadocians;* Kees, *Lehre von der Oikonomia Gottes;* and Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ.*

36. See Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity,* 4, and Heather, "New Men for New Constantines?"

37. We still owe so much to Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces.* In addition to more recent studies of particular cities—Ephesus and Sardis, for example—see Humphrey, ed., *Roman and Byzantine Near East;* and more particularly on Syria, as a sequel to Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord,* see Tate, *Campagnes de la Syrie du nord du II^e^ au VII^e^ siècle.*

those examined by Patricia Cox Miller. Palladius and Theodoret present and represent new profiles of both capital and province, of Christian Constantinople and the turbulent religiosity of the Egyptian and Syrian countryside.[38]

LANGUAGE AND ITS PUBLIC

Palladius and Theodoret both wrote in Greek; and the way they used that language may readily be taken as a symptom of both provincial disquiet and social upheaval. Glen Bowersock, however, devotes his paper specifically to a Syriac text, and we make several references elsewhere to Syriac and other tongues. It is not easy to formulate precisely the questions prompted by this proliferation of languages. Greek provided the models—for biography, the tradition inspired by Plutarch; for panegyric, the example of Isocrates and the principles of Menander Rhetor. There was a range of associated Greek genres, especially the novel and the funeral *consolatio.* Even Latin, the language of imperial hegemony, was in many other respects dependent on Greek inspiration. However, it has been too easily assumed that this Hellenist tradition represented some high culture wholly distinct from the rougher experiments of more demotic (and ethnically marginalized) sectors of provincial life. Recent research into what we still tend to call "Near Eastern" cultures has revealed a broader and more complex "debatable land," largely but not wholly Semitic, between Yemen and the Caucasus.[39] The increasing presence of this culture outside biblical or talmudic literature does not represent a *democratizzazione,* to use the paradigm made familiar by Santo Mazzarino, but rather a blurring of earlier distinctions that had been artificially sharpened by the rivalry between Rome and Persia.[40]

38. Neither figure has attracted as full a study as he deserves. For Palladius, see Molinier, *Ascèse;* and Hunt, "Palladius of Helenopolis" is still helpful, together with the extended treatment in Clark, *Origenist Controversy.* Theodoret is even more inviting and, as a complex figure, neglected: see Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II,* on his status as an historian, and Guinot, *L'Exégèse de Théodoret,* on his exegesis.

39. For general stimulation, see Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth.* On Ephrem, who marks a Syrian turning-point, see Vööbus, *Literary, Critical, and Historical Studies,* and Brock, *Luminous Eye.* Detail is provided in, e.g., Brown, "Town, Village and Holy Man," and Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis.* See also n. 37 above.

40. For a general statement of his views, see Mazzarino, *Fine del mondo antico.* On the cultural and diplomatic traffic on Rome's eastern frontier, see Isaac, *Limits of Empire,* and Lee, *Information and Frontiers.*

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Perhaps, finally, we should look beyond even those possible shifts in social or geopolitical identity. Biography and panegyric dealt, certainly, with issues of morality and imitation; but, in certain forms, they also represented an attitude to death, or more precisely to the appropriate relationship between the dead and the living. It stands to reason that a change in the understanding of death would be reflected in texts that celebrated the dead. Elements of technical conceit and even of fiction were endemic within associated genres, and can be found in new guises in, say, Jerome's biographies (of Malchus and Hilarion especially) and in the travelogue of the *Historia monachorum*—not to mention the miracle stories of later hagiography. But the Christian understanding of death set its own stamp on the portraits of those who had safely weathered the transition and who might still influence the chances of those who had yet to make it.[41]

For this reason, the assurance of a paradise both gained and attainable, the presentation of models of moral discipline and vigor, and the promise of patronal aid all made the praise of the dead, in one form or another, central to the new Christian self-confidence. Of course, it is striking that ancient forms had so much to offer in constructing these images. Yet there was a new tone of familiarity, affection, and comradeship in the Christian material, a *communio sanctorum*, that tempered the respect and dignity, and also the remoteness, of the older portraits. To sustain this imagined intimacy with those who had gone before, it was necessary—in contrast to the voyeuristic denigrations characteristic of our own biographical tastes—to emphasize success and enduring influence, to create an almost tangible presence, which immediately expanded the social horizons of readers, empowering them to build within the orbit of their own experience the transcendent architecture of the city of God.

41. There has been surprisingly little attention paid to personal relationships with the dead, whether characterized as patronage or as affection and loyalty. See Lavagne, "Tombeau, mémoire du mort," and Ducot, "Tombeau, *locus religiosus*" (both sensitive to the element of private and intimate recollection), and Moreschini, "Meditatio mortis" (among several helpful essays in the same collection).

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1

Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life

Porphyry and Iamblichus

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How should a philosopher live? Part of the answer to this question is how philosophers have lived; and in the late third and early fourth centuries, two Platonist philosophers, Porphyry and Iamblichus, made use of the biographical approach to the philosophic life. Porphyry's treatise *On Abstinence* portrays the ideal philosopher, who is detached from worldly concerns about politics and property, and who lives so as to minimize bodily desires and to encourage the ascent of reason toward God.[1] This philosopher is more isolated and more austere than either Pythagoras or Plotinus, whose lives Porphyry and Iamblichus describe in texts that are usually read as biographies. Each is credited with a *Life of Pythagoras*, and Porphyry also with a *Life of Plotinus*. These three works do indeed provide the narrative of a philosopher's life, but in each case the conventional title is misleading.[2] None of them is a freestanding biography, and each was written as part of a larger project. Nevertheless, they are often studied as examples of late antique biography, and they are most often read in relation to Christian texts, whether as a response to Christian challenge or as models of holiness that Christians sought to rival.[3]

This chapter attempts a double shift of focus. One shift is from life to lifestyle: from the remarkable individual βίος of the late antique

1. Porphyry, *On Abstinence* (*De abstinentia* = *Abst.*); see References, Primary Sources, at the end of the chapter for full citations. I thank Tomas Hägg, Philip Rousseau, and the participants in the conference on Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity.
2. Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* (*Vita Pythagorae* = *VPyt*) and *Life of Plotinus* (*Vita Plotini* = *VP*); Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean (Way of) Life* (*De vita Pythagorica* = *DVPyt*).
3. For an especially perceptive study, see Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity.*

GREEK BIOGRAPHY AND PANEGYRIC IN LATE ANTIQUITY