I

Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire

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Introductory

The Greek and Latin literature of the Roman Empire displays a marked biographical trend. The aim of this book is to illustrate this through studies of six relevant texts and authors. By way of introduction this first chapter examines the range and function of such texts against some of the historical and social changes of the age. As has been remarked in the Preface, this is not an introduction to the following chapters as such. Rather, this piece has its own distinctive interests and approaches. It aims to outline ways of reading the background to the literary–historical developments that are behind the concerns of this book.

The biographical trend we are interested in amounts to much more than a style of presentation where people and persons are more important in texts than places and things. It cannot adequately be covered by the term biography, for it is visible in many other types of writing. Indeed, in recognizing it, we can borrow from French and German and speak in abstract of 'the biographic' ('le biographique', 'das Biographische'), or use some such phrase as 'biographical individualization'. But we must remember that we are not dealing with an impersonal force with a mysterious existence of its own: what we are studying has direct relevance to the conditions of the Roman Empire as they are lived and experienced by real people. In this period the biographical focus on individuals does not aim simply to recount the facts of their lives: it is concerned with the setting of these portraits in social, political, and religious contexts. By studying it, we are studying the workings of society as constituted in writing at the level of the individual.

Biographical texts are texts which furnish detailed accounts of individuals' lives. They may be complete, from birth to death, or sectional

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and partial. True biography tends to the former, whereas legal or tax records (for example) are concerned more with particular aspects, localities, or times in an individual's life. But it is the aim of every biographical text to gather detailed information about the individual. The individual's existence is codified and edited by the text's author, who has particular purposes and obligations in collecting and publishing the information. This process of documentation can often be read as exemplifying the exercise of power on or by the individual who is the subject of the text. That is, at any given moment we may point to various different groupings in a society, religious, political, economic, cultural, any of which may singly or together form a dominant system of power. When the writing of biographical texts can be identified with particular groups with particular aims, the codification of an individual's life ceases to be a simple story.

Any period of history where one wishes to speak of biographical individualization and to describe its operation must clearly be one where having and providing information about people is important and where there is interest in the place of the individual in society. In the modern world, where documentary texts are multiplied in a confusing variety of media, it would be easy to write history examining how the operation of the biographic advances or hinders competing systems. Biographical individualization does not, however, depend on technological advances. It depends simply on the will to know and to control by those who dominate or wish to. The period of the Roman Empire shows a great increase in the portraiture of the individual in writing and art, i.e. in biographical texts in the widest sense. We can also point to an increasing attention to the body and mind of the individual in thinkers and writers of various sorts, as well as to a developing feeling of what the individual is in relation to others, and specifically of what female individuals are in relation to males.

It is not only the case, then, that so great an interest in biographical information was something new: the point lies in its connection with the greater attention to the individual in the moral, legal, political, and religious domains. Biographical interest is a manifestation of social and political changes that lead to the formation of later antiquity. It is also part of those changes and illuminates them from within. In the ancient world, where literacy was restricted, writing and literature were intimately linked to the possession and exercise of power.[1] Naturally, the

[1] For recent work on this area see the responses to W. V. Harris's *Ancient Literacy* in Humphrey (1991), and the collection of papers in Bowman and Woolf (1994).

ways in which men came to control one another, through economic, military, or religious policies and symbols, do not operate on each and every individual text; but we do see an effect on the sorts of writing and the uses to which writing may be put. History must be read through the literature that transmits its memory; but we must also appreciate how the writing which records history has worked upon it. The type of writing a society produces reveals that possibilities of expression at the time and the limits within which men's intentions and actions are felt to be or aim to be intelligible.

What follows is in two parts. In the second I shall talk of the biographical specifically in literature with remarks on the texts which have been studied by the contributors to this volume. I shall start with some aspects of the historical background which are relevant to the development of notions of the individual.

1. PUBLIC STATUS AND PRIVATE MORALITY

There are clearly important and observable differences between the Principate, the High Empire, and the world of later antiquity, the Dominate or Low/Late Empire.[2] There is, conveniently for historians, a historical break between the two which comes in the third quarter of the third century. It is introduced by the first systematic persecutions of Christians by Decius in 250 and by Valerian a few years later, pointing to Christians' growing impact on secular power, by the ending of the 'epigraphic habit', the phenomenon of advertising public and private power on stone and bronze that was so important in the High Empire, in the years following 250, and by the three or four decades of imperial misrule and military insecurity before the ascendancy of Diocletian in 284/5, the institution of the Tetrarchy and the other administrative reforms which set the tone for the late Empire. The fifty years before the Tetrarchy is still too often romanticized as The Third-Century Crisis. Asia Minor, the Balkan peninsular, and Syria certainly saw serious barbarian invasions in these decades. But many of the western and African provinces escaped relatively lightly, and newer work is beginning to allow for extensive regional variation. What we can say for sure is that the system of imperial succession that had operated fairly well in the first and second centuries had broken down after the assassination of Alexander Severus in

[2] On this terminology ('Dominate' is now less common in English) see Bleicken (1978), who also emphasizes areas of continuity in the operation of power from Principate to Late Empire.

235, and it is certainly correct to speak of the 'New Empire' of Diocletian and of Constantine.[3]

These concrete changes in the style of government run parallel to a series of changes in men's attitudes to themselves in relation to others and in their conception of status and social stratification that had been gathering pace from the start of the Principate and for which an obvious break is less apparent. First, while the division between society's inferiors ('humiliores') and superiors ('honestiores') is clear throughout the imperial age, a further divide opens up during this period between richer and poorer members of the élite itself (by which term I mean the restricted group in control of economy, culture, and government). Although this is more noticeable in the Late Empire, it represents a progressive development from the Principate. The cause is undoubtedly the growth of central power around the emperor and court and the increasing opportunities this gave to the richer grades of the local aristocracies to enter high-ranking imperial service as part of an empire-wide superclass. The resulting differences between imperial and local élites were enshrined in law and in the assumptions made by the legislators about the privileges and restrictions available to the different groups.

Second, there may be observed in the moralists and philosophers of the Principate and in other sources such as private letters and fictional writings a closer attention among males to the male self and to individual behaviour. This change has also been connected with the growth of the imperial system, for it is held that the monopolization of external power by the emperor led to reflection on personal conduct and, in particular, to closer attention to family life as forms of compensation on the part of those who would normally have competed as equals in the public sphere. It has been suggested that this is the start of a more advanced idea of individual morality and responsibility which will be fully realized in the Christian world of later antiquity (though at this time such matters are the concern of women as much as men). In this later period the idea of the spiritually unique and self-aware individual who is subject to the normative morality of the Church certainly invites comparison with what we observe of the distinctions people were now drawing between themselves in taste and style and with the careful grading and social stratification that was so important to them in public.

[3] 'Crisis': Alföldy (1989); Herrmann (1990); Liebeschuetz (1992) esp. 4–13; Potter (1990); Sidebottom (forthcoming); Swain (1992). 'New Empire': Barnes (1981), (1982).

Public Status

To start with the social–political context. It is common enough to think of the power structure of ancient society as a pyramid. Under the Principate the pyramid is broadly based and tapers more gently than it will do later. The style of imperial government at this time was designed to ensure that it did not weigh down too heavily at any given point. Many, perhaps most, cities in the Roman world did not see much of Rome or her officials. In the provinces acquaintance with Rome was no doubt greater among the élite. But although Rome had to regulate the government of the cities to some extent, this meant working with and accommodating the local aristocracies rather than controlling them by force. Prosopographical links between members of the provincial élites and prominent Romans suggest a fairly close 'Graeco-Roman' network of power for some (for example, those who joined the imperial service or amy); but the notion of a gradual extension of the Roman citizenship leading up to the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212, when almost all free people were made citizens, is now being questioned, since it is clear that many who were themselves honourables became Roman citizens as a result of this measure and not before it.[4] Thus provincials who were members of an imperial world in the first and second centuries, even at the level of Roman citizenship, may well have formed a far smaller group than is often claimed.

Most of the élite in the High Empire were in fact more concerned with themselves, with intra- and inter-city co-operation and rivalry, than with Rome. One of the most significant manifestations of this was the phenomenon of euergetism, or benefaction, to the cities and to the cults connected with them. The public face of the élite under the Principate expressed an inner drive and ambition. This signalled a relation with others rather than simple, selfish advancement, and was most often expressed in the context of local patriotism, as we see from the inscriptional record (which is more prolific in the eastern half of the Empire). But there was always a tendency for public-spiritedness to take a more personal turn and for some members of the élite to express themselves in ways which would be of no benefit to their local communities. This trend begins under the Principate and it is a well established and significant feature of the diminished relationship between the élites and their homelands in later antiquity, and increasingly so as the Empire became more

[4] They are revealed in the epigraphic evidence by their adoption of the emperor Caracalla's *gentilicium*, Aurelius. See Follet (1976: 63–105), esp. Buraselis (1989: 120–48).

bureaucratized at the topmost levels. Imperial service was a cause of some mobility at all times. Professionals such as rhetors, sophists, and physicians must also be reckoned with here, both because they might be able to claim exemption from the duty of providing local services and because of their own tendency to travel around. But a significant change occurred at the end of the third century, when for the first time those in imperial station began regularly to be allowed immunity from local obligations. This coincided with a hardening and extension of the categories of status, which recognized the increasing separation of imperial and local aristocracies.[5] It is interesting to recall that a majority of those receiving honorary epigrams or inscriptions advertising euergetism come from the mid-third century onwards from the senior ranks of the imperial services. Often they act or are honoured not by dint of personal connections with the town in question, but as highly placed officials.[6]

In the earlier Empire, Gibbon's golden age, we know that political stability ensured an overall economic prosperity. This was a necessary condition for the cultural renaissance that contributed to and reflected the physical expression of benefactions. The leisure time required to produce and absorb the vibrant artistic output of the so-called Second Sophistic movement in the eastern half of the Empire and the festivals and games in all parts presupposes a surplus of wealth. It is now that we find firm evidence of the emergent division in the civic élites, which is expressed in Roman legal sources as the difference between the 'primores viri' and the 'inferiores' on the town councils.[7] As we pass into later antiquity the 'inferiores' are increasingly required by legislation to stay, perform, and underwrite municipal services under growing interference from Roman governors, while the richer members are free to remove themselves upwards to the imperial sphere. This change does not reflect a collapse of the urban aristocracies themselves, as some have imagined from paying too much attention to the inflation and invasions of the later centuries, for inflation and invasion did not affect all parts of the Empire to the same degree and in many areas there is good evidence of continuing prosperity.[8] What we see rather is a redirection of the energies which the aristocrats had previously been content to disperse at local level. The cause of this is partly pressure from the top in an age when power was naturally drawn towards the centre more and more and when rewards

[5] See Millar (1983). [6] Robert (1948). [7] Garnsey (1974).
[8] MacMullen (1988: 15–35), cf. e.g. Roueché (1989) on the fairly stable fortunes of Aphrodisias, and for a more or less continuously prosperous region, see Lepelley (1979–81), Thébert (1983) on the African provinces.

were fewer but greater for those who were successful at this level.[9] But we also see an unravelling of the ideologies that had made élites want to assert themselves in their home towns.

In the Greek world what came undone was the complex ideological formula that linked the notables with the long-dead leaders of the great Hellenic past. This ideology was at its most successful in the Second Sophistic period, when differentiation from Rome and conspicuous wealth at home made a link with the past pleasing and tenable. Even at this time the desire for exclusivity conflicted with a need of all élites to be broadly-based in appeal. An ideology whose insistence on purifying the Greek language was unrealistic for most and which attached far too much importance to an imagined biological descent from the ancient Greeks was in constant danger from those who used Greek culture without feeling an obligation to acknowledge Greek ancestry or to learn how to reproduce the language of Demosthenes.

In the Latin west we can point to analogous patterns. Western identity was based on political and urban institutions that came from Roman Italy (the Latin language, Roman citizenship, Roman law, amphitheatres, aqueducts, roads, the *municipium*). It must have been particularly strong among those who became Roman citizens by serving as decurions in municipalities whose constitutions were modelled on those of the Italian towns. They were part of a privileged group that looked to Italy as the only area of the Empire whose entire population had Roman citizenship. The universal extension of this citizenship in 212 by a member of the first imperial dynasty which was not from Italy nor of Italian colonial stock immediately removed from the local élites the protection and status which citizenship and its heritage had brought with them and simultaneously put an end to Italy's role as a living source of western origins.

The loosening of local identity coincided with a centralizing of power about the emperor, a seemingly inevitable process. Even during the Principate there was a gradual hardening of the institutions at the centre and an increasing focus on the imperial person. After the Empire's mid-life problems there rapidly developed a more authoritarian regime, exercised more openly and at a greater remove from the ruled, who were viewed as the objects of its will. This new organization of power, where the propertied élite closed in around itself, gave birth to a great amount of legislation and codification of law. It is the disciplinary nature of this

[9] Cf. Brown (1978: 47).

legalistic government which strikes the observer.[10] For it is of great importance to such power to know who are the subjects it must control and where they are located, whether the bishop or the count is the controlling force.

Overt in this respect was the widespread distribution in the cities of late antiquity of troops to watch the towns.[11] Equally noticeable is the virtual disappearance of public assemblies after about AD 300. These were stopped because mass coagulation was felt to be too difficult to control and because it was pointless to continue in the New Empire.[12] There are various institutional sites which highlight the changes. The factory-prisons (*ergastula/ergastēria*), the great extension of the imperial estates, the growth of military nerve centres like Sirmium or Nicaea which served a peripatetic court. It is undoubtedly the case that the central power in late antiquity aimed to control much more than it actually did control. Even in the provisioning of the cities, a role where it could be particularly influential, its authority was often restricted.[13] The central power was a 'pouvoir qui se voudrait obéi et se sait impuissant'.[14] The key point, though, is its desire to control, not its ability. Crucial to and indicative of this disciplinary rule is taxonomy and classification. From the perspective of the centre each element in the system must be defined by where it stands in relation to others. In later antiquity we are more than ever in an age when what counts is status and rank. Since élite power and competition are confined in a much narrower space, features distinguishing one from another assume a greater weight. Here it does not matter much who the particular elements in play are, since there is always another to take the place of any who falls. Understanding élite society in the later imperial era then is the art of reading the circulation of individuals in a closed network where modern ideas of 'individualism' in the sense of a fundamental order of being or a qualitative uniqueness are irrelevant. Only in the private reflection of a Christian before God did a modern individualism become conceivable at all.

[10] Garnsey (1970) remains fundamental on the legal underpinning of an increasingly unfair society.

[11] MacMullen (1988: 145–6, 209–17) '[t]he general impression yielded by the evidence under the Dominate . . . is of an army most of which lived right on top of civilians.' Cf. Mitchell (1993: i. 228–30) for complaints against soldiers by cities in Asia Minor as early as the 190s. Cities were right to complain, for the result was that wars were now directed increasingly against them.

[12] De Ste. Croix (1981: 313–14).

[13] Durliat (1990).

[14] Gaudemet (1976: 279).

In the spatial series of late antique society it was gaps and particularities between single individuals that were to be isolated and measured. In this regard the body acquired great merit. If the mind was an ideal surface for writing power, as the philosophers had long recognized, the body was so much more a real one, as legislators knew well. Hence the meticulous ranking of the élite into the categories of *clarissimi*, *excellentissimi*, *perfectissimi*, *egregii*, etc. and the careful differentiation by lush codes of dress; hence the importance of emblems and of a whole array of personal gestures, movements, and expressions. It is true that many of these symbolisms reach back into earlier periods;[15] but the extent of their new function is not adequately paralleled. The movements and colours of late antique man afforded discipline a physical hold over the body to an extent that had not been possible before.[16] The culminating textual example of this ranking is found in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.[17]

Private Morality

The scrutiny of the individual in society can be matched by the rise of new forms of scrutiny in the arena of personal conduct, to which subject I now turn. The essay by Paul Veyne, 'La Famille et l'amour sous le Haut-empire romain', has had an important influence during the past two decades on our reading of how pagans thought about themselves and their bodies in the imperial age.[18] Veyne's general thesis was that the new managerial, functionary role of the élite in the High Empire and its comparative powerlessness outside the domestic sphere produced a 'reactive' compensation within the family. Élite man was obliged to redefine his relations with his wife, placing a much greater emphasis on conjugal unity ('la "morale du couple" '), and ordering his own life in the mirror of hers.[19] Veyne's real concern here was with the role of power

[15] Cf. Sidebottom (1990: 4–32) on sophists and philosophers, Gleason (1995) on bodily and vocal deportment in the High Empire. Polemo's treatise of physiognomy, around which Gleason's book is built (see additionally Zonta 1992: 25–47), survives in a later epitome and in translations, attesting its long years of service in late antiquity and the Middle Ages. Cf. pp. 113–16.

[16] For the senatorial and court life of this period see Alföldi (1934), (1935); MacCormack (1981); MacMullen (1964); Matthews (1974), (1989).

[17] On which see Goodburn and Bartholomew (1976), Berger (1981).

[18] Veyne (1978).

[19] Cf. the reference at 38 to Lacan's 'imaginaire': the subject must look at himself acting in relation to those near him. For some poignant criticism of Veyne's contrast between family life under the Principate and under the Republic see Saller and Shaw (1984: 134–5). Veyne's point, though, was not that conjugality was unheard of before the Principate (one can go back to Homer to find loving couples), but that it acquired a greater moral investment, which he attributed to political changes, and which allowed in turn a readier acceptance of the coming Christian values (48–57), on which see below in the text at nn. 33–7.

relationships on the production of the individual. For him it was the political arrangements of the Principate that encouraged the élite to look inwards at themselves. The changing way in which the paterfamilias exercised power in the family made him as an individual an effect of an increasingly monarchical system.

The most influential successor to Veyne's ideas has been the philosopher and historian, Michel Foucault.[20] Foucault examined the moral and medical pronouncements of the age (Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, Soranus, Galen, among others) and argued that males' greater attention to the self in relation to others, especially the wife, was due to changes in the 'political game'. This attention was different from the old ethics of the classical philosophers, which had advocated control over the self as a precursor to rule over others. Now control over others had yielded to control by another. Yet even an emperor, at least in the case of Marcus Aurelius, could be seen to be discounting his right to power by dint of status alone. Self-regulation, particularly in the crucial areas of sexual and emotional conduct, was now accorded a privileged place.

Veyne's paper and Foucault's elaborations of it have proved extremely thought-provoking. They suggest that in the High Empire there emerged a sense of internal discipline achieved by a taking stock and observation of others, particularly the family. How this relates to the later Empire's interest in external discipline and desire to control the individual body is a difficult question that will be considered later. For the moment, it may be said that the High Empire did see an ethical change of the sort Veyne identified, at least in the Greek world or in its intellectual commonwealth (which is the source of so much of our evidence). Here the 'new conjugality' went hand in hand with a depreciation of the traditional male homosexual relationship between the older 'lover' (*erastēs*) and his younger 'beloved' (*erōmenos*). This had always been problematical, and the philosophers' claim that they could gaze on the nearest human reminder of absolute beauty without feeling sexual desire had long been ridiculed. It was recognized as absurd even by Plato himself, whose explorations of the matter are the most sophisticated in the classical period. Under the Roman Empire Platonic philosophy, blended with Stoic asceticism and neo-Pythagorean mysticism, became dominant in both East and West. Now the sexual matters males found intellectually problematical involved both boys and for the first time their wives.

[20] Foucault (1986).

Naturally, the parameters of those relationships proved impossible to determine. But two main themes recur in the discussions and debates that are left to us. One is that homosexual relations lead to sexual intercourse, no matter how far the transfer of knowledge and the quest for beauty feature too. (For this, see especially the debate entitled the *Amores*, which is ascribed to Lucian.) The other is that homosexual relations involve a lack of reciprocity, a crucial objection. In the charming *Dialogue on Love*, which Plutarch wrote at the beginning of the second century, we find as we read that the absence of reciprocity in traditional male pederasty does not come down to a familiar exploitation by age or wealth, for by a stroke of genius Plutarch exemplifies the proper loving relationship between men and women through the story of a love-affair between an older, richer woman and a young man. Ismenodora, as she is called, does not simply stand in for the Platonic *erastēs*, for Plutarch points out that contingent discrepancies in the female–male relationship do not matter in the face of their shared 'grace' and 'loving-friendship'.

The dramatic element in Plutarch's debate reminds us that an important place for viewing the new ethics is in the pages of the ancient novel, a new type of literature which flourished in the first three centuries.[21] In these romantic fictions the heroes and heroines, who are drawn from the urban élite, amply display the values of what Foucault called in this regard 'the new erotics', either in the context of marriage or with marriage as their goal. As has been widely recognized, the ancient novel demands to be read in terms of historical dynamics. The stories are not, however, moral handbooks but works of entertainment. Thus the protagonists suffer many trials of their virtue, and occasionally the male hero has sex with other women, as in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, or inflicts terrible harm on his beloved wife, as in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. In the latter text the heroine is even obliged to marry another man in the course of her adventures, though in the end everything comes right and she is united with her rightful husband in marital bliss. The key point is that these texts operate in the same ethical field as their serious counterparts. They show that, as in Plutarch and others, the idea of mutual respect and fidelity between man and wife is the aim, but they make it clear that getting there is problematical and open to interpretation.[22] They also remind us forcefully that the new-style male debate about the role of the wife did not stifle old-style misogynisms or

[21] Chariton, Xenophon, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus, the main extant texts, fill over 550 pages in the recent translations in Reardon (1989).

[22] See Goldhill (1995).

encourage anything like a genuine sexual equality. Nor for that matter did a lack of theoretical respectability bring to an end pederasty or discourage other forms of male and female homosexuality.

The novelistic and moralistic writings are to a large extent products of the Greek world, even where their authors are Romans writing in Latin like Seneca or in Greek like Musonius Rufus. It is not clear what original developments we should posit in the Latin West.[23] Indeed, we may begin to wonder about Veyne's connection between the new ethics and the new role of what Syme called the Roman 'service aristocracy'. In support of the idea of a change in personal attitudes we might cite the work of Norbert Elias on comparable changes that took place between the medieval and early modern periods. In his *magnum opus*, *The Civilizing Process*, published in German in 1939, Elias traced the stages by which individuals emerged more clearly from the primitive collective religious societies of the Middle Ages, while at the same time firmly remaining a part of these societies.[24] In the comparative tradition of Weber and Sorokin he linked changes in sensibility and individual psychology with wider changes in social organization and modes of interaction. He exemplified his ideas by examining norms of conduct and patterns of affect as they were shown in texts describing and prescribing forms of conduct. Especially interesting is the examination in volume two of how during the early modern period violence among individual members of the élite was suppressed and monopolized by the central power of the royal courts. As a result of this, social status and class distinction came increasingly to revolve around cultural achievements, language, and manners. Displays in the realm of dress and symbol became the key markers for separating the gentility from one another and from the lower orders.[25] Not all of these ideas are relevant to the Roman Empire. For a start, it is plain that the élite grew ever more violent both in public and in private, especially during the later Empire.[26] But Elias's link between diminished

[23] Cf. Richlin (1992) for a study of traditional Roman misogynism. Her attack on male gay Foucauldian commentators (Richlin 1991) for ignoring the Latin tradition is not without point: but what is new in the sexual debate does appear to come largely from the Greek world (which did not, of course, think of itself as an adjunct of Rome, as Richlin holds).

[24] The translation of the work a decade or so ago (vol. i appeared in 1978, vol. ii in 1982) is now complemented by the recent translation of 'The Society of Individuals' and two other essays in Elias (1991). Cf. also similar developments in the increasingly stratified society of the high Middle Ages explored in Bynum (1982).

[25] On taste, gesture, and symbol as expressions of power, see the classic work of Veblen (1899), further Bourdieu (1984).

[26] Public violence—above, pp. 7–8, and below, pp. 20–1; domestic violence in late antiquity—Shaw (1987).

public aggression and increasing attention to social interaction does encourage us to associate comparable changes in the Principate relating to the public power and personal conduct of the Roman aristocracy.

Veyne, however, distanced himself from Elias, pointing to the latter's concern with his subjects' public lives only.[27] He himself saw the greater involvement in family as a more significant replacement for overt political display and aggression than the competition for titles or displays of benefaction and dress. Family life constituted a form of self-reflection which resulted from being deprived of full participation in the public sphere. But should we not be thinking more positively than this? For though self-knowledge and self-improvement in the crucial areas of emotional and sexual conduct could certainly be gained by examining one's relationship with one's sexual partner, to understand why marriage became a special place of self-reflection for the provincial élites we surely have to appreciate their very great attachment to the cities where they ruled, their investment in their heritage as a source of authority and power, and their imperative to continue their rule in the future. In an age when the order of their priorities was to 'know the families each of us come from, the education we have received, and the property and attitudes and way of life we have',[28] the focus on married life was a rather public mode of self-reflection intimately connected with male control of the city. If Veyne was right about the nobility of Rome, it appears that he was wrong with regard to the provincial élites as a whole.

As Plutarch says, ordering one's home life well is an essential foundation for an ordered public life.[29] It would, however, be wrong to dwell on the formal parallel between the value placed on 'harmonie familiale' and the many calls for 'paix sociale' that were also made in this age.[30] In both East and West the regimes of the notables depended on an ideology of consensualism. Frequent appeals were made to *concordia* or in the Greek world to *homonoia* ('like-mindedness') within and between communities. These operate in ways quite distinct from the rhetoric of conjugality: the ideology of consent between cities, which is attested in numerous (mainly Greek) speeches and (Latin and Greek) inscriptions, depends essentially on the assumption of a demonstrable parity in descent, culture, and society and economy (to invoke Galen's criteria once more) between the parties. This is its 'horizontal' aspect. On the other hand,

[27] 1978: 37.

[28] Galen, *On Precognition* 14. 624 Kühn.

[29] Cf. fr. 148 Sandbach (from *On Anger*), *Advice on Marriage* 144c, *Political Advice* 824f–825a.

[30] As suggested by Panagopoulos (1977: 216).

since the aim of consensualism is to preserve the *status quo*, there is also a 'vertical' aspect which we can see in pleas for 'like-mindedness' between local councils and citizenry. In contexts like these concord reinforced vested interests from top to bottom. It may be suggested that only these calls for unity inside the city bear any resemblance to those expressed in the home by husbands—with the same aim and the same result.[31]

Where does this leave personal improvement and self-reflection? Undoubtedly élite males were encouraging themselves to practice these more often and more deeply, even if women and families had little to gain. But it is difficult to see how far we can go. For we must not forget that ancient pagan thought at all times assumed the existence of an objective order of being, of which individuals formed a part. Moral improvement through comparison with and observation of others was 'expressed and evaluated in the same categories which also serve the general, communicable rational cognition of the world or of nature', Thus, although self-knowledge was the goal, this could not amount to the private inner reflection of an individual before God, and we are making a grave error if we think that moral ascent towards virtue is the same as the Christian individual's spiritual ascent which was undertaken to escape from the world, not to know its flawed workings better.[32]

This leads me on to consider other ideas about psychological and emotional matters and the connection of these with self-reflection and Christian morality in the later Empire. For one of Veyne's other theses, which was to influence Foucault's planned fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality*,[33] was that this modification of personal sexual behaviour prepared the ground for Christian morality. The way in which Christianity did develop, the social groups in which it first expanded, and its debt to Jewish thought, show this idea to be basically wrong.[34] Indeed, in one area of personal conduct the Christian world is certainly new: the opportunities open to women to construct a self-identity of their own, either through solitary acts of renunciation in chastity and fasting, or together in coenobitic living. Although it may be argued that the particular forms of praise available and applicable to women were always largely subordinate to a traditional masculine discourse of how they

[31] Cooper (1992) suggests that the main purpose of male conjugal rhetoric was to secure a reputation for good moral conduct; this was undoubtedly a major public asset.

[32] Dihle (1994: 526–7).

[33] For which cf. Foucault (1982).

[34] Cf. Brown (1987: 261) on the democratization of Christian morality under the influence of pagan lower-class intimacy and solidarity, and Lane Fox (1986: 340–51) on the narrowness of the pagan evidence (but being perhaps too reserved about its relevance).

should be praised (and therefore involved a 'transcendence' of the feminine), the female construction of the female self should not be read as a devaluation of women but as a positive step forward bringing individuals' control over their own lives within the female *ascesis* of making their bodies impenetrable to the outside (and thereby rejecting a principal male concern with what went out of the flesh).[35]

In Christian thought, then, chastity and marriage were treading a very different path from that recommended by pagan moralists. To those who were daily expecting the dawn of the new age, marriage was in the way, and however important it was for Christian communities to get to the heart of the family, their interest was not that of the pagan city in reproduction, continuity, and identity, but chaste conduct before marriage and sexual restraint within marriage in order to avoid the sin of lust that was soon to be judged. This is apparent in the so-called Christian novel, best viewed in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which unlike its pagan counterparts prescribes the rejection of marriage in favour of a completely spiritual love between men and women.

The strictness of Christian sexual morality was one form of differentiation which the new religion could enact between itself and its parent, as well as a way of dealing with its sibling, 'Gnostic' rivals such as the Encratites, while the total renunciation of sex that was practised by some Christians served to establish a hierarchy of spirituality for the brief time left on earth.[36] Nevertheless, the Christian literate were a Greek or Roman élite, and their morality does have affinities with pagan stipulations, as authors like the Stoicizing Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Augustine show here.[37] In tracing the rise of the individual through the interrelations of sex and self it is possible at least to make out a development from pagan philosophers to the Christian ascetics, however much Christian belief is in itself consciously new in such matters.[38]

[35] See Cameron (1993: 148–50) 'asceticism offered at least the illusion of personal choice'; Cooper (1992); Corrington (1992) (a female *ascesis*); Torjesen (1992) (transcendence); Perkins (1995: 104 ff.) on Perpetua's rejection of the old social order.

[36] Brown (1988). Origen set the ideal of renunciation on a different track by investing in virginity and celibacy themselves a metaphysical glimpse of the unfallen soul (Brown 163 ff.).

[37] Cf. respectively Brown (1988: 122–39), Barnes (1985*a*: esp. 136–41), Shaw (1987).

[38] See esp. Brown (1988), also Rousselle (1988); Whittaker (1979) (on loving one's enemy); Wimbush (1990) (translations of selected passages). Note also the work of the Corpus (Pagano-)Hellenisticum (Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti) on similarities and possible connections (sometimes strained) between pagan and Christian morals: Betz (1975), (1978); Mussies (1972); Petzke (1970); van der Horst (1980); see also Betz (1961), Almqvist (1946), Zahn (1895). Perkins's interesting discussion of pagan and Christian attitudes to pain and bodily suffering (Perkins 1995) marks significant progress in seeking connections between pagan élite and Christian systems of thought.

Many have in fact seen the rise of Christianity in terms of a replacement of pagan thought rather than a convergence with it. This reading also takes account of a shift in personal feelings, albeit in a very different way. For the essentially rationalist scholars of the later nineteenth and early and mid-twentieth centuries (Cumont, Festugière, Murray, Nestle, and Nock among them) Christianity appeared to occupy territory vacated by a decline of traditional pagan religion. The decline was signalled by the growth of foreign, 'oriental' cults, such as those of Isis and Mithras, and the salvationist elements in these were held to disclose an individual fearfulness which could only be assuaged by Christian hope. It was reflection on these matters that led E. R. Dodds to describe the second and third centuries as an 'Age of Anxiety'.[39] A School of Anxiety has followed in Dodds's shoes. Its writings encompass the supposed hypochrondria of Cornelius Fronto and Aelius Aristides and the introspection of Marcus Aurelius, as well as the allegedly rootless life of the inhabitants of the great cities of the Graeco-Roman world. However, there does not seem to be any good evidence to show that new foreign cults were perceived as wreckers of a traditional religion (which had long been able to incorporate additional members). As for valetudinarianism, there we must be careful. Before diagnosing social anxiety, we must worry about transposing our culturally specific notion of individual psychological neurosis into another world and time. Aelius Aristides, for example, speaks about himself and his illness in his *Sacred Tales* not as a hypochondriac but 'to praise his god' who cured him, as Marie-Henriette Quet has put it.[40] More importantly, the whole idea of the lonely city is quite at variance with our rich information on the closely interconnected society of ancient towns, most of which were still very small by modern standards.[41]

An interesting attempt has been made recently to integrate these ideas of social anxiety with Veyne's notion of political change causing an affective, individualizing shift. According to Peter Toohey, Veyne's identification of the shift in the High Empire was right, but he was wrong to limit it to the area of married love.[42] The deepened interest in love is a

[39] Dodds (1965). [40] Quet (1993).

[41] It is worth recalling that Galen's remarks about family, education, and property (cf. above) were applied to one of the biggest cities in the eastern Mediterranean, Pergamum, whose population Galen himself puts at some 40,000 male citizens (120,000 including wives and slaves) at *On the Diagnosis and Treatment of the Passions of the Soul* 5. 49. 14–17, suggesting a total of 180,000–200,000 (Mitchell 1993: i. 243–4).

[42] Toohey (1992: 285–6). Benabou (1987: 1259–60) remarks on the compatibility of Veyne's ideas with 'un thème historiographique fort ancien', i.e. the notion of a decline from

reflection of and is reflected by the new phenomenon of depressive lovesickness, whose physical and mental symptoms of melancholia are, it is claimed, described for the first time in literature from the first century AD. Furthermore, lovesickness is only one of a package of new affections. We must also reckon with 'the interrelated "discovery" of its congeners, depression and boredom'.[43] The causes of these negative emotions are the progressive urbanization of the Empire and the growing disenfranchisement of the traditional ruling and intellectual élites and their present feeling of powerlessness.[44]

The historical causes adduced here are, as I have said, incorrect. There must also be doubts about the evidence for these emotions. For the rather small number of (literary) texts which can be cited in support of these theses are insufficient proof. The only new affection known to me in this period for which there is clear evidence, if only the treatise of a single author, is the *pathos* or 'affective state' Plutarch calls *dusōpia*. The cognate verb *dusōpeisthai* goes back to classical times, but is not used in the new sense of a 'defeat at the hands of the shamelessly importunate' (as Plutarch defines it at *Life of Brutus* 9.6); the noun is not found much before his essay on the subject (*Peri Dusōpias*). In this work Plutarch charts a very bourgeois reaction, which is 'not an unfavourable sign, but is a cause of badness'. Not being able to say no is a fault which must be dealt with in young men; but from the examples he gives, Plutarch plainly has in mind something that affects fellow-members of the élite in their daily relations with dependants and the more powerful ('who are particularly hard to refuse or shake off when they approach us about legal or electoral decisions'). Elias would have understood a feeling that lay between harsh refusal and meek compliance very well. But even if affections like this are really disclosed first in the literature of the High Empire and do in their way further establish the feelings and perceptions of the individual, it must be said again that it is not possible to speak of individuals in the modern sense before the advent of a Christian mentality. In which regard one other affective state examined by Toohey looks more promising. This is the invention in the fourth century of *acedia*, 'accidie', the medieval vice of sloth, boredom, and restlessness. For this is certainly a product of the Christian world and that 'prolonged depression and anxious self-searching' that afflicted the monks in the disciplined en-

robust Republicans to the insipid nobles of the Empire, who can now attend only to their wives, and it may be added that it is not so far from this juncture to ideas of social anxiety.

[43] Toohey (1992: 286).

[44] Toohey (1990*a*: 161).

vironment of their cells, as much as it empowered them with spiritual credibility in the eyes of the faithful without.[45]

It was the record of this discipline and self-reflection at the level of text that led Arnaldo Momigliano and Jean-Pierre Vernant to highlight the link between writing and the rise of the individual in the period of the Christian Empire.[46] Vernant, in a wide-ranging essay which traced individuality from the beginnings of the ancient world to its end, identifies pagan and then Christian speculation on the inner man in relation to God as the key development. The Christian notion of the person had also formed Marcel Mauss's second stage in his exploration of the origins of the modern idea of the individual in his celebrated last essay, 'A Category of the Human Mind: the Notion of Person; the Notion of Self'.[47] It was in reaction to this piece that Momigliano sought the construction of the modern individual in the late antique development of biographical and especially hagiographical writing, seeing the figure of the biographer as a mediator between the holy and his or her audience and hence as someone who occupied a crucial place in the definition of what was human and what divine. In so doing he was drawing in part on Patricia Cox Miller's *Biography in Late Antiquity* (1983), which traces the battle between the pagan and the Christian mind as exemplified in texts like Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Works* and Eusebius' portrait of Origen in the sixth book of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Cox again stresses the process of objectification in late antique writing about the person and the function of the portrait as a vehicle for one's own views and ultimately as a projection and reading of one's own self. We should never imagine that such exercises in self-definition were free of political charge or prejudice.[48] This is certainly true of Eusebius' portrait of Origen, which is not *about* Origen, but uses him to present to us the history and doctrine of the Church through the times he lived in and the events he experienced (as these are seen by Eusebius in his time). Origen's life functions in Dihle's words as 'the mirror of a whole epoch in ecclesiastical history'.[49] But Momigliano was also talking of something else, of a necessarily different style of presentation which stemmed from

[45] Toohey (1990*b*); Brown (1978: 94).

[46] Momigliano (1985*a*), (1987); Vernant (1989). Cf. Bowersock (1991) on the latent autobiography in Momigliano's work in this area.

[47] Reprinted in translation in Carrithers *et al.* (1985: 1–25).

[48] Cf. Wimbush (1992*a*) (studying the colour-coded racial assumptions in late-antique reports of the Ethiopian ascetic, Moses the Black).

[49] Dihle (1994: 424). Presumably the lost *Apology for Origen* (written jointly with Pamphilus: *Ecclesiastical History* 6. 33. 4) was similar.

Christian biography's fundamental interest in the subject's spiritual life as an individual standing before a wholly transcendent Deity.

It was the Christian discovery of the individual and the importance of individual chastity and virginity that caused Foucault to restart his *History of Sexuality* by going back to ancient times from his stamping ground in the early modern period. The shift was due to a desire to remedy the remarked absence from his work of the self. Foucault's interest was now to be the subject's active participation in its own formation.[50] But his abiding long-term study was, of course, of the workings of power on the individual at 'capillary' level, an examination of techniques and styles of control in which (to the great joy of academics) no distinction was drawn between the Gulag and the classroom. Indeed, in the first introductory volume of the *History of Sexuality*, 'sexuality' referred precisely to the state's discovery of ways of controlling the masses by regulating individuals' emotional and sexual behaviour.[51] In this train of mind it would have been easy for Foucault to have cast a wider gaze than is afforded by the picture of the Christian in spiritual contemplation. For we see in the imperial period an interest in putting knowledge about the individual at the service of both Christian and secular systems of power.

Certainly, the transformation of Roman administration through the imperial secretariat, the great growth of officialdom, and in particular the rise of the *cognitio* system and its love of constraint cannot be ignored by those interested in the process of objectification and definition that seems to shadow the rise of the inner man.[52] The law provided an objectification that defined a man's outer shell.[53] Here man means man, for this public political arena remained a male-dominated affair. There is plenty of scope for work in this area, for Mauss himself recognized the Roman discovery of the juridical/citizen *persona* as the crucial first step along the road towards our own concept of the person.[54] The operation of the 'micro-physics' of power (to use another Foucauldian cliché) in late antiquity is a profitable line of enquiry.[55] It was in fact Hadrian who had particularly stressed the relevance of *condicio personae* and *mens facientis* in criminal investigation. The law officer's brief was now to ask, What sort of man is he? Hadrian did not invent this procedure—it had been implicit in the courts for centuries—but he harnessed it to a new style of monarchical rule. And in the ever more transcendent late-antique

[50] Cf. Callinicos (1986: 175).

[51] Foucault (1978).

[52] Cf. Hopkins (1991).

[53] Cf. the remarks of Durliat (1990: 574).

[54] Mauss in Carrithers *et al.* (1985: 14 ff.).

[55] MacMullen (1988: esp. 58–121) applies his usual original insight to the task.

division between the 'more honest' and the 'more humble' the notion of *persona* achieved a primary importance.

It is here that the biographic comes into the reckoning. For whatever connection we posit between external disciplinary interest in individuals and the revealing of the inner self, both find their expressions in texts with a biographical focus that serve their aims. The whole idea of *custodia*, which means in fact the range of penalties applied to those without good status, demanded a diligent biographical industry—for one must record and know the mind (and the wealth) of one's prisoners. In the prison itself, which became progressively more important a punishment as time went by, the appearance of the *commentariensis* is significant.[56] His job was to detail reports on the prisoners. Notaries in the rest of the legal service performed a similar role. There may even have been an 'individualizing tendency' in prison architecture—at least in texts bearing on the subject carceral violence is exacerbated the closer one gets to the heart of the institution.[57] Although we do not know the chronology of the development of prison architecture, what we observe ties in with what we do know of the topography of the home in later antiquity. For from around AD 300 there is evidence of a more marked spatial compartmentalization. The porticoes of the peristyles were closed off, niches and apses were built, major rooms acquired annexes. This development was not totally unexpected. The house had long been internally segmented by curtains and doors in corridors or stairways. This reflects paterfamilial control. It also discloses the family's ready absorption of external controls, seen for example in the habit of hedging round public buildings with protective awnings. In the much greater compartmentalization of later antiquity we perceive a fertile marriage between the individual's scrutiny of himself and the external controls and restraints imposed by a monarchical society.[58]

Let me summarize thus far. The much harsher system of penalties and punishments that existed in the later Empire is connected with the vastly

[56] On the whole business of punishment and control see, with various approaches and interests, Garnsey (1968), Millar (1984), Gatier (1985), Liebs (1985), MacMullen (1986), Coleman (1990).

[57] CTh 9. 3. 1 (cf. CJ 9. 4. 1) contrasting the 'darkness of the inner prison' with the 'vestibules of the prisons and . . . healthy places'; Gatier (1985) on the segregation of different sorts of prisoners.

[58] See Thébert (1987: 383 ff., esp. 389–92) on the effect of the 'idea of the individual' on the organization of domestic space, and cf. A. F. Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 51) on the increasing influence of the public sphere on domestic architecture from the second century.

increased distance that had arisen between the imperial élite and the rest. Commentaries, explications, and codifications of Roman law show (amongst things) the lack of success the authorities had in implementing their intention to control. But the will to discipline is also clear and the desire to extract what Ammianus Marcellinus calls 'cruciabiles poenas' (39. 1. 23, 3. 1–9) was put into practice often enough, and is a major theme of Christian heroics as well as of secular texts. These changes in the public sphere can be traced back to the time of the Principate. There is also good evidence from the early Empire for the beginnings of a more intense examination of the pagan self in private life. One of the places where this self-reflection takes place is within marriage. We can point to a new theoretical credibility which was given to the marriage relation by male thinkers. However, we have to be very careful about saying what this means. The idea that greater investment in family life functioned as a compensation for the more limited opportunities for political display under monarchy may be the right explanation for a few males; but for others greater attention to marriage seems to be part of a process of reinforcing traditional privileges and powers. Further, we must be very wary of taking the new pagan sexual thinking as a forerunner of Christian values, whose major sources are quite different, social range far wider, and ideologies much denser. Quite apart from anything else, Christian life allowed women to express themselves in public for the first time as individuals in full control over their own bodies. Nor can the establishment of Christianity be seen as a cure for the supposed introspection and soul-searching of the second and third centuries. Greater attention to the male self is indeed apparent in this period and we may well feel that it constitutes progress along the road to the discovery of the individual. But there was no real possibility of inner consciousness before the Christian God put man—and woman—firmly in their place and made them reflect on their isolation in the world as they stood before Him.

Are there sustainable connections between the greater attention given to personal conduct, identity, and difference, and the later Empire's multiplication of external controls on the body? It could be suggested that self-examination (pagan and Christian) and public control both involve an objectification of the individual, the first that of personally examining and constructing oneself by comparison with what is external, the second that of viewing individuals as targets of power. On the other hand, despite notions like *condicio personae* and *mens facientis*, the operation of the law involves taking individuals *im*personally as specimens of groups and types. It may be felt that other administrative procedures work in the

same manner. Yet we might after all make some progress by calling to mind the self-display and personal symbolism of the later Empire. In the ascetic texts self-discipline is achieved through examining others as well as oneself. This process of learning by observation and example involves reflection of how one is different and special. Not dissimilar in technique and result is the precious care taken by members of the ancient élites to distinguish themselves from inferiors and from each other by elaborate social codes and distinctive rankings which harden as we move into late antiquity. In the Christian world we can go further still. For here together under one roof are hierarchies of dress and manners, an obsession with disciplining and supervising members, together with a stress on inner reflection which is combined with a fear of the body and an imperative to control its inveterate vices.

II. BIOGRAPHIC LITERATURE: RANGE AND FUNCTIONS

At the end of 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity' Peter Brown observed that, 'In between [the classical period with its temples and the Middle Ages with their cathedrals], it is the portraits that strike the imagination, the icons of the holy men, the austere features of the philosophers, the ranks of staring faces in frescoes and mosaics.'[59] In literature there is also a great increase in portraits during the imperial age, not only in the writing of lives themselves, but also noticeably in historiography. The following will be a brisk and summary journey through these areas in search of the biographic.

Biography itself is an obvious place to begin. The first exponents of biography in classical Greece, some belonging to the School of the Peripatos, can be numbered on two hands.[60] They tended to compose lives of philosophers or writers, though lives of great men are known too. After them we suffer a gap from about 200 BC—relieved by Polybius on Philopoemen—until we come to the varied output of Varro and Nepos, Julius Hyginus and the mysterious Santra,[61] and Nicolaus of Damascus and his life of Augustus. There is another major lacuna before Plutarch's *Lives*. One must ask whether these gaps are simply holes in the transmission of classical texts? It seems, though, that before the imperial age biography was not as common as we may suppose. In the imperial period

[59] Brown (1971: 100). See Beckwith (1979) for a good general art-historical account.

[60] In the 4th cent. BC Aristoxenus certainly, Dicaearchus perhaps; in the 3rd Hermippus, Satyrus, Antigonus of Carystus, Ariston of Ceos, Sotion, and others hardly known.

[61] Cf. recently Kaster (1995: xxvi n. 14).

itself, by contrast, biography and biographical writing surely were very much more frequent (and this is not just a question of survival). Leaving aside biography of non-imperials (such as Cassius Dio's life of Arrian), we have imperial biography by Plutarch, Suetonius, Philo of Byblos and Aspasius of Byblos on Hadrian, Amyntianus' parallels of Philip–Augustus and Dionysius–Domitian, the sophist and imperial secretary Antipater's biography of Severus, Marius Maximus' imperial lives, several lives/encomiums of Constantine, Constans, and Julian, to say nothing of the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelius Victor's *Caesars*, and the anonymous *Epitome de Caesaribus* and *Viri illustres* which are attributed to him. We have as well a very, very large amount of hagiographical material (including lives of women), much of it, initially at any rate, motivated by martyrdom beginning with the Greek *Polycarp* in the later 150s and well established by the time of Pontius' Latin *Life of Cyprian* a century later. The funeral orations and biographical works of the Cappadocian fathers are in the same line.[62] There was also a good deal of 'pagan hagiography': Philostratus, Diogenes Laertius, Eunapius, individual lives like those of Lucian on Demonax and Sostratus or Damascius' biography of Isidorus and Marinus on Proclus.

As far as historiography goes, biographical information is not, of course, new. Herodotus and Thucydides and Xenophon and Theopompus have their pictures of individuals. However, these are not really biographical portraits, but judgements. They do not ask where a man has come from or where he is going to. They do not see him as a player in a particular arrangement of power. As Momigliano put it for classical Greece, 'History went on being concerned with political events, even when they were guided and dominated by one man.'[63] In the imperial period the focus is different. We are mainly concerned here with Greek historiography, since after Tacitus there is virtually nothing in (pagan) Latin literature till Ammianus, barring the odd compendious accumulations of Granius Licinianus, Florus, and Justinus. In Greek it is recognized that secular historiography tends heavily towards a biographical texture.[64] The cause of this can be traced to the difficulty of finding out what actually happened in real politics in an age when policy

[62] For a catalogue of Greek saints' lives see Nesbitt (1969). On the phenomenon of women's lives see Meredith (1984), Momigliano (1985*b*) on Gregory of Nyssa's life of his sister St Macrina, and Harvey and Brock (1987) on Syriac relatives of the fertile Greek and Roman genre.

[63] Momigliano (1971) 63.

[64] Cf. Questa (1957) on Cassius Dio; Reardon (1971: 208–9) on Cassius Dio, 216–17 on Herodian. See esp. Dihle (1987) and Pelling below, Ch. 5.

was secretly made in the emperor's court; which reason is indeed mentioned by Cassius Dio for the period after Actium (53. 19). For as Dio observed, there was now a necessary fascination with the person of the emperor: room for independent action had diminished and so the historian must look to the source of action ('the wishes of those in power at any time') as the centre for his narrative.

It was this situation that led Tacitus to complain about the undistinguished material he was obliged to put forth in his *Annals*. Comparing himself with the older Roman historians, in whose tradition he saw his own labour and the shape of his own work,[65] he notes that 'they could narrate and digress at will upon major wars, stormed cities, routed and captured kings, or when they turned their attention to domestic matters, the disputes of consuls and tribunes, agrarian- and corn-laws, and the battles of the *plebs* and the *optimates*. My task is inglorious and restricted, for this was an age of unbroken or hardly challenged peace, sad happenings in the City, and an emperor who took no care to extend the empire' (*Annals* 4. 32. 2–3, cf. 13. 31. 1). Yet, if Tacitus felt the need to justify himself at a time when 'Roman affairs had come down to little more than the commands of one man', his contemporary Suetonius took full advantage of the change and applied his encyclopaedic and grammatical mind to marshal a great array of 'trivia' (as Tacitus ironically describes his own material) according to the reigns of successive emperors. The result was as different from Plutarchan moral biography as it could be. It also strangled at birth Tacitus' own experiment in biography, the life of his father-in-law Julius Agricola. That sophisticated but misjudged combination of family loyalty and high-style historiography (with full accounts of battle, generals' orations, political history at Rome, geographical excursuses) apparently found no imitators.

The Suetonian model itself had a long influence because it catered for two things: the importance of the emperor and the thirst for information of all sorts that is characteristic of Greek and Latin literature of the imperial period, the age of the epitome and the handbook. Suetonius' grammatical interests and his biographical sketches of famous grammarians found a direct descendant in Aulus Gellius.[66] Gellius was also, as Holford-Strevens brings out in Chapter 4, intensely aware of the personalities behind the linguistic and cultural studies that form his material. He cares to name only those who are of value to him socially,

[65] Tertullian may well refer to the *Annals* as 'vitas Caesarum' at *Scorpiace* 15. 3 (Barnes 1985*a*: 202).

[66] Cf. Kaster (1995: xlix–l).

and several of these people reveal the scholar's fascination with portraits and vignettes of those in his field. His work is not only a useful illustration of how the educated class handled knowledge, but also of how they based their identity on constant examination and observation of this knowledge and its holders—which is again part of the general taking stock that anchored the élite securely in their peer group. The portrait in Gellius is quite as much at the service of power as the life of a saint is.

As far as historians go, it is clear that many of them continued to avoid biographical techniques to a greater or a lesser extent. Cassius Dio's *Roman History* was certainly influenced by the old-style Roman annalistic tradition. This is not surprising, since more than half the work is devoted to the Roman Republic and Dio followed the lead of Roman sources such as Livy. In the imperial books too consular years provided a chronology, as we can see from the surviving sections (cf. even 78. 26. 8 and the preface to book 79). Yet it would be quite misleading to view Dio as a would-be Tacitus trying to adhere to a model of historiography long since obsolete. As Chris Pelling shows in this collection, the motifs and themes of the imperial books are heavily dependent on biographical styling. This is especially clear with a figure like Tiberius. In the Augustan books he is bland and pretty well lacking in personality. In his own books, as we might hope, he emerges as a character. What is striking is that the character-sketch at the beginning of book 57 (1. 1–13. 6) at the start of his reign sets the agenda for his literary treatment in this and the following book. The same is true with Gaius and Claudius. So far as we can tell, the later books all had such 'biostructuring' (to use Pelling's phrase), though our poor knowledge of the actual structure of the epitomized books makes it difficult to see just what Dio did with it in most of the *History*. An indication that our suspicions are right is offered by the Byzantine monk Xiphilinus, for when he made our epitome of books 61–80, he partitioned it by imperial reigns.

In the course of recounting Commodus' excesses Cassius Dio breaks off to apologize for the triviality of his subject: 'let no one think I am sullying the dignity of history by narrating these things.' Since they were done by the emperor (and were witnessed by Dio himself), they must not be suppressed (72. 18. 3–4). This 'dignity', or *ongkhos*, of history is referred to in fourth-century complaints about biographical instrusions. The *Historia Augusta* conceives itself as superior to Marius Maximus' mythistorical verbosity (*HA Firmus* 1. 2). Someone with more right to complain is Ammianus Marcellinus. In his famous caricature of the people of Rome he reproves the nobility for paying too much attention

to 'Juvenal and Marius Maximus' (28. 4. 14). What he means is made clearer in the introduction to book 26. He rejects criticisms of having omitted 'what the emperor said at dinner' and 'very many similar items which are at variance with the principles of history'. History should concentrate on major events only (26. 1. 1–2). It is true that Ammianus lives up to his claim to write old-fashioned history 'in the sublime style' (as he puts it), avoiding Cassius Dio's tittle-tattle and scandal and paying attention chiefly to official matters. On the other hand, Ammianus too is very often biographical. In the contemporary history that forms the surviving portion of the work, the residual annalistic framework is not only damaged by the too numerous digressions (however carefully isolated they may be), but also by the several major character sketches of emperors and others ('ut aliquotiens fecimus', 30. 7. 1) and the plain fascination with and subordination of so much material in books 16–17 and 20–25 to the life of the emperor Julian.[67] The line of least resistance was to narrate the events of history both 'chronologically and by reigns', as Herodian had put it (*History* 1. 1. 6). The careless *Viri illustres* attributed to Aurelius Victor shows that by the second half of the fourth century biographical historiography was acceptable even for Rome's Regal and Republican heroes.

Procopius is an interesting case to consider among the historians. In the eight books of the *Histories of the Wars* against the Persians, Vandals, and Goths conducted by Justinian's generals Belisarius and Narses, he writes in the grand style of History, concentrating on military events with the usual excursuses on geographical and other matters. Belisarius is certainly the 'hero' of the work; but the author does not hang everything around him. In the introduction to the final book (8. 1. 1–2) he tells us that the parts dealing with the different wars have been published throughout the Empire and that he is now bringing up to date the events in the various theatres of operation. Clearly, though, this was not enough. A different sort of book was also needed to tell why things had happened as they did. For this work, which is known as the *Secret History*, Procopius became avowedly biographical.[68] In the introduction he begins by saying, in phrases which deliberately recall the preface of *Histories* 8, that his narration of all that happened in the wars 'in its proper time and place' has appeared in public. The present volume will depart from the scheme used thus far because the death of those behind the events now allows him to include what he had had to keep secret and 'to

[67] Cf. Sabbah (1978: 449–53), Matthews (1989: 456–61).

[68] On it see Averil Cameron (1985: 49–66).

demonstrate the reasons' behind his earlier stories. This account of 'what happened in every part of the Romans' empire' will be presented through the 'depraved deeds' (*hosa . . . mochthēra*) of Justinian and Theodora and sundry others including Belisarius. In his attack on the leading personalities of his age Procopius marshals diverse information on economic and social affairs, especially at Constantinople, which is complementary to the origins, upbringing, and development of the imperial couple. Purely biographical information is to the fore in his withering narrative of 'the events of their lives' (*ta bebiōmena*), a phrase which should remind us of its use in the classical Athenian orators in contexts where the speaker is defending or denigrating character by setting out someone's life history.[69]

The strong influence of the biographical approach in pagan (or secular) historiography is undeniable. Hagiography and martyrology, on the other hand, seem to have a different ancestry despite their biographical focus. The religious power of the subject and his or her miraculous acts or suffering belong to different traditions.[70] The Gospels themselves obviously have a crucial role here. Their status as biographies in any sense has been denied by most commentators during this century, especially by Bultmann.[71] Recently, however, Richard Burridge has tried to re-establish a connection with Graeco-Roman biography by arguing for a very flexible definition of the *bios*, or Life, as a type of literature.[72] It is certainly possible to make progress in this direction—but only up to a point. The Gospels obviously have close cultural connections with Jewish historiography, which is centred around prominent individuals to an extent that is alien to Greek historical writing (and so Greek biography is not necessarily a primary source). We must also reckon in Jewish martyrologies of the type Tessa Rajak explores in the next chapter of this book. 4 *Maccabees*, her chosen text, belongs probably to the later first century AD, in which case it is a contemporary of the Gospels. In this period the key elements of Jewish martyrdom (as we see also from Philo and Josephus) are a tyrannical oppressor, a threat to the nation, an act of piety, endurance in the refusal to break the Law, followed by a victory in the death itself. As Rajak demonstrates, the victory is on earth and there is no idea of Christian redemption. Nevertheless, the Gospels' own

[69] Cf. Demosthenes, *Or.* 22 *Against Androtion* 53; Isocrates, *Or.* 15 *On the Exchange* 7 (a speech which takes a decidedly autobiographical form).

[70] For an historical contextualization of the martyrologies see now Bowersock (1995).

[71] Bultmann (1972 (1931²)).

[72] Burridge (1992); see further in the Epilogue. Contrast Dihle (1983) (Plutarch as model biography).

emphasis on the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and Law bring them firmly within the Jewish tradition.

The religious intensity of the Gospels and the Jewish and Christian martyr texts may also be felt to owe something to a pagan philosophical tradition descending from Platonic and other accounts of the death of Socrates.[73] But here again there is surely a very different level of spirituality in play. A work like Philostratus' *In Honour of Apollonius of Tyana* certainly shows parallels with Christian treatments, and may have been influenced by them.[74] It is not, however, a study in individual salvation, but a celebration of the revitalization of traditional pagan religion in the first century AD by the semi-legendary holy man, Apollonius of Tyana, who successfully resists his own tyrannical oppressors in the shape of the emperors Nero and Domitian. The revival of Greek culture in that period is a fact, and one which Philostratus (who was writing in the second quarter of the third century) emphasizes also in the *Lives of the Sophists*, his survey and celebration of his own cultural world through biographical portraits of some of its most prominent exponents. As far as *Apollonius* is concerned, we have a text that can also be read as a response at some level to Christian tradition and writing (rather than an attack on it), and which marks the beginning of Apollonius' role as a rival to Jesus (as 'divine man'), as well as of the Apostles (in his wanderings, conversions, harangues, and epistles to the cities).

Christian demonization of Apollonius matured in the ridicule Eusebius poured on Sossianus Hierocles for attempting to prove that Apollonius was actually superior to Christ.[75] But Christians had plenty of enemies of their own making in the form of heretics, whose appeal depended in fair part on an ability to confuse their doctrines and leaders with those of the true God. In this respect Apollonius' shadowing of Christ was as nothing compared with the man who was held by some to be the father of all heresies, Simon Magus, whose career in doctrine and literature from the Acts of the Apostles onwards is traced below by Mark Edwards. No doubt Simon had some basis in history, just as Apollonius

[73] Burridge (1992: 77) compares the 1st-cent. 'genre of *exitus illustrium virorum*' at Rome with an eye on philosopher martyrs like Thrasea Paetus; cf. Nock (1933: 194–6).

[74] Cf. Smith (1978: 84–93) on the techniques employed by Philostratus to defend Apollonius and by the Gospels and other Christian writings to vindicate Jesus (many have accepted that Philostratus knew the Gospels—e.g. de Labriolle 1948: 180–8). For others—notably Reitzenstein (1906)—formal contact between *Apollonius*, its congeners, and early Christian literature (esp. books of pseudo-acts) depends on the shared inheritance of Hellenistic *Kleinliteratur*.

[75] See the edition of the *Against Hierocles* by Forrat and des Places (1986). (The attribution to Eusebius has recently been challenged by Hägg (1992).)

did. But the use made of him takes us into the realm of the Christian novel, as well as disclosing a need to discover a biography for such a deadly enemy of the infant Church. And while the Simon figure precisely forms an anti-life which is not to be imitated or valued, it is no surprise to find that the constellation of biographical fictions which grew up around him soon led to the fictional entertainment of the *Acts of Peter and Paul*, where the magus is quite literally brought low by Peter, and to the inclusion of more of his villainy in the novelistic *Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*. For as in Plutarch's *Demetrius and Antony*, the warning exemplum becomes too good a story in its own right, and Simon's eventual influence on the Faust legend would have confirmed Irenaeus' and Hippolytus' worst fears about his baneful allure.

Turning to Christian historiography we again find that biographical approaches are of great importance, no matter how different the literary texture is from pagan works. As has been remarked, the account of Origen in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* makes that great individual into a mirror of his age. It has more in common with the Suetonian pattern than with hagiography and its preoccupation with individual holiness and imitation. Other people prominent in the history of Church doctrine, leadership, or martyrdom are also presented biographically in Eusebius' work. Much of the information about them comes in the form of quotations from earlier literature, letters, and documents. This is the sort of material that is common to both Plutarchan and Suetonian biography (as well as having analogues in forensic literature). But Eusebius is primarily engaged in writing a narrative of the development of the Christian churches, a theme which is not incompatible with high-style 'events historiography'. Interestingly, it was this side of his work which was developed by his successors, for Church history after Eusebius was ever more closely involved with secular political matters once Roman politics and ecclesiastical politics were fused.[76] The *Ecclesiastical History* itself was not only the first Church history: it was also the last apology, and this motive again led the text towards biography. Eusebius' story was both a defence of the Church during its first three centuries and a celebration of its recent victory through the conversion of Constantine. Thus a biographical focus was very suitable both for demonstrating the calibre and integrity of its older leaders and through them its doctrine, and also for hailing the majesty of its imperial patron, Constantine, 'the friend of God' (10. 9. 2).

[76] Cf. Dihle (1987: 75–6).

Eusebius was in fact quite aware of the distinction between history and biography. In the introduction to the account of Origen in the sixth book of the *Ecclesiastical History* he remarks that 'one could say many things in an attempt to hand down at one's leisure an account of the man's life [*bios*], but the narrative about him would need a treatment of its own. Nevertheless, on the present occasion we will abridge most of the facts and be as brief as possible as we run through a few details of [Origen's] career, gathering from certain letters and enquiries among acquaintances of his who have been preserved in life till our day what is known clearly. And it seems to me that it is worth taking the record back to his "very swaddling-clothes", as they say' (6. 2. 1–2). The idea that Origen's Christianity was lifelong and unflinching certainly responds to a classic biographical desire to demonstrate unchanging character. The use of childhood information is part of this. On the other hand, Eusebius has a plain sense that the account of Origen's life is subordinate to the history of the Church. This is why he forbears from listing Origen's writings, as would normally be done in the biography of the great scholar (cf. Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Doctrines of the Philosophers* or Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Works*). 'Why', he says, 'is there a need to make up an accurate list of the man's works on the present occasion, when it needs leisure of its own? We did in fact write one in the *Life of Pamphilus* . . . But now we must proceed to the next section of the history [*historia*]' (6. 32. 3).

If the *Ecclesiastical History* is ultimately conceived of as historiographical in form, that cannot be said of the *Life of Constantine*, which Averil Cameron has chosen to study in Chapter 6. Here we again have familiar features of biography—documents and letters in the grammatical–exegetical tradition. Not surprisingly there is a good deal of material from the end of the *Ecclesiastical History*. For this is precisely the part of the *History* that begins to take on a panegyrical colouring. In the *Life of Constantine* we find standard encomiastic elements from the rhetoricians' *basilikos logos*, as well as novel ones, such as the important comparison with Moses, some of which have obviously apologetic overtones. In the end it is difficult to read the *Constantine* as anything other than a highly complex creation which works on several levels and amounts to a really very tendentious rewriting of Constantine's life. This complexity surely shows through in the text's structural untidiness, and the mixture of biography, justification, and history seems to have discouraged later imitations. For in terms of literary history this fascinating work had as little success as Tacitus' experimental biography–encomium of Agricola.

In writing of the development of classical biography Momigliano had noted that pagan philosophers and sophists and Christian saints and martyrs, 'the main subjects of late Roman biography', were rather unsuitable examples for forming theories about the origin of the genre.[77] They were not the right sort of heroes. He has not been alone in holding a view that has hindered interpretation of later developments.[78] Status, as Momigliano implied, was of great importance for determining who were the subjects of early political biography. It was the Age of Alexander and the Successors that first brought proper treatments in this mould. Biographies of these men are biographies of great individuals.[79] They acclaim and heroize them. For in a monarchical age the life of the monarchical figure alone was of importance to posterity. Many lives of the Roman emperors and many of their portraits in biography and historiography are similar in intent. In the Principate the lives of less exalted figures generally remained below the point at which a full description was merited. Written accounts and visual reproductions especially marked out the person of the regent and his family in a procedure of heroization that was concerned with hailing worth rather than eliciting imitators. This is the pattern of writing set by Suetonius.

As we move into later antiquity lives of the great continue to be written, but there is an important change. Now biographical attention pans outward to capture a wider mass. We see a different sort of individualizing at work in which fixing and cataloguing by normative criteria is an important motive. The 'political axis' of individualization undergoes something of a reverse.[80] Those who do not wield power matter more. This is obvious in the sort of people coming to prominence in biographical treatments. But it is also apparent in government's intensified desire to categorize even ordinary people by social and economic criteria. Christianity is the most influential force in later biographical writing. Crucially, the Christian texts present us with models from all walks of

[77] Momigliano (1971: 9).

[78] Cf. Delehaye (1921: 236, 313) on the 'passions épiques', Festugière (1961–5: i. 20–1) on the resurfacing of the irrational 'voix du peuple' in the lives of the monks; on these judgements see Brown (1981: 17 ff., 81), condemning the 'two-tiered' model erected against 'the dismal victory of the tastes of the "common herd" '. At the end of his life, of course, Momigliano became fascinated by precisely these heroes.

[79] Onesicritus, *How Alexander Was Brought Up*; Marsyas of Pella, *The Training of Alexander*; Lysimachus, *On the Education of Attalus*; Satyrus on Philip II and Dionysius the Younger; Neanthes on Attalus I; Asclepiades Areiou on Demetrius Phalereus; Timochares on Antiochus (?Epiphanes or Sidetes); a certain Posidonius on Perseus; Sosylus on Hannibal; Momigliano (1971: 83).

[80] For the phrase see Foucault (1977: 191–4).

life, and not infrequently from very humble ones. Robin Lane Fox's study of the early Byzantine *Life of Daniel the Stylite* in this volume is a case in point. In the work historical accuracy is subordinated to imitation of the paradigmatic portraits of Daniel's famous predecessor, Simeon Stylites. *Daniel* is none the less useful as a document of the mentality and ascetic habits of these very peculiar hermits, and also of their admirers and portrayers. As Lane Fox argues, the stylites' chief aim was freedom to approach God, and this certainly challenges the well-known thesis of Peter Brown, that the portraits of the holy men of the period mark them out primarily as vessels of power.[81] Daniel does indeed lead a life 'high above ground and high in the social order' (as Lane Fox has it), with no less than three emperors wanting his attention. This is a remarkable achievement for a backwoodsman who probably had no Greek. But the gathering of political power around the man of God is not the most important matter. Rather, a hagiographical text of this sort above all shows us Christianity's need to remember the details of its distinguished sons' and daughters' lives in their quest for the divine.

The stress on ascetic values and disciplined, moral living owes something to a traditional Roman censoriousness, which only increased in the later Empire as the 'real' Romans disappeared. One of the fundamental differences between Greek and Roman society is that the pagan Greek élite had never known a normative morality. The Greeks' system of ethics was grounded in the operation of free will. The competing philosophies that offered guidance in personal life and explanations of the workings of nature were really no more than a private ethics which one could adopt or not, and if the founders of these systems had sometimes dreamed of using them to establish planned societies, in reality 'they had left behind only their writings and discourses', as Plutarch noted slightingly (*Lycurgus* 31. 2).

Romans were different. Roman morality was founded on practice not theory, and because of this examples attained a greater importance. The pages of Livy are full of them. Valerius Maximus' huge collection of *exempla*, complete with anecdotes and aphorisms, and Justinus' ?mid-second-century moralizing excerpts from the world history of Pompeius Trogus, reveal a Roman preoccupation with action as a source of conduct. From the early and middle Republic an array of patriarchal heroes was left over to choose from. That there was no literary, artistic, or architectural heritage to recall from this period explains why Romans failed to

[81] Brown (1971); Brown (1995) is an important rethinking of this view.

develop the cultural–political sense of the past that Greeks enjoyed. Nevertheless, the idea of the *mos maiorum* (literally 'the morality of those who were greater/older') was dominant in Latin thought till the end of antiquity. Example plays an important part in the Suetonian conception of biography.[82] During the early centuries of our era Roman government had a clear idea of its mission to 'impose morality on peace', as Virgil lovingly puts it (*Aeneid* 6. 852). This mission was conceived very much with the voluble, untrustworthy, and sexually deviant modern Greeks in mind. Given all this, in terms of the operation of disciplinary power the alliance of Christian values with an increasingly moralizing Roman government in the reigns of Constantine and his successors is not all that surprising.[83]

For this purpose detail was crucial, and Christian texts are generous from the beginning. The Gospels are almost unique as multiple, contemporary accounts of a single life. (Only Alexander received comparable treatment in the pagan world.) In the saints' lives we have as subject the confessor-figure who acts out the role of the truth. But there is more here than a heroizing, memorializing process along Suetonian lines. In a tightly controlled system like the Church the biographic was never simply celebration, but was part also of the disciplinary, normalizing process. Consider the *Life of Antony*, written *c.*357 by bishop Athanasius of Alexandria.[84] First, it is no coincidence that this prototype of saints' lives was written by a bishop: the advantage of Christianity over its intellectual rivals lies apart from anything else in its greater ability to control its representatives (which in this case involved a condemnation of internal 'Arian' belief).[85] Second, observe how important to this are words and writing. Antony in his high desert fastness recommended writing down one's sinful thoughts as a form of confession (ch. 55).[86] In other words, the master text already conformed to the *Life*'s declared aim of summoning and controlling its followers. Lives like this conform to a

[82] Steidle (1951: 108–26).
[83] Cf. Brown (1988: 22, 207).
[84] On the authorship see Cameron below, pp. 170–2.
[85] Momigliano (1987: 210).
[86] *PG* 26. 924: ἕκαστος τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰ κινήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς μέλλοντες ἀλλήλοις ἀπαγγέλλειν, σημειώμεθα καὶ γραφῶμεν . . . ἔστω οὖν τὸ γράμμα ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμῶν τῶν συνασκητῶν. Cf. Foucault (1983: 5 ff.), Perkins (1995: 201). From Antony's writing we may trace the development of monastic autobiographical works such as Evagrius of Pontus' list of his temptations and responses to them (the *Antirrhētikos*, *c.*400; see Brown 1988: 374), or the extraordinary correspondence between Dorotheos of Gaza and the great Egyptian sage Barsanuphius (mid-6th cent.; trans. Wheeler 1977), and even the genuine, fully-fledged autobiography of Augustine's *Confessiones* (written between 397 and 401) and unfinished *Retractiones* (which contains a list of his own works in accordance with the biographical/grammatical tradition).

certain typology not simply because of the existence of a literary template. We see rather the needs of a particular system of supervision. It is no coincidence that individualization is present only to a limited extent. For these texts are not memorials but models (emulation often being an explicit aim). They offer a 'symbolic appropriation of the past',[87] which is for potential use by those who will have to undergo similar struggles.

For the pre-Constantinian Empire the level of detailing in Christian biographical texts may also function in another way. When we recall the ability of the Christian Empire to suppress texts it did not like—notably, the anti-Christian tracts of Plotinus and Porphyry or Hierocles' glorification of Apollonius—we may wonder why Roman government tolerated a profusion of anti-establishment literature which catalogued its brutality and misunderstanding? It is not satisfactory to argue that such texts were retained safely within Christian communities or that pagan government was too loose to suppress them (remember, for example, Tacitus' story of Cremutius Cordus). These lives of martyrs, some true no doubt, many more fictions to a greater or lesser degree, should be taken as fulfilling a role for both sides. The martyr's religious confession was also a confession of guilt and hence paradoxically a consecration of pagan justice.[88] Much has been written on the forensic truth of such impressive works as the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* or the Greek *Acts of Phileas*. Instead of wondering about the physical origin of the texts, we might suggest that the authorities tacitly approved the publication of verbatim accounts. It was not enough for the sentence to be carried out in public: the records kept in the governor's office must also have their hearing.

Christian intellectuals in the East had always been closely involved with pagan thought. Rhetoric was common property from the start. Philosophy too, particularly Platonism, was soon built into the Christian mind. Clement of Alexandria and Origen are primary representatives of a heavily philosophized Christianity. Towards the end of the High Empire the unsubtle *Symposium* of Methodius, with its debate on virginity (rather than *erōs*), is a significant rewriting from the same heritage. In later antiquity Platonist thinking was taken up also in the West through figures like Marius Victorinus, whose writings are mentioned by Jerome and Augustine. The appropriation of the pagans' philosophical furniture only made pagans more entrenched. In this regard biography also assumed a crucial place in their self-presentation, and at least something should be said about this.

[87] Averil Cameron (1991: 141–50).

[88] For the thought cf. Foucault (1977: 66–8).

It is interesting to observe that in its old age Greek pagan biography (Porphyry's and Iamblichus' work on Pythagoras, Marinus on Proclus, Damascius on Isidorus, etc.) returns to some of the preoccupations, if not fully to the aims, of its youth. In the classical age of the fifth and fourth centuries BC biography, as has been mentioned, had certainly been interested in political subjects—cf. Xenophon on Agesilaus, Isocrates on Evagoras, then the labours of the Peripatos. But more effort was expended on recollecting the lives of the philosophers, sophists, and writers/poets.[89] The intention of these texts was again to acclaim and memorialize. Late pagan biography, however, looks more like an attempt to document an increasingly threatened way of life (and one which belongs to a different social and economic level than we see in many of our Christian texts). The picture we have is of a cultural–religious Hellenism that is rather narrowly focused.[90] The contrast between the relaxed style and content of Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* is striking. In Philostratus, Hellenism is admittedly starting to dig itself in; but its styles and symbols are still good reflections of the way the vast majority of the élite expressed itself, or might be encouraged to. The sophists of Philostratus' *Lives* have a very public persona, and politics and culture are well integrated. Eunapius' philosophers and sophists, who form a majority of the pagan 'holy men' known to us, are far more intense, more obsessive, and aware of the real dangers of public gesture and the hazards political involvement now held for them. The powerlessness of these figures can be measured by the success of the Christians, for whom earthly power—whether it mattered or not—was easily available.[91]

The tone struck by the late pagan lives is one of monumentality: the time for imitation is either too short or has gone. It is interesting to note that this trend is observable also in some of the last Christian lives of antiquity, though with quite different implications. The records of the early Church were records for imitation. But in the end the dominant genre of the saint's life itself aspired more and more to the condition of the monument. The theme of works like the very influential life of Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus (early fifth century) or that of Severinus by Eugippius (written 511) is the saint as a person of power. Now the importance of the biographic is not so much to construct roles to copy as to

[89] Cf. Lefkowitz (1981).

[90] Fowden (1982).

[91] One sign of the influence of the late antique environment may be noted in Eunapius: the biography of Sosipatra, whose fame entitles her to be included 'in this catalogue of wise men' (*Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* 466–71); cf. Penella 1990: 61 on the 'demonstration of [her] superiority to various men'—but as in many Christian lives of women the demonstration is carried out from a male perspective and is not simply stray 'biographical ἀΰξησις'.

mark off the chosen few as the legitimate intercessors between the human and the divine. The 'descending individualization' of the earlier Church has started to yield to an ascending order where the individualizing focus is drawn upwards to a privileged domain of spirituality. That is not to suggest that the biographic at the beginning of the Middle Ages is directly comparable with that of the earlier Roman Empire with its heroization and worship of the emperor. But there are parallels. Recent work has underlined the association between the saint's arrival in a town, or its yearly re-enactment, and that great fixing ceremonial of late imperial power, the emperor's *adventus*.[92] The establishment of new hierarchies, of new expressions of power, is clothed in the apparatuses of the old. Such reformulation will be no surprise to those who study the operations of power, in whose propagation the biographic is an essential instrument.

Biography, historiography, ecclesiastical history, the lives of the saints: the literature of the Roman Empire and late antiquity displays a strong biographic turn. It would be easy to argue that this is simply a matter of literary-thematic consequence. Fashion and taste are indeed important factors for consideration. Yet the crossing of genres might give us pause for thought. If it were a matter only of the extension of biography (however the ancients defined this), it would be different. As it is, we are confronted with a spread of biographical interests and techniques across a broad band of literature. It makes no sense to believe that all of this can be subsumed within biography. History of Church and State continues to be recognizable as history; hagiography is a new sort of writing with a parentage that owes nothing formally to classical biography. Nor is it the case of a generalization of biography's characteristic interest (as we would see it) in a life story. Rather, there has been a fundamental transformation in the role of the person which placed the person at the centre of literary production.

I have suggested that we must look outside literature itself to find reasons for this change. In the legal and social domains distinctions between individuals were being drawn ever more tightly in the period this book is concerned with. There was an increasing obsession with differentiation by rank and status dependent on the superperson of the emperor. We observe too new approaches to the development of personal morality in the form of self-evaluation through comparison with others. This was common to pagans and Christians. 'The eyes of your

[92] MacCormack (1981: esp. 17–89) on *adventus* and the idea of the emperor as *deus praesens*; Gussone (1976); see Brown (1981: 98 ff.).

fellow-ascetics', as the *Life of Antony* puts it, are on you even when you are alone. The disciplinary regard of the Christian Church and the Christian State required closer knowledge of an individual who was now viewed as a likely failure more often than a potential model. These new social, religious, and political factors (in the widest sense) pushed the individual into prominence and established biographical representation as a key structural feature of the literature of martyrologists, intellectuals, historians, hagiographers, and theologians.

Portraits

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