

THE GENERIC FEATURES OF LATER GRAECO-ROMAN BIOI

Plutarch's *Lives* are an outstanding achievement in the field of biographical writing.¹

The historical development of Graeco-Roman biography provides a more suitable framework within which to consider these works.²

Now we have studied five βίοι predating the gospels, five further works will show us how the genre develops: three date from the creative period around AD 100, and then we move to the later imperial forerunners of hagiography and the novel. Beyond this point, the genre begins to develop into new forms and new cultures outside our scope. All together, we have a sample of ten different βίοι across some eight centuries within which to place the gospels.

We have seen already that the subjects of βίοι include a wide range of people; eventually, 'the wise man, the martyr, and the saint became central subjects of biography in addition to the king, the writer, and the philosopher'.³ Within Graeco-Roman biography as a whole, each category could be seen as its own subgroup, some of which may be closer to some neighbouring genres than others. Thus the border between historiography and political βίοι is blurred: some history shows biographical features (for example the concentration on the emperor in Roman historiography), whereas βίοι of generals or statesmen will show some historical features. As Wallace-Hadrill says: 'History or not history? The problem faces every biographer in varying degree. Biography occupies an ambivalent position on the outskirts of proper his-

¹ Alan Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, (London: Paul Elek, 1974), p. 2.

² Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, p. 4, referring to attempts to use aretology to explain the gospels and later biographies of holy men.

³ Momigliano, *Development*, p. 104.

torical writing.⁴ Equally, βίοι of philosophers may be closer to the genres of philosophical works or, in the case of one as well-travelled as Apollonius of Tyana, to travelogue or even novel. Considering all their generic features will help us to understand such works.

A Introducing the examples

1 Tacitus' *Agricola*

The *Agricola* is probably Tacitus' earliest work, written in AD 98⁵ when confidence was reviving after the terror of Domitian. Cornelius Tacitus was born of equestrian stock c. AD 56, probably in Narbonese Gaul; elevated by Vespasian, he pursued a senatorial career, becoming consul in 97 and governor of Asia 112–13; he died in the reign of Hadrian. The *Agricola* and *Germania* were completed around his consulship; his great historical works came later, the *Histories* (dealing with AD 69–96) and *Annals*, covering from Augustus to Nero, AD 14–68. In AD 77 he married the daughter of the consul at the time, Gn. Julius Agricola (*Agricola* 9.6). The subject of Tacitus' first work was, therefore, his father-in-law: Agricola, also born in Narbonese Gaul, at Forum Iulii (modern Fréjus) in AD 40, had a typical senatorial career, mixing military and political posts, tribune of the plebs in 66, praetor in 68 and consul in 77. His military career was spent in Britain, as military tribune under Suetonius Paulinus 58–61, then commander of the XXth Legion 70–73, and returning finally as governor in 77 until his retirement in 84 to peace and quiet at Rome, where he died in 93.

The genre of the *Agricola* has been disputed among classical scholars,⁶ and we have already noted that Shuler claims it for his

⁴ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius: The Scholar and his Caesars* (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 8.

⁵ See *De Vita Agricolae*, ed. R.M. Ogilvie and I. Richmond (OUP, 1967), pp. 10–11, and pp. 854–5 of M.M. Sage, 'Tacitus' Historical Works: A Survey and Appraisal', *ANRW* II.33.2 (1990), pp. 851–1030; see also, T.A. Dorey, "'Agricola' and 'Germania'", in his *Tacitus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 1–18 and 'Agricola and Domitian', *Greece and Rome* 7 (1960), pp. 66–71; F.R.D. Goodyear, *Tacitus, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics* 4 (OUP, 1970); Ronald Martin, *Tacitus* (London: Batsford, 1981), pp. 39–49.

⁶ Forni lists many suggested options including *laudatio funebris* (Hübner), political pamphlet (Boissier), biographical encomium (Leo), laudatory biography (Andersen), panegyric (Giarratano), prose encomium (Gudeman), idealistic biography and moderate panegyric (Stuart), *monumentum pietatis* in biographical character (Hosius), *laudatio* following rhetorical canons of Quintilian (Cousin) *et al.* – see his edition, *Agricola* (Rome: Athenaeum, 1962), p. 13; see also, Ogilvie's

genre of 'encomium biography'.⁷ It differs from the gospels in many ways, such as its social and literary levels and settings. If some kind of generic relationship can be demonstrated, this will be very significant in placing the gospels within the web of literary relationships of their day.

2 Plutarch's *Cato Minor*

Plutarch was born c. AD 45/6 and lived until the early 120s. His family came from Chaeronea in northern Boeotia, and he spent most of his life there, although he travelled to Rome where he became friends with several leading citizens and won his citizenship. He was among the most prolific of ancient writers, writing philosophy, morality, rhetoric, biography and antiquarian history; about half of it still survives. His philosophical tastes tended towards the Platonic, and he was also a priest of the shrine at Delphi. This philosophical interest is clear in works like the *Moralia* but also shines through the *Lives*.⁸ Like Tacitus' work, Plutarch's βίοι probably belong to the period after AD 96 when it was safer to publish.⁹ He wrote individual Lives, of which four survive, and others in parallel pairs, comparing Greeks with Romans; twenty-two pairs remain, with nineteen having formal comparisons, σύγκρισεις.¹⁰ He distinguishes βίος from history in the famous passage from *Alex.* 1.1–3 but, as we have seen, this distinction can be overemphasized, particularly if taken without reference to Plutarch's actual practice. Plutarch's βίοι exemplify the flexible nature of this genre, nestling between history, rhetoric and moral philosophy, with a variety of literary and artistic purposes.

introduction to his commentary, pp. 11–20 and Sage, 'Tacitus' Historical Works', *ANRW* II.33.2, pp. 855–6. The new volume II.33.3 (1991) also contains several helpful articles on the *Agricola*, pp. 1714–1857.

⁷ Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels*, p. 75, see pp. 86–9 above; for similar views, see Alfred Gudeman, ed. *Agricola* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902), pp. 1–13 and J. Cousin, 'Histoire et rhétorique dans l'*Agricola*', *Revue des Etudes Latines* 14 (1936), pp. 31 and 326–36.

⁸ For his life, see C.P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (OUP, 1971), pp. 3–64; also J.R. Hamilton, *Alexander* (OUP, 1969), pp. xiii–xxiii and C.B.R. Pelling (ed.), *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (CUP, 1988), pp. 1–10.

⁹ For dating, see C.P. Jones, 'Towards a Chronology of Plutarch's Works', *JRS* 56 (1966), pp. 60–74; Hamilton, *Alexander*, pp. xxxiv–xxxvii; Pelling, *Antony*, pp. 3–4 and 'Plutarch's Method', *JHS* (1979), pp. 74–96.

¹⁰ For pairings and comparisons, see Pelling, 'Synkrisis in Plutarch's Lives', *QGFF* 8 (1986), pp. 83–96 and *Antony*, pp. 18–26; Geiger, 'Plutarch's Parallel Lives', *Hermes* (1981), pp. 85–104; Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, pp. 105–6; Gossage, 'Plutarch', pp. 60–2.

Although the *Cato Minor* is roughly contemporary with the *Agricola*, there are many differences. It was written in Greek and in Greece; it is part of a much larger work, the *Parallel Lives*, and it is paired with the *Phocion*. Cato is an interesting subject as a political and public figure, but one with a strong moral and philosophical side. Marcus Porcius Cato (the Younger) was a politician and philosopher active over the last decades of the Republic. Born in 95 BC, he was the great-grandson of Cato the Elder. He was an uncompromising Republican and fought hard against the changes in Roman politics; elected praetor in 54, he failed to obtain the consulship in 51. He consistently opposed the First Triumvirate and their associates, such as Clodius. When the break finally came, he persuaded Pompey to become the senate's champion and served under him in the Civil War. He committed suicide at Utica in 46 BC when he saw that the Republican cause was lost.¹¹ Cato espoused a mixture of traditional Roman values and Stoicism, having studied with Antipater the Tyrian (*Cat. Min.* 4.1) and later under Athenodorus while serving in the East (10). Plutarch describes his last hours spent in philosophical discussion and reading (67–69). After his death, Cato became a symbol of Republicanism: Cicero wrote a panegyric, the *Cato*, and Caesar a reply, the *Anti-Cato*. Later others, including Cato's nephew Brutus, who was one of Caesar's murderers, Caesar's lieutenant Hirtius, and even Augustus himself, expressed their philosophical and political ideas through writing about him, as 'Catonism' became 'an ideological hallmark of the Early Principate'.¹² Thrasea Paetus' account, composed in his retirement from active politics after upsetting Nero, is described by Geiger as using the genre of 'full-fledged biography, describing the life of the hero from childhood to death' to set out his own beliefs.¹³ Not long afterwards, Paetus was himself also to commit suicide having lost to the imperial tyrant. Interestingly, Plutarch can write about Cato, using these polemical βίοι as his sources, but without participating in the ideological debate; instead, Cato is just one of his great figures for the *Parallel Lives*.

¹¹ For an introduction to Cato, see *LACTOR* 14, *Plutarch: Cato the Younger* (London: Association of Classical Teachers, 1984); for full discussion, see Rudolf Fehrle, *Cato Uticensis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983).

¹² Geiger, 'Munatius Rufus', *Athenaeum* (1979), pp. 48–72, quotation from p. 48; see also Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, p. 220: 'The cult of the philosophical Romans, Brutus and Cato, was at times a gesture of defiance against an autocracy.'

¹³ Geiger, 'Munatius Rufus', p. 71.

3 Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*¹⁴

Gaius Tranquillus Suetonius was slightly younger than Tacitus and Plutarch, born c. 69, the year of the four emperors. A professional scholar and writer, he held secretarial posts under both Trajan and Hadrian. Little is known about his life, apart from personal references in his work and correspondence with his friend and patron, Pliny the Younger. The letters, covering AD 96–112, mention Pliny's assistance, such as gaining Suetonius the *ius trium liberorum* – the political advantages of parenthood – even though he was childless. He appears to have been dismissed by Hadrian in AD 121/2, but the date of his death is unknown.

Much of his work was biographical, including the large *De viris illustribus* (echoing Nepos' title), now lost. The *De vita Caesarum* has twelve βίοι, beginning with the *Julius Caesar*, which has some chapters missing, and continuing down to *Domitian*. As we have seen, Suetonius differs from Plutarch in his topical analysis of the emperors' reign, with chronology used only for their early years and death. He is interested in the lively story, often to the point of being seen as a scandal-monger, and this, together with his simple, easy to read style, ensured him lasting popularity. The accounts of Julius Caesar and Augustus are the most detailed; the quality of the others deteriorates down through the sequence, probably as a result of his dismissal from the imperial service and its archives and libraries. We shall concentrate, therefore, on these first two *Lives*.

4 Lucian's *Demonax*¹⁵

Lucian was born about the time Suetonius' official career ended, c. AD 120, in Samosata, formerly capital of Commagene but then in the Roman province of Syria. He often calls himself a Syrian and may have had Aramaic as his first language (*Double Indictment* 27). He lived through the 'golden years' of the mid-second century under Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and died

¹⁴ Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*; Baldwin, *Suetonius*; Wolf Steidle, *Sueton und die antike Biographie*, 2nd edn (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1963).

¹⁵ Barry Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973); Graham Anderson, *Studies in Lucian's Comic Fiction*, Mnemosyne Supplementum 43 (Leiden: Brill, 1976); C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Harvard: University Press, 1986), especially pp. 90–8; Christopher Robinson, *Lucian: And his Influence in Europe*, (London: Duckworth, 1979); for a comparison with Mark, see H. Cancik, 'Bios und Logos'.

after AD 180. After an unsuccessful start in the family sculpting business, he trained in rhetoric; as a travelling sophist, he visited much of the ancient world, including Rome, Greece and Egypt. Although philosophy is the main subject of much of his work, he was more an entertainer than a sage, developing his 'dialogues' with a rich vein of satire and comedy: in *Philosophers For Sale* the range of ideas and beliefs available in his pluralistic society are described and examined as though they were slaves up for auction in a mock slave-market.

The eighty or so extant works display a range of literary genres and a capacity for mixture and experiment. Some are little more than formal rhetorical exercises, in which the orator has to accuse or defend a person in a given situation (e.g. *The Tyrannicide*). Others are προλαλῖαι, short, warm-up orations for the start of a public performance. He used the genre of philosophical dialogue for his more substantial works, and infused them with a strong whiff of satire (*Dialogues of the Gods*, *Dialogues of the Dead*, etc.). Other books are concerned with a particular individual: 'biographies, favourable and hostile, were well suited to sophistic practice'.¹⁶ The *Demonax* concerns a philosopher with Cynical tendencies from Cyprus, but resident in Athens, under whom Lucian studied. Little else is known about him outside Lucian's account, except for some apophthegms preserved in other writers.

5 Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana*¹⁷

Flavius Philostratus was born in the later years of Lucian's life, c. AD 170. He studied rhetoric at Athens, and then came to Rome and became part of the circle of Julia Domna, wife of the emperor Septimius Severus. He survived the turbulent end of the Severan dynasty, continuing to write and publish, and died c. AD 250. His interest in βίοι is demonstrated by his *Lives of the Sophists*, βίοι σοφιστῶν, a picture of the professional sophists and their craft. Philostratus received from the Empress Julia the 'memoirs of

¹⁶ Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian*, p. 79.

¹⁷ Eduard Meyer, 'Apollonius von Tyana und die Biographie des Philostratos', *Hermes* 52 (1917), pp. 371–424; G. Petzke, *Die Traditionen über Apollonius von Tyana und das Neue Testament*, Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1970); E.L. Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality', in *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978), pp. 1652–99; Graham Anderson, *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

Damis', with a request that he should write an account of Apollonius, a first-century philosopher and mystic from Tyana in Cappadocia. An active teacher and religious reformer, Apollonius travelled all over the known world, and Philostratus uses these travels as a backdrop for his words and mighty deeds. The historical authenticity of all this, of Damis and even of Apollonius himself, is much disputed and too complex a distraction to our task to go into here.¹⁸ This work is often compared with the gospels.¹⁹ In fact, its precise genre is disputed: although it is called the *Vita Apollonii*, Bowie says that 'the work is not properly a Vita'. The overlap with both philosophy and *Reiseroman* is noted by Meyer, and Anderson points out links with historiography, dialogue, the novel and romance, concluding that 'it is futile in the end to try to "explain" *Apollonius* in terms of any single genre'.²⁰ Here too then, generic analysis may help.

B Opening features

1 Titles

The full title of the *Agricola* in the *Aesinas Codex* is: 'Cornelii Taciti de Vita Iulii Agricolae liber incipit'. As Martin says: 'The title of the work . . . promises the reader . . . a biography of Tacitus' father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola.'²¹ Plutarch's work is known by the name of the subject, *Κάτων*, but is also part of the much larger work, the *Parallel Lives*. Similarly Suetonius' overall title is

¹⁸ Meyer suggested that Damis was 'lediglich eine Fiktion des Philostratos' for his own ideas against Moiragenes, 'Apollonius von Tyana', *Hermes*, 1917, p. 393ff; for a modern version, see Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', *ANRW*, II.16.2, who accepts the existence of Apollonius, but is sceptical about the stories and Damis; the opposing view is taken by Graham Anderson, *Philostratus*, pp. 155–97; see also, Petzke's excursus, 'Das Damisproblem', in *Die Traditionen*, pp. 67–72. For fiction in βίοι, see Momigliano, *Development*, p. 56; Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im NT', *ANRW* II.25.2, p. 1239 and Pelling, 'Truth and Fiction in Plutarch's *Lives*' in *Antonine Literature*, ed. D.A. Russell (OUP, 1990), pp. 19–52.

¹⁹ See, for example, Petzke, *Die Traditionen*, pp. 51–62; Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 120; Talbert, *What is a Gospel?*, pp. 36–7, 94–5, 101, 125; Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels*, pp. 82–5; Boring, *Truly Human/Truly Divine*, pp. 20–1.

²⁰ Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', *ANRW* II.16.2, p. 1652, n. 1; Meyer, 'Apollonius von Tyana', *Hermes*, 1917; G. Anderson, *Philostratus*, p. 235.

²¹ Martin, *Tacitus*, p. 39. At the end of this manuscript the title has *et Moribus* after *Vita* and this is the title in other MSS – A (Vatican 3429), B (Vatican 4498) and T (Toletanus 49.2); see Forni's commentary, p. 75 and Heinz Heubner, *Kommentar zum Agricola des Tacitus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), p. 143.

De vita Caesarum, with individual books named after their emperors. Although Lucian's work is often called the *Demonax*, its fuller Greek title is βίος Δημόνακτος.²² Finally, something similar to Philo's *περὶ τοῦ* . . . formula happens with Philostratus: the title is *τὰ ἐς τὸν Τυανέα Ἀπολλώνιον*. Bowie notes that this 'is not of the normal biographic form τοῦ δεινός βίος' but suggests a 'novelistic formula'²³ – an indication perhaps that this work is on the border between βίος and novel or travel-romance. Anderson translates it as 'in honour of Apollonius of Tyana' or 'a monument to Apollonius'.²⁴ We conclude from all our examples, therefore, that the titles given to βίοι are based around the subject's name and often, but not always, include the word βίος or *vita*.

2 Opening formulae/prologue/preface

Tacitus begins with a formal prologue, following common literary practice and rhetorical canons, with a strong personal theme about previous biographies and how such works were impossible while Domitian was emperor.²⁵ In the first chapter, Tacitus uses 'vitam narrare' of his predecessors (1.3), and then for his own work, 'at nunc narraturo vitam' (1.4); the verb reappears in the final words: 'Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit', (46.4). 'Narrare vitam' is used by Nepos to distinguish his Lives from more historical works (*De viris illustribus* XVI: *Pelop.* 1.1), so Tacitus is giving us a clear indicator of the genre of βίος here. There is no prologue at the start of the *Cato Minor*, since there is the prologue and initial comparison in its partner, the *Phocion*, see especially chapter 3. Unfortunately the beginning of the *Divus Julius*, the first of Suetonius' *Caesars*, is not preserved, so we cannot tell if the sequence began with a prologue; the other Lives begin immediately with the emperor's ancestry. Both Lucian and Philostratus do have prologues (*Dem.* 1–2; *Apoll.* I.1–3), in which they explain the purpose of their writing, as well as referring to other philosophers.

In these examples, too, we find the subject's name at the beginning. After its prologue, the *Agricola* begins with the opening words: 'Gnaeus Iulius Agricola' (4.1). According to Ogilvie, this is

²² See Eunapios VS 454, quoted on p. 62 above; also Jones, *Culture and Society*, p. 22 and Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian*, p. 98.

²³ Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', *ANRW* II.16.2, p. 1665.

²⁴ G. Anderson, *Philostratus*, pp. 121 and 235.

²⁵ For the prologue, see Karl Büchner, 'Das Proömium zum Agricola des Tacitus', in his *Tacitus und Ausklang* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1964), pp. 23–42.

the only certain occasion where Tacitus gives all three of a person's names in the official manner: 'this formal, and perhaps unique, introduction signals that Agricola is the subject of the work'.²⁶ The *Cato Minor*, with no prologue, begins with the subject's name as the first word, even though it is not the grammatical subject, Κάτωνι δὲ τὸ μὲν γένος . . . , and then we move straight into his ancestry (1.1). This is also the case in many of Plutarch's *Lives*: see for example, *Antony* 1.1, Ἀντωνίου πάππος μὲν ἦν . . . , or *Eumenes* 1.1, Εὐμένην δὲ τὸν Καρδιανὸν . . . Similarly in Suetonius, the family name is often mentioned immediately, leading into the ancestry section, while the subject's actual name begins the main body of the work. Lucian refers to Demonax by name several times in his opening sentences, whereas Philostratus has an opening chapter on Pythagoras, but begins the second chapter with Apollonius' name, repeated again after the preface, Ἀπολλωνίῳ τοίνυν πατρὶς (I.4).

It is now clear that some of our examples begin with a formal prologue or preface, but that all of them mention the subject's name at the very start, or immediately after the prologue.

C Subject

1 Analysis of verb subjects

The large section on the geography, ethnography and history of Britain (chapters 10–17) is sometimes cited as an argument against the *Agricola* being biography. Manual analysis of verb subjects reflects this ambivalence of focus. Agricola clearly dominates, the subject of some 18% of the verbs with a further 4% occurring in his speech (chapters 33–34). All the other named Romans, including Domitian, taken together barely make 8%, with a similar figure for all the soldiers and sailors. However, the *Agricola* has, like a symphony, a second subject: Britain and various Britons, having some 14%, plus a further 7% appearing in Calgacus' speech (chapters 30–32) (see Figure 9, Appendix, p. 268). Some scholars suggest that chapters 10–17 were originally a separate piece, a monograph or a section for a history, which Tacitus has incorporated into his narrative.²⁷ However, the reason for all this material

²⁶ Ogilvie, *Agricola*, p. 140; Heubner, *Kommentar*, p. 14.

²⁷ See, for instance, the commentaries by Furneaux, 1898, p. 8; Furneaux-Anderson, 1922, p. xxiii; and Goodyear, *Tacitus*, p. 4.

on Britain is very simple, as Ogilvie points out: 'Agricola's claim to fame was that he was the conqueror of Britain and, therefore, the life of Agricola was to a large extent the history of the conquest of Britain.'²⁸

Computer analysis of the *Cato Minor* reveals that Cato's name occurs in a huge 42.5% of the sentences, and that it appears in the nominative in 14.9% of them. His two political rivals, Pompey and Caesar, score significantly lower results, appearing in about an eighth of the sentences (13.4% and 12.6%) and being in the nominative in 3%. After them, no one else has a significant score (see Figure 10, Appendix, p. 269). Similar results occur in others of Plutarch's *Lives*; the fact that the leaders of the Civil War factions appear in each others' *Lives* produces particularly interesting results. In the *Caesar*, Caesar himself appears in 34.4%, with 11% in the nominative, while Pompey occurs in 13.9%, with 2.5% nominative. The position is completely reversed in the *Pompey*, however: Pompey occurs in 35.8% with 12.1% nominatives, while Caesar appears in 10.9% with 2.4% nominatives. Something very similar happens with Marius and Sulla: in the *Marius*, Marius scores 32% and 9.2%, while Sulla can only manage 5.5% and 2.4%; in the *Sulla*, however, Sulla scores 32.4% and 11.2%, with Marius getting 9.1% and 2.1%. Thus we may conclude that the subject of one of Plutarch's *Lives* is likely to appear in about a third of the sentences and to be the subject of at least a tenth; however, his nearest rival will only appear in a tenth, and be the subject of very few indeed (2 to 3%).

Much of the *Demonax* consists of conversations between Demonax and someone else, leading up to a witty saying or clever pronouncement by the sage himself. This is reflected in manual analysis of the verbs: Demonax is the subject of a third of them (33.6%) and speaks a further fifth (19.7%), whereas all those with whom he converses only make up another fifth when taken all together (20.9%) (see Figure 11, Appendix, p. 270).

Despite the potential problems of precision which were anticipated for this method of analysis, these results, plus those in the last chapter, reveal a clear and consistent picture: βίος literature is characterized by a strong concentration and focus on *one* person, and this is reflected even in the verbal syntax.

²⁸ *Agricola*, p. 15; for an account of Agricola's activity, see R. Syme, *Tacitus* (OUP, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 19–26.

2 Allocation of space

The *Agricola* does give a bare outline of Agricola's life – but this is only sketchy. Birth, parentage, boyhood and education are all covered swiftly in one chapter (4). The first thirty-eight years of Agricola's life have not quite 13% of the text and the last ten years just over 9%. Remarkably, one year, AD 84, has huge coverage – over a quarter of the work; closer inspection reveals that chapters 30–38 in fact cover only one day, the battle of Mons Graupius. So Tacitus chooses one period – the one which best displays his subject – for disproportionate treatment: 'That Tacitus should give to Agricola's final campaign more space than he gives to the whole of the narrative of the six preceding years is a clear indication that he regards the battle as the climax of Agricola's career.'²⁹ Finally, Agricola's death and its aftermath also receive attention: chapters 43–46 have almost 10% of the whole – more than all the previous ten years.

V: Content analysis of Tacitus' 'Agricola'

Chapters	Date (AD)	Lines	Percentage of work
1–3	–	50	5.6%
4–9	40–78	113	12.6
10–17	–	164	18.3
18–24	78–82	120	13.4
25–28	83	65	7.2
29–39	84	234	26.1
40–43	84–93	83	9.3
44–46	–	67	7.5

Plutarch covers Cato's early years briefly and then describes the central period of his political career fairly evenly. However, the end of his life gets the greatest attention, over a sixth (17.3%) of the total work (see Table VI).

Death scenes are a standard feature of biography: 'the final moments of personages and their last words have through the centuries been a common motive in biographical composition' for such scenes are 'always fraught with possibilities, dramatic and melodramatic, for portraying the character of the departed'.³⁰ The

²⁹ Martin, *Tacitus*, p. 43.

³⁰ Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, p. 245.

VI: Content analysis of Plutarch's 'Cato Minor'

Chapters	Date (BC)	Topic	Percentage of work
1–7	95–73	Birth, childhood and education	15.0%
8–15	72–66	Slave Wars, Military Tribune in Asia	9.2
16–21	66–65	Quaestor	10.3
22–29	64–63	Cicero Consul; Catilinarian Conspiracy	11.5
30–39	62–56	Pompey and Caesar: Cato in Cyprus	13.8
40–46	55–53	Praetorship	10.3
47–51	52–50	Growing tension	6.9
52–55	49–48	Civil War, Pharsalus	5.7
56–73	47/46	Last days in Africa, death	17.3

character of Cato is revealed in his final meal and discussion with his friends about philosophy (on Stoic paradoxes and the good man, 67), and in his reading and re-reading of Plato's *Phaedo* (68.2, 70.1). Murrell sees a literary purpose also: 'The last chapters (66–73) provide a charming and memorable close ... to the energetic and turbulent life of one whose character can provoke the most diverse re-action – admiration and respect, hostility and contempt.'³¹ However, in addition to his literary purpose, Plutarch has a moral problem: the principle of divine retribution dictates that bad men's lives and deaths show that crime does not pay and good men's the reverse. An ignominious death after Cato's apparent failure to stop the evil against which he has fought all his life has to be balanced: 'His attempt to prove that the good are rewarded, by relating elaborate funerals for the unjustly afflicted, also seems contrived.'³² So Cato is declared to be 'Saviour' (σωτήρα) by the immediate gathering at his door of 300 senators and the people of Utica (71.1). Great honours, decoration and a procession are given to the body, and it is buried near the sea 'where a statue now stands, sword in hand' – a romantic, yet victorious image (71.2). Even his enemy, Caesar, is brought on to speak well of him (72.2). All of this contrives to give a triumphant end to the βίος.

This disproportionate attention to Cato's death may also relate to the genre of *exitus illustrium virorum*, as composed by Capito and Fannius.³³ The tradition of the deaths of philosophers is seen in the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*. Geiger demonstrates the similar

³¹ In his introduction to *LACTOR* 14, p. v.

³² F.E. Brenk, S.J., *In Mist Apparelled*, p. 270.

³³ Pliny, *Epistles* VIII.12.4; V.5.3; see p. 77 above.

pattern in the deaths of Cato here and of Thræsea Paetus in Tacitus' *Annals*: both deaths are consciously modelled on the death of Socrates, as is shown by Cato's last reading of Socrates' final dialogue (*Phaedo*).³⁴ Another extended death scene occurs in Plutarch's *Antony* where we have a 'Last Supper' with friends, with discourse and instruction, on the night before the subject's death (*Ant.* 75), followed by detailed treatment of subsequent events, including Cleopatra's death.³⁵

The allocation of space in Suetonius' *Caesars* is arranged topically. Clearly, Suetonius is not trying to provide an even-handed chronological coverage. Instead, the whole of the period up to Augustus' Principate is summarized in a few chapters (5–8), and then we have three main sections on his military, political and personal affairs, before returning to a chronological account of his death and connected events.

VII: Content analysis of Suetonius' 'Divus Augustus'

Chapters	Topic	Percentage of work
1–4	Ancestry and family	3.0%
5–8	Birth, early years to accession	3.5
9–25	Wars and military affairs	16.0
26–60	Administration and rule of empire	35.0
61–96	Personal and family matters	36.0
97–101	Death, omens, funeral, will	6.5

Something similar may be observed with Lucian's *Demonax*: the brief section about his life merely mentions his birth and education (3–11), and then we move into portrayal of his character. The main section (12–62) is made up of many stories and anecdotes, each leading up to a pronouncement or saying of the sage.³⁶ Of course, since the focus of interest in a philosopher is his teaching, this is to be expected (see Table VIII).

Philostratus has a brief introduction and account of the early years, but devotes the bulk of his work to the travels of Apollonius and the many philosophical dialogues which he had during them.

³⁴ Geiger, 'Munatius Rufus', *Athenaeum*, 1979, pp. 61–5.

³⁵ See Pelling, *Antony*, pp. 16–18, 293–4 and 302–3.

³⁶ See Cancik, 'Bios und Logos', pp. 121–2.

VIII: Content analysis of Lucian's 'Demonax'

Chapters	Topic	Percentage of work
1–2	Preface	6%
3–11	Life and character	25
12–62	Anecdotes and sayings	60
63–67	Later years, death, conclusion	9

What sort of period this is supposed to represent and how the years are allocated is impossible to say. Significantly, however, Apollonius' imprisonment, trial and death comprises over a quarter of the work.

IX: Content analysis of Philostratus' 'Apollonius of Tyana'

Chapters	Topic	Percentage of work
I. 1–3	Introduction	0.9%
I. 4–17	Early years	4.0
I. 18–VI. 43	Travels and dialogues	68.8
VII. 1–VIII. 7	Imprisonment and trial	21.0
VIII. 8–31	Later events, death, appearances, honours	5.3

Clearly, therefore, an even-handed allocation of space is *not* required in βίος literature: one period of the subject's life can dominate, e.g. the Mons Graupius campaign in the *Agricola*. Furthermore, a tenth of the *Agricola*, over a sixth of the *Cato Minor* and a quarter of the *Apollonius of Tyana* are taken up with the person's final days and the events surrounding the death. This makes for very interesting parallels with the last meal and death of Jesus in the gospels and the corresponding disproportionate allocation of space there.

Our ten examples together show that the allocation of space in βίοι may involve a generally even coverage of the subject's life (*Evagoras*), but the author may choose instead to emphasize one small period at the expense of others (*Agesilaus*, *Agricola*, *Cato Minor*); he may combine chronological and topical material in roughly equal proportions (*Agesilaus*), or stress the subject's deeds in a chronological sequence (usually for statesmen, e.g. *Agricola*, *Atticus*) or put the emphasis on his character and sayings (usually for philosophers, e.g. *Demonax*, *Apollonius of Tyana*).

D External features

1 Mode of representation

The *Agricola* is in continuous prose narrative, mostly in the third person. It includes two set speeches by Agricola and Calgacus before the crucial battle; Ogilvie notes rhetorical influences in the opening and closing sections (in the style of Cicero), and historical influence in the middle of the work (following Sallust and Livy).³⁷ The *Cato Minor*, like all of Plutarch's *Lives*, is presented in continuous prose narrative and ordered chronologically. It is designed as a whole and flows smoothly. It too contains many sayings and speeches, mainly reported, with notable exceptions like the final speech (68–9) which lends emphasis to the death scene. Suetonius presents his material in continuous prose also, but differs in the non-chronological sequence of the narrative, preferring to order it by topical sections. Although Lucian's *Demonax* is still prose narrative, the bulk is *not* continuous, but rather a string of unconnected anecdotes and stories. The *Apollonius of Tyana* is in continuous prose narrative, including blocks of formal dialogue in the manner of philosophical works: e.g., the dialogue on kingship and the Republic with Vespasian (V.32–40) or the discussion with the Egyptian sages (VI.10–21). This is a further indication of the mixed genre of this work. Thus we may conclude that the normal mode of representation for βίοι is prose narrative, often continuous and chronological, but allowing for other modes, especially those of rhetoric, to be inserted.

2 Size

The *Agricola* contains about 7,000 words (896 lines in the *OCT*), too long for a short work, and too short for a long one. As Dorey says: 'The *Agricola* is the right length: short enough for its contents to be assimilated easily and rapidly, but long enough to contain solid material and a wealth of detail.'³⁸ It thus falls into our category of medium length, if at the shortish end, and it is comparable with the *Agésilas* and the estimated length of Satyrus' *Euripides*. The *Cato Minor* is about 16,500 words, while its pair, the *Phocion*, is considerably shorter at about 10,000; together they

³⁷ Ogilvie, introduction to *Agricola*, p. 22.

³⁸ Dorey, "Agricola" and "Germania", p. 8.

would fill one scroll. The *Cato Minor* is one of Plutarch's longer examples, with only *Antony*, *Alexander* and *Pompey* being longer, about 19,000–20,000 words. The mismatch in length between the *Cato Minor* and its pair is unusual; Plutarch normally prefers to have both *Lives* of similar length, even if it means padding one to fit the other – for instance, *Fabius* is extended to the length of *Pericles*, and *Publicola* similarly to match its pair, *Solon*. However, all the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch are of medium length, averaging around 10,000 or 11,000 words each; the shortest pairs are *Sertorius/Eumenes* (about 14,000 words in total) and *Philopoemen/Titus* (about 12,000), with each *Life* making up about half the total. Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* also average about 10,000 words; the longest are *Divus Julius* (12,000 words still existing despite the loss of the opening chapters) and *Augustus* (16,000), while the shortest are the two groups of the Three Emperors of AD 69 and the three Flavians, each group being 10,000 words in total. Our final two examples are rather different, since one is much shorter and the other longer: *Demonax* is just over 3,000 words, whereas Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana* is a massive 82,000 words.

We take 'medium length' to mean about a scroll's length for the maximum and two or three works to a scroll for a minimum – about 5,000 to 25,000 words at the very extremes. Lucian's *Demonax* is the shortest of these examples, comparable to the length of Nepos' *Atticus*. In an interesting discussion of the length of βίοι, Geiger suggests that 'political biography in its fully developed form was as a rule a much lengthier literary genre than intellectual biography'.³⁹ This is certainly true of writers like Plutarch, compared with the short *vitae* attached to poets' and writers' manuscripts. The odd one out here is clearly Philostratus, who has given his *Apollonius of Tyana* a length beyond the medium range; significantly, it falls within the range of both longer philosophical works (e.g. Plato's *Republic*, 89,358) and also pseudo-historical/fictional works, like Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (80,684). Once again, there is a problem in describing the *Apollonius of Tyana* as a βίος.

3 Structure

The *Agricola* has a chronological structure following the main events of Agricola's life, finishing with his death and a laudatory conclusion. Within this basic framework, specific items are given

³⁹ Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos*, pp. 26–9 and 34–5; quotation from p. 28.

space – such as the disproportionate consideration of the battle of *Mons Graupius* and the background section on Britain (10–17) inserted into the chronological sequence when Agricola commences his governorship. Similarly, *Cato Minor* begins with the subject's birth, family and childhood, and closes with his death and burial. Unlike many βίοι, chronology is followed very closely here, almost on a year by year basis. This is easier to do for the Life of a politician than for a poet or philosopher; as Hamilton says:

In general, in composing his biographies, Plutarch relates his hero's career from birth to death in chronological order. But he allows himself a good deal of scope, and the precise arrangement and the amount of space allotted to each topic depends on whether the hero is predominantly an orator, a politician, or a military man, and on the amount of material available to him.⁴⁰

Plutarch even apologizes for inserting a topical item on Cato's relationships with women out of chronological sequence: 'even though this happened later, I decided to anticipate it while recording the topic of his women' (25.5). Geiger believes that such departures from the chronological sequence occur in passages derived from Munatius' ἀπομνημονεύματα or *Memorabilia* about Cato, modelled upon Xenophon and thus less chronologically ordered.⁴¹

Suetonius, on the other hand, has only the barest chronological framework, beginning with the emperor's ancestry and family and his accession at the start, and his death and related events at the end; the bulk comprises topical sections on his virtues and vices, foreign campaigns and policy, administration at home and so on.⁴² Lucian is even less chronological: we move straight from Demonax' birth and education (chapters 3–5) into anecdotes about his character (5–10) and a loosely connected sequence of stories and sayings (12–62). As Cancik notes, the *Demonax* is more loosely structured with less integration of teaching and activity than even Mark's gospel.⁴³ Philostratus provides a seemingly chronological account of his hero's travels, but there is little dating: any story of a set of journeys will appear chronological. Meyer sees the chron-

⁴⁰ Hamilton, *Alexander*, p. xxxix; see also, Russell, 'On Reading Plutarch's *Lives*', *Greece and Rome* 13 (1966), p. 149.

⁴¹ Geiger, 'Munatius Rufus', *Athenaeum*, 1979, pp. 56–7.

⁴² See Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, pp. 10–15.

⁴³ Cancik, 'Bios und Logos', p. 128; also, Jones, *Culture and Society*, pp. 91–3.

ology of the account as 'das Werk des Philostratos'.⁴⁴ All these authors return to chronology to describe the subject's last days and death, closing with the funeral or honours given, or with an evaluation of their subject. Cox sees a similar pattern in later biography:

The only structural statement one can make to characterize the genre as a whole is a very simple one: the Graeco-Roman biography of the holy man is a narrative that relates incidents in the life of its subject from birth or youth to death. The hero's activities provide points of reference for the insertion of material not always related in an obvious way to the narrative's presumed biographical purpose.⁴⁵

Thus, βίοι have a basic chronological framework, possibly little more than the birth or public arrival as a start, and death as the end, with topical material inserted; βίοι of statesmen or generals (Agricola, Cato, Evagoras, Agesilaus, Atticus) tend to be more chronological, whereas philosophical (Demonax, Apollonius) or literary (Euripides) βίοι are more likely to be topically arranged.

4 Scale

The scale of the *Agricola* is quite broad in that it includes some of the history, geography and ethnography of Britain. Although some classicists cite this as an argument against its being βίος,⁴⁶ the scale is narrower than that of a true historical monograph or geographical treatise like Tacitus' *Germania*. Therefore, suggestions that the *Agricola*, or the Britain section (10–17), was originally intended for an historical work are not convincing.⁴⁷ The scale is still focussed upon Agricola, and any departure from this is best explained as furthering understanding of the subject himself. The limitation of scale is particularly marked in the *Cato Minor*, where the focus is concentrated on the subject, despite all the major

⁴⁴ Meyer, 'Apollonius von Tyana', *Hermes*, 1917, p. 405; see also, Petzke, *Die Traditionen*, pp. 51–62.

⁴⁵ Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, p. 55; also, Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im NT', *ANRW* II.25.2, p. 1239.

⁴⁶ See commentaries by Furneaux, pp. 8f.; Furneaux–Anderson, pp. xxiii–xxviii; Ogilvie, pp. 14–16; and Goodyear, *Tacitus*, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁷ Andresen's theory, *Festschrift d. Gymn. zum grauen Kloster*, Berlin, 1874; see Furneaux–Anderson, p. xxiii and Ogilvie, p. 15, n. 1.

events of the end of the Republic which were happening around him. For instance, at the battle of Dyrrachium, we are told about Cato's speech encouraging the men and about his weeping over the mutual slaughter of Romans (54.5–7), but nothing about this very significant battle itself, for which Plutarch refers us to his *Pompey* (54.6). He often gives cross references to other *Lives* for events not concerning Cato himself (e.g. to the *Elder Cato* in 1.1, or 73.4 for the death of Cato's daughter related in *Brutus* 13 and 53). Suetonius' topical arrangement of his works naturally limits the scale to the subject, because it is his virtues or vices and military or administrative skills which are being described. Lucian's anecdotal approach entails a limited scope with each story being about Demonax himself.

The work with more extraneous material and a wider scale is the *Apollonius of Tyana* again. Philostratus includes geographical, historical or ethnographical background at various points. As Anderson says, 'where the *Life* differs most . . . is in its sheer scale: here it stands side by side with the largest of sophistic novels'.⁴⁸ This is clearly somewhat different from the generic feature noted in our other βίοι, that the scale is limited to the subject and his concerns.

5 Literary units

The *Agricola* is a carefully written coherent whole, without obviously separate literary units. However, there are several different structural units: personal anecdote (e.g. his mother's response to his early passion for philosophy, chapter 4); units of geographical description (10), speeches (Calgacus, 30–32; *Agricola*, 33–34);⁴⁹ stories (e.g. the desertion of the cohort of Usipi, 28) – all of which are typical of both historical writing and βίος. The *Cato Minor* is also written as a continuous whole; the early years do use anecdotes, with some of them leading up to a notable saying of Cato (e.g. his desire as a boy of fourteen to slay Sulla, chapter 3; or about his habit of silence, 4). Other units include direct and indirect speeches, larger anecdotes and separate stories. However, the *Lives* differ in the type of literary units used according to Plutarch's desired emphasis or sources available. Thus the *Phocion* and *Cato Maior* have many apophthegms, the *Alcibiades* and *Alexander*

⁴⁸ G. Anderson, *Philostratus*, p. 229.

⁴⁹ See Martin, *Tacitus*, pp. 43–5 on speeches in *Agricola*.

more personal details, and the *Caesar* historical and tragic elements.⁵⁰

Lucian and Philostratus betray their units more clearly, and are often compared with the gospels. The main unit of the *Demonax* is termed by Lucian 'λελεγμένων' (chapter 12): such 'sayings' comprise units of about fifty words, beginning with a vague phrase to introduce or place the story, e.g. 'when . . .', introducing a character who says or does something which leads to the actual saying of Demonax. Such units are basic to biographical writing from Aristotle onwards: variously termed ἀποφθέγματα, γνώμαι, παραδείγματα and χροεῖαι, they have excited the interest of biblical scholars as possible parallels to synoptic 'pronouncement-story' forms and much work has been done on their analysis and classification.⁵¹ In addition, units which may be seen as 'legends' or 'miracle-stories' are found in *Apollonius of Tyana*.

It is clear, therefore, that all our examples are formed from a similar range of literary units of stories and anecdotes, sayings and speeches, with some being rather carefully composed while others are more of a loose connection of units.

6 Use of sources

Tacitus had access to several types of sources: oral family tradition and personal memory, *Agricola*'s own notes, senatorial records and letters, and other writers for geographical and historical background (such as Strabo, Pliny, Varro, Caesar, Livy).⁵² Like other authors of βίοι, he makes a selection from these for his desired portrait of his subject. Thus Dorey argues that Tacitus' portrayal of Domitian's hatred for *Agricola* is historically false: Tacitus is keen to prevent his father-in-law being seen as a friend of the tyrant, and so 'to make good his case he would naturally ignore anything that might interfere with his chosen interpretation of the facts'.⁵³

⁵⁰ See Gossage, 'Plutarch', pp. 58–9 and Pelling, 'Plutarch's Adaptation', *JHS* 1980, pp. 136–8.

⁵¹ For Aristotle, see p. 72 above and Momigliano, *Development*, pp. 72–3; for chreia and *Demonax*, see Cancik, 'Bios und Logos', p. 122 and Jones, *Culture and Society*, pp. 91–3; on chreia generally, see R.C. Tannehill (ed.), *Pronouncement Stories, Semeia* 20 (1981) and *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, ed. R.F. Hock and E.N. O'Neil (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

⁵² For personal memory, see 'saepe ex eo audivi', *Agricola* 24.3; for other sources, see Forni's commentary, pp. 51–5.

⁵³ Dorey, 'Agricola and Domitian', pp. 66–71, quotation from p. 71; see also, "Agricola" and "Germania", pp. 5ff.

Whether or not one agrees with Dorey's interpretation, the latitude allowed to the writer of a βίος in his use of sources is clear.

Plutarch also uses a wide range of oral and written sources. He read widely in Greek literature, but less so in Latin, since he states that he learned it later in life and was never completely fluent (*Demosth.* 2.2–4). Hamilton has counted 150 historians (including forty in Latin) cited by Plutarch in the *Moralia* and *Lives*.⁵⁴ Likewise, Pelling considers that there are some twenty-five sources behind the six late Republican *Lives* (*Lucullus, Pompey, Crassus, Cicero, Cato Minor, Brutus, Antony*), including historical authors (especially Pollio), other βίοι, memoirs, contemporary primary sources, letters and documents, and oral sources.⁵⁵ To these, Geiger adds Plutarch's use of Thrasea Paetus' and Munatius' *Lives* of Cato.⁵⁶ Such a wide range is striking, and, as a writer of βίοι, Plutarch had greater latitude in use of sources than was often the case for historians.⁵⁷ This would have caused difficulties: as Pelling points out, a modern scholar can work with many books and papers strewn all over the study floor, constantly checking and comparing different authorities; papyrus scrolls without chapter headings and indexes are a different matter.⁵⁸ Like the Elder Pliny (as described by his nephew in *Epist.* III.5), Plutarch would have read widely first, with some note-taking, and then followed one main source when writing, supplemented by notes and memory. Such a method allows for great selectivity of material, and an account of an incident in one *Life* is sometimes contradicted by another. Although this can be explained by poor memory, more often it is because he wants to tell the story this way this time to illustrate this particular person's character. While Plutarch did not allow himself wholesale fabrication (as happened in encomium or invective), he does have an element of imaginative 'creative reconstruction' of the truth as he saw it, in order to illustrate the way 'it must have been'.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Hamilton, *Alexander*, p. xliii; on Plutarch's sources, see Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, pp. 81–7 and Gossage, 'Plutarch', pp. 51–7.

⁵⁵ Pelling, 'Plutarch's Method', *JHS* 1979, pp. 83–90; for *Antony*, see his commentary, pp. 26–31.

⁵⁶ Geiger, 'Munatius Rufus', *Athenaeum*, 1979, pp. 48–72.

⁵⁷ See Pelling, 'Truth and Fiction in Plutarch's *Lives*', esp. pp. 28–9; also, Momigliano, *Development*, pp. 56–7.

⁵⁸ See Pelling, 'Plutarch's Method', *JHS*, 1979, esp. pp. 91–6, and *Antony*, pp. 31–3.

⁵⁹ See Pelling, 'Truth and Fiction', and *Antony*, pp. 33–6.

Suetonius had access to many sources, including documents in the imperial archives and the letters of Augustus, from which he quotes freely and frequently. His scholastic and secretarial training is evident as he compares and criticizes different accounts to discover the truth. However, detailed discussion of his sources and quotations from emperors' letters decline through the sequence of the *Caesars*; this may reflect limited access, possibly as a result of his dismissal.⁶⁰ Philostratus details his sources: traditions from the various cities which Apollonius visited, accounts and letters, as well as the works of his predecessors Maximus of Aegeae, Moiragenes (the 'standard work when Philostratus wrote') and the disputed Damis himself, all of which he claims to have brought together (ξυνήγαγον) carefully (I.3).⁶¹ Conversely, personal knowledge of his subject is used by Lucian, having been Demonax' student for a long period (chapter 1).

7 Methods of characterization

Direct analysis of Agricola's character comes only in the concluding chapters praising him (*Agr.* 44–46). Elsewhere, character is depicted through the description of events (e.g. his skill in both governing and war, chapter 20) and by the imputation of motives and thoughts ('ceterum animorum provinciae prudens ...', 19.1). Tacitus uses the latter method regularly in the *Annals* to depict the character of emperors like Tiberius. The description of words and deeds is typically ancient: Tacitus says his predecessors 'clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere' (1.1) and concludes by commending Agricola's 'omnia facta dictaque' to his wife and daughter. Martin sees this as typical: 'The way in which a man's "deeds and ways" (*facta moresque*) are related to the ideal of *uirtus* is a cardinal element in all Tacitus' writings.'⁶² Characterization is thus through the unfolding of the narrative itself.⁶³

The classic statement about how character can be discerned from even minor actions comes from Plutarch's introduction to *Alexander and Caesar*, already discussed. Hamilton has analysed how this works out in the *Alexander* itself:

⁶⁰ See Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, pp. 88–96, and Baldwin, *Suetonius*, pp. 101–213.

⁶¹ Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', *ANRW* II.16.2, p. 1673; see n. 18 above, on Damis.

⁶² Martin, *Tacitus*, p. 41.

⁶³ See Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, p. 248.

Plutarch's artistry consists largely in the way in which he skilfully employs these different methods of illustrating character in combination. Direct statement is confirmed by anecdote, and the major events are related in such a fashion that attention is concentrated on the person of Alexander and the biographer's conception of him gradually emerges through the narrative.⁶⁴

Similarly, in the *Cato Minor*, Plutarch says that small signs of character (τὰ μικρὰ τῶν ἠθῶν σημεῖα) are a good image of the soul (εἰκόνα ψυχῆς, 24.1); indeed, 'such small incidents shed as much light on the manifestation and understanding of character' (πρὸς ἐνδειξιν ἠθους καὶ κατανόησιν) as great and public ones and therefore deserve extended treatment (37.5). Equally in the parallel *Life*, we are told that small events, 'such as a word or a nod' (καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ νεῦμα), are more important than lengthy writing (*Phocion* 5.4). Thus the character of Cato is portrayed through anecdotes, sayings and stories: concern for others through the story of the boy Cato helping a playmate (2.5–6); his self-discipline and obedience to the law in his campaigning for office (8.1–2); his attention to his duties (18) and so on. Direct description (e.g. his character as a child, 1.2–3) is rare, except in comparison with others: 'the character of a hero may be clarified by a succession of comparisons'.⁶⁵ Although no formal σύγκρισσις exists in the *Cato Minor/Phocion* pair, direct comment on Cato's character and achievement is found in *Phocion* chapter 3.

Suetonius says his non-chronological, topical approach ('neque per tempora sed per species') is to make things clearer ('distinctius', *Div. Aug.* 9), so we might expect direct characterization. The basic categories in all the *Caesars* are military affairs, consulships and offices, general conduct, and virtues and vices, but 'Suetonius' virtue and vice chapters are not to be understood primarily as a means of distinguishing character'.⁶⁶ Although we have brief description of the emperor's personal appearance (e.g. *Div. Aug.* 79–80), there is little direct analysis of character: it emerges from the overall account of deeds and words as in our other βίοι, despite the topical arrangement. Lucian considers *Demonax*' manner of life and temperament in chapters 6–8, but then shows these qualities in all the anecdotes and sayings which follow. Philostratus

⁶⁴ Hamilton, *Alexander*, pp. xlii–xliii; see also Gossage, 'Plutarch', pp. 58–60.

⁶⁵ Russell, 'On Reading', p. 150; see also, Pelling, 'Synkrisis'.

⁶⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, pp. 143–4.

has a brief comparison of Apollonius' character with other philosophers, as he moves from the travels to his imprisonment and trial at Rome (VII.1–4). Elsewhere, however, character emerges from the vast fund of stories about his subject. Thus, we conclude from all our βίοι that the methods of characterization were primarily indirect, through narration of the subject's words and deeds.

8 Summary

The external, structural pattern here confirms that of our early βίοι. Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana* diverges most with its excessive length and broader scale. We conclude, therefore, that βίοι are works in prose narrative, often continuous, though not always (e.g. *Demonax*), and of medium length, 5,000 to 25,000 words; into a bare chronological framework of birth/arrival and death is inserted more chronological narrative (especially for statesmen – e.g. Plutarch) and topical material (especially for philosophers or literary men, or as in Suetonius' approach); the scale is narrowly focussed on the subject; a similar range of literary units is used, notably anecdotes, stories, speeches and sayings, taken from a wide range of oral and written sources to display the subject's character indirectly through words and deeds.

E Internal features

1 Setting

The geographical settings of the *Agricola* can be as diverse as Anglesey (chapter 18), a hill-side in Scotland (Mons Graupius, 29–38) or the streets of Rome (43), but they all provide a background for *Agricola*. Even the section concerning Britain (10–17) provides further background for the hero. The *Cato Minor* begins in Rome, moves to Asia for his military tribunate (chapters 9–15), returns to Rome with Cato, then to Cyprus to sort out Ptolemy (34–39), back to Rome again and finally follows the Civil War to Greece and Africa. If the subject was mobile, then so is the setting; indeed, we traverse not just all the known world of the Mediterranean but even beyond, to the unknown climes of India in the footsteps of Apollonius.

As for the dramatic setting, *Agricola* is usually on stage in person, and he dominates things when absent. Similarly, Plutarch's

focus is always on Cato, even when the action is elsewhere; then we wait with Cato for news to arrive (e.g. his not knowing the fate of Pompey after Pharsalus, 55.2, or hearing of the defeat at Thapsus three days later, 58.7). In Suetonius, the topical arrangement of material ensures that 'the subject is always at the centre of the stage. Subsidiary characters enter and exit; they are never developed.'⁶⁷ Demonax too is at the centre of the anecdotes as different people come to debate with him; indeed, in such a loosely structured work, this constant focus of the dramatic setting provides a much needed unity. Thus it is clear from all our examples that the subject is the focus of the settings.

2 Topics

Anderson notes similar topical material in Lucian and Philostratus: 'This assembly of parallels can be seen in two ways: either they indicate a common tradition, which would then certainly be a Pythagorean biography, or we are dealing once more with similar mosaics of rhetorical topoi.'⁶⁸ We use our previous analysis:

- (a) *Ancestry*: Tacitus mentions Agricola's city, grandfathers, father and mother (*Agr.* 4). Similarly, Plutarch refers to Cato's great grandfather, the Elder Cato; as Pelling says regarding *Antony*: 'Plutarch deals with his subject's γένος even when there is little to say.'⁶⁹ Lucian and Philostratus name the origin of their subjects' family: Cyprus (τὸ μὲν γένος Κύπριος, *Dem.* 3) and Tyana (Ἀπολλωνίῳ τοίνυν πατρίσι μὲν ἦν Τύανα πόλις Ἑλλάδος, *Ap.* I.4). Suetonius always begins with the emperor's family background, except for *Titus* and *Domitian*, where it is covered in the previous *Life* of their father, Vespasian.
- (b) *Birth*: There are no accounts of the births of Agricola, Cato or Demonax. For a really good birth story, we turn to *Apollonius*, with its account of his mother's vision of Proteus and the dance of the swans (I.4–6), which Petzke relates to the birth of Jesus and his ancestry.⁷⁰ Suetonius describes the place of Augustus' birth and the shrine built there subsequently in *Div. Aug.* 5–6.
- (c) *Boyhood and education*: Agricola's ancestry and education

⁶⁷ Baldwin, *Suetonius*, p. 513
⁶⁹ Pelling, *Antony*, p. 117.

⁶⁸ G. Anderson, *Studies in Lucian*, p. 93.
⁷⁰ Petzke, *Die Traditionen*, pp. 162–5.

are covered briefly with a single story, Agricola's mother's opposition to his early love of philosophy (all in chapter 4). Plutarch has an anecdote about Pompaedius Silo holding the four-year-old Cato out of the window in an attempt to frighten him, and also includes the common motif of childhood play portending the man, with Cato's concern for his unjustly imprisoned playmate (2). Then we have stories of his education under Sarpedon and Antipater the Stoic. The philosophical education of Demonax (I.4–5) and Apollonius (I.7–13) is important for their development.

- (d) *Great deeds*: Agricola's skill in both military strategy and provincial administration are illustrated immediately on his arrival in Britain (18–21). Most of the *Cato Minor* consists of stories relating his great deeds. Suetonius arranges his account of the emperors' deeds under his various headings. As with most philosophers, Demonax' greatness is expressed more in mighty words, seeing a situation and coming up with precisely the right comment (12–62). So too with Apollonius, except that as a miracle-worker, his great deeds are also recorded, like the miraculous removal of his fetters in prison (VII.38); the sheer amount of travelling may also be seen as a mighty deed.
- (e) *Virtues*: In most of our examples, virtues emerge from the account of deeds. Suetonius, however, devotes large parts of his works to direct analysis of the virtues and vices of the emperor, both in his public life and his personal affairs.⁷¹
- (f) *Death and consequences*: All these works conclude with the subject's death. Agricola's death is carefully described, together with the emperor's interest in it (43); there may be some influence here from the genre of *exitus illustrium virorum*. Cato's death is very detailed, even down to the final minutes (66–70). Suetonius usually has graphic details or memorable last words; as Baldwin points out, 'four assassinations, one lynching, two suicides, two suspected poisonings, and three probably natural deaths ought to summon forth the best in any writer'.⁷² Subsequent events often include the funeral, and any particular honours accorded are also mentioned, e.g. Demonax' public funeral, honours and

⁷¹ See further Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, pp. 142–74.

⁷² Baldwin, *Suetonius*, p. 508.

garlands, *Dem.* 67.⁷³ Cato's funeral is described, and honours are bestowed on his body by the inhabitants of Utica, including a statue (71). Suetonius records a praetor seeing Augustus ascending into heaven after his cremation (*Div. Aug.* 100). Finally, Philostratus reports appearances of Apollonius after his death to assure his doubting followers; the different versions of his departure include his assumption into heaven and an appearance to a doubting young man. Philostratus says he has never found any tomb for Apollonius (VIII.30–31). Petzke compares this death and subsequent appearances to those of Jesus.⁷⁴

Thus, βίοι contain a common range of topics and motifs which are not necessarily prescriptive, with some missing in some works, but which make up a commonly recognized group when taken all together.

3 Style

Tacitus was well trained in rhetoric and would also become a leading historiographer, so it is not surprising that this blend of oratory and history should be discerned in his first work: the influence of rhetoric, especially Cicero, upon the opening and concluding sections, and of history, notably Sallust and Livy, upon the rest has already been noted.⁷⁵ Such influences can be traced in both stylistic devices and in echoes in vocabulary and technique from Livy, Sallust and Vergil: 'As regards the general literary style of the treatise, we see the beginning of the development which gradually led Tacitus farther and farther away from the popular language of his time till he reached the lofty and strongly individual style of the *Annals*.'⁷⁶ One feature showing that public reading was intended is the use of pithy epigrams at the end of a section to give a 'pause for applause', many of which remain as well-known sayings,

⁷³ Cancik discusses Demonax' death, 'Bios und Logos', p. 128.

⁷⁴ Petzke, *Die Traditionen*, pp. 183–7. For his tomb, see the Adana inscription suggesting that it is in Tyana: Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', *ANRW* II.16.2, pp. 1687–8 and C.P. Jones, 'An Epigram on Apollonius of Tyana', *JHS* 100 (1980), pp. 190–4; for an alternative reconstruction, see N.J. Richardson and Peter Burian, *GRBS* 22 (1981), pp. 283–5.

⁷⁵ Ogilvie, *Agricola*, pp. 21–2.

⁷⁶ Furneaux–Anderson, p. lxxxiii; for style, see pp. lxxx–lxxxvii, and commentaries by Gudeman, pp. 15–29; Ogilvie, pp. 21–31; and Goodyear, *Tacitus*, pp. 4–5.

e.g. the damning indictment of Roman 'pacification' from Calgacus, 'solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant'.⁷⁷

Plutarch did not follow the contemporary trend of attempting to recreate classical Attic style; his writing draws upon the vocabulary of historiography, rhetoric and moral philosophy, but it remains a form of Koiné, albeit rather literary. He uses the optative (typical of Attic) rather sparingly, but, like Satyrus, he avoids hiatus; his style is more popular and easier to read than that of Tacitus, yet higher than Satyrus'.⁷⁸ *Demonax* is also rhetorical writing on a popular level, with a simple and clear style.⁷⁹ Suetonius' style is different again, very simple yet precise, often using technical language and accurate quotation from his sources: 'It is the businesslike style of the ancient scholar.'⁸⁰ Finally, Philostratus, despite his claim of imperial patronage, is still aiming for an audience which likes a story, and the style befits popular narrative. Thus we conclude that while βίοι could be written in a high literary style, they can have a large element of the popular also.

4 Atmosphere

From the four features of tone, mood, attitude and values, a fairly serious atmosphere emerged for early βίοι, with the exception of Satyrus. A similar atmosphere is seen in Tacitus and Plutarch. The tone of the *Agricola* is fairly serious and respectful. The mood varies according to the story: rejoicing at the dawn of the new age after Domitian's terror in chapter 3, or horror at those recent events in 45, or desolation after the battle in 38. The attitude to the subject is one of respect and, in some places, eulogy (e.g. 46). The values put forward are the traditional Roman values – virtue, courage and piety – together with Tacitus' concern not for vain-glorious opposition to bad emperors, but for moderation and the public good (chapter 42), to which themes he returns in the *Annals*. *Cato Minor* is also serious, its tone reflecting the serious events of the end of the Republic; perhaps Plutarch sympathized with Cato's unsuccessful battle with Fate to prevent the overthrow of the Republic (*Phocion* 3). The mood is somewhat stern and moralistic,

⁷⁷ *Agricola* 30.5; see Ogilvie's commentary, p. 30.

⁷⁸ Wardman calls the *Lives* 'popular history' in *Plutarch's Lives*, p. 37; see also Hamilton, *Alexander*, pp. lxvi–lxix on style.

⁷⁹ 'Die Sprache ist schlicht, klar, einfach', Cancik, 'Bios und Logos', p. 121; see also, Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian*, pp. 72–3.

⁸⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, p. 19; see further pp. 19–25 for Suetonius' style.

almost austere, reflecting perhaps the character of Cato himself. The attitude to the subject is mainly respectful and reverent, as befits one of the last great Romans of the Republic. Yet Cato does not escape without criticism, e.g. for rejecting Pompey's overtures of marriage and thus driving him to an alliance with Caesar (30.6) or his refusal to wear a tunic and shoes when acting as praetor (44.1).⁸¹ The values reflect those of Cato, a mixture of traditional republican values with those of Stoic moral philosophy. Plutarch's own moral and philosophical values may be seen occasionally countering Cato's values such as never compromising (as in his preventing Caesar's triumph in 31.6) or doing so only reluctantly (taking the oath in 32.3–6).

While the usual atmosphere for a βίος is thus somewhat heavy, Lucian is quite different: the tone is never really serious, but he enjoys good witty banter in a generally light-hearted mood. The attitude to the subject is apparent approval of him and of his values of philosophical detachment, but the reader is not exhorted to follow suit as in our previous examples – indeed, one is never quite sure how seriously to take any of it. The atmosphere of *Apollonius* lies somewhere in between these extremes. On the one hand, there is much that is serious and respectful, even eulogistic about Philostratus' approach. The mood is confident in *Apollonius*' superiority and in the values of later pagan philosophy, but the attraction of the good yarn or interesting story has a constant lightening effect. A similar effect is obtained in Suetonius, where the material is often quite serious, about matters of state; equally, his portrayal of the emperor's virtues and vices indicates a serious moralistic concern. However, the easy style, the racy anecdotes and snatches of court gossip mean that the atmosphere is quite different from Tacitus' or Plutarch's. Thus we may conclude that although the atmosphere of βίοι, derived from the tone, mood, attitude and values tends to be mostly serious and respectful, even encomiastic in some, it can be much lighter in others.

5 Quality of characterization

The question of stereotype arises here too; Agricola's character is sometimes thought to be overdone, almost too good to be true:

⁸¹ Plutarch's own criticisms must be distinguished from criticism by others, especially Caesar, (e.g. about Cato's drinking and dice playing, meanness or greed in 6, or over his marriage, 52.4) where Plutarch is rebutting the charges (see 11.4, 52.4); see Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, pp. 195–6.

So in the *Agricola* a coherent picture of a devoted public servant emerges which is contrasted with the jealous despotism of Domitian. Qualities are attributed to Agricola which are as much conventional hall-marks of the good soldier and the good administrator as particular characteristics of the man himself.⁸²

Dorey suggests that Agricola is the 'prototype of a stock character that Tacitus portrays in his later works, the great soldier who falls a victim to the emperor whose jealousy he has incurred', such as Corbulo and Germanicus; so he is endowed with qualities of practical wisdom, statesmanship and fairness, as well as military skill.⁸³ Nonetheless, the picture of Agricola is convincing and attractive, with enough of the individual and the personal to make it credible, such as his needing to be rescued by his mother from the temptation to drink more deeply of the 'studium philosophiae' than was permissible for a senator (4.3).⁸⁴ Something similar happens with Lucian, where the temptation to stereotype is strongest in character analysis: thus the description of Demonax' character is fairly stereotypical (6–11), whereas the picture that emerges from the actual anecdotes has a more 'real' and individual feel about it, as also noted in *Atticus*.

One of Plutarch's main purposes in the *Lives* is to display character, and Cato is depicted clearly as a brilliant, yet rather austere and isolated, conservative figure who never quite manages to control political life, but who has a great effect from the sidelines. This picture begins with Cato as a child (1.2–3) and is developed through the various anecdotes and events, until suicide in the face of defeat is seen as the final evidence of his nobility. Suggestions about the ancients' belief in fixed and unchanging character are still expressed in the secondary literature about Plutarch.⁸⁵ However, in the *Lives* there is evidence of character change, for instance in Philip V (*Aratus* 51.4, 54.2) or Sertorius (*Sert.* 10.2–5). Some Plutarchean scholars talk therefore of character 'unfolding' or say that 'Plutarch did not entirely accept the

⁸² Ogilvie, introduction to *Agricola*, p. 20.

⁸³ Dorey, "'Agricola' and 'Germania'", pp. 9–11.

⁸⁴ See also Martin, *Tacitus*, p. 48, on 'personal information'.

⁸⁵ 'It is often said that the Greeks and Romans did not conceive of changes of character as the moderns do', Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, p. 132; see similarly, Brenk, *In Mist Apparelled*, p. 176; Russell, 'On Reading Plutarch's *Lives*', p. 145; Gossage, 'Plutarch', p. 66.

thesis that character was basically unchangeable'.⁸⁶ Gill's contrast of character and personality has been mentioned already: modern concern is for psychological personality, whereas Plutarch is interested in moral character as he gives examples of virtue and vice – 'for him, as for Aristotle, *ēthos* means 'character' in an evaluative sense, excellence or defectiveness'.⁸⁷ This view does allow for development, of the child forming the character (hence the anecdotes about boyhood and education) or the adult reforming his character. Even so, Plutarch does find it difficult to grapple with good character becoming evil (as with Philip or Sertorius). Pelling sees the issue in more literary terms. The moralistic approach is quite clearly there in some *Lives*, such as the *Cato Minor*; others, however, have less moral concern, preferring real psychological interest in the characters, notably *Antony*.⁸⁸ Plutarch's characters are very 'integrated', so that their 'different qualities cluster very naturally . . . The infant Cato is determined, humourless, and intense, and it is not difficult to see how these early traits group naturally with those which develop later, the political inflexibility, the philosophy, the bizarre treatment of his women'.⁸⁹

Thus we should beware of looking for modern concepts of character and psychological analysis in either the gospels or Graeco-Roman βίοι. Instead, we may find some quite carefully drawn characters – some stereotypical and others more realistic – emerging through the narratives.

6 Social setting and occasion

Here we are looking for internal clues indicating the social setting. The *Agricola* reveals its setting among the educated upper classes of Roman public life, possibly intended to be read at a dinner party or similar gathering: this is demonstrated by the style and atmosphere, as well as by the *sententiae*, the pithy little maxims concluding each section with a rhetorical flourish. The anecdotal style of the *Demonax* also lends itself to oral delivery, probably in a popular setting or even a public performance, with audience

⁸⁶ Gossage, 'Plutarch', p. 66; Brenk, *In Mist Apparelled*, p. 177.

⁸⁷ C. Gill, 'The Question of Character-Development', *CQ* 33 (1983), p. 472; see also, his 'Character–Personality Distinction' discussed on p. 125 above.

⁸⁸ Pelling, 'Plutarch's Adaptation', *JHS* (1980), pp. 136–9, and *Antony*, pp. 12–16.

⁸⁹ 'Aspects of Plutarch's Characterisation', *ICS* 13.2, (1988), pp. 257–74, quotation from p. 263; see also his 'Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography', in *Characterization and Individuality*, pp. 213–44.

reaction (laughter?) after each story. However, the text itself concludes that from these stories, readers (τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσι) can deduce what kind of man Demonax was (*Dem.* 67).

Plutarch also reveals his intended audience among the Graeco-Roman educated classes. Wardman concludes from the individuals named and the general attitude displayed towards the masses that 'Plutarchean biography was not, in the first place, designed as a popular work, without qualification'.⁹⁰ Instead, the audience was probably intended to be a circle of 'friends' among the wealthy and educated. The easier style without the rhetorical flourishes suggests that the *Parallel Lives* were intended to be read rather than declaimed. Since Plutarch regularly explains Roman institutions and words, his work was probably intended more for Greeks, despite its dedication to a Roman, Q. Sosius Senecio;⁹¹ perhaps he hoped to stimulate his compatriots to take part in public life. If Philostratus' claim to have been commissioned by the Empress Julia Domna, as a member of her circle, is true, this too sets us firmly in an upper social setting.⁹² However, Philostratus adds that he wants to correct widespread ignorance about Apollonius, so a wider audience is intended (I.2–3). A wider social circle may be discerned in Suetonius also: Wallace-Hadrill remarks that his social standpoint is disputed, with some seeing him in a senatorial setting like Tacitus, through to others who see him as representing 'the "man in the street", the reader of the gutter press with a taste for the sensational and sordid'.⁹³ He suggests that the text reveals the interests of the scholar and the equites, rather than the senate.

We conclude that although these βίοι reflect a social setting within the upper classes, there is evidence within the texts that βίοι can have a variety of social settings and occasions, including those of a more popular level.

7 Authorial intention and purpose

We follow the same analysis of intentions as in the last chapter.

(a) *Encomiastic*: Tacitus' desire to praise is clear at the start, 'hic liber honori Agricolae soceri mei destinatus' (3.3), and again

⁹⁰ Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, p. 37, his italics.

⁹¹ Pelling, *Antony*, p. 8; for Plutarch's circle, see Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, pp. 39–64.

⁹² See G. Anderson, *Philostratus*, pp. 4–7.

⁹³ Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, p. 99; see also pp. 100–18.

at the end, particularly in the apostrophe of Agricola 'Tu vero felix, Agricola' (45.3). Thus Gudeman, Cousin and Shuler have seen both the intention and genre in encomiastic terms. If we look for other features of a *laudatio*, Ogilvie tells us, 'it lacks some of the fundamental elements'; we should not 'be misled into seeing the *Agricola* as a special kind of "biographical encomium" or as a literary variant of the funeral laudation'.⁹⁴ This is just one of its purposes.

- (b) *Exemplary*: Plutarch's stated aim is to portray moral character (*Cato Minor* 24.1; 37.5). As Pelling says, Plutarch's 'theory is clear and consistent. Biography will often concentrate on personal details, and may abbreviate its historical narrative; its concern will be the portrayal of character, and its ultimate purpose will be protreptic and moral.'⁹⁵ By imitating (μίμησις) the virtues and avoiding the vices described, the reader will improve his own character (see *Pericles* 1, *Aem. Paul.* 1). This moralistic and didactic exemplary concern for ἠθος and ἀρετή is seen explicitly in the comparison of Cato with Phocion (*Phoc.* 3.3–5).⁹⁶ Lucian also aims to provide an example (παράδειγμα) and pattern (κωνών) for the young to follow (*Dem.* 2).⁹⁷
- (c) *Informative*: Philostratus states that he wishes to correct people's ignorance (τὴν τῶν πολλῶν ἀγνοίαν) with a true account from which they may learn, (I.2–3). Wallace-Hadrill sees this as important for Suetonius, distinguishing the *Caesars* from history: 'It is not history at all. It is biography, written by a scholar in the hellenistic tradition, composed neither to instruct nor to titillate but to inform.'⁹⁸
- (d) *Entertainment value*: Lucian was a professional entertainer and the *Demonax* has satirical undercurrents; likewise, the Apollonius has elements of a good novelistic read in places. Suetonius is often read for his entertainment value: 'The final proof of Suetonius' success must be that he is intensely

⁹⁴ *Agricola*, pp. 12–13; see also, Stuart, *Epochs*, p. 236: 'One must go to extravagant lengths if the *Agricola* is to be reconciled with the normal pattern of encomium.'

⁹⁵ Pelling, 'Plutarch's Adaptation', *JHS* (1980), p. 135; see also, Russell, *Plutarch*, p. 115.

⁹⁶ See Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, pp. 37 and 47–8; also Hamilton, *Alexander*, pp. xxxvii–xxxix; Brenk, *In Mist Apparelled*, p. 184; Gossage, 'Plutarch', p. 65; Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, p. 105.

⁹⁷ See Cancik, 'Bios und Logos', pp. 124–5.

⁹⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*, p. 25.

readable.'⁹⁹ Connected with this are Tacitus' literary intentions, such as portraying the 'noble savage' against imperial might (see especially Calgacus' speech, 30–32). As Dorey reminds us: 'The *Agricola* represents Tacitus' first attempt at the production of a work of literature.'¹⁰⁰ Similarly, many of Plutarch's *Lives* have various literary intents: for example, *Antony* is full of dramatic and tragic motifs.¹⁰¹ Plutarch's rhetorical training and skill is demonstrated by his early orations on Alexander, Athens and Rome,¹⁰² and these skills appear in the *Lives*, helping to keep their lasting interest and appeal.

- (e) *To preserve memory*: Like Isocrates, Tacitus tells his wife and mother-in-law that pondering Agricola's deeds and words is better than a statue (46.3). Lucian also claims to be preserving his subject's memory as a student of Demonax (2).
- (f) *Didactic*: Lucian concludes that he wants his readers to realize what sort of man Demonax was (ὅποῖος ἐκείνος ἀνὴρ ἐγένετο, 67). Discussion of the subject's teachings occurs in Lucian and Philostratus. Plutarch too has his didactic, semi-religious purposes, to portray his view of the universe. This is seen in the *Cato Minor* when he reflects on justice and the attitude of others to those who are just, such as Cato (44.7–8, see also 9.5), or in Cato's censure of τὰ θεῖα for deserting Pompey now he is fighting for the right (53.2). Brenk shows how Plutarch's moral and religious views come through all the *Lives*: 'The total effect is something quite different from that of an individual biography . . . Plutarch was at heart a philosopher rather than historian or biographer in the strict sense.'¹⁰³ Plutarch is concerned to show the workings of divine justice and retribution in human lives. He uses dreams, oracles and portents to point this out and has more sympathy for those characters who failed (in political terms) than those who were arrogantly successful.
- (g) *Apologetic and polemic*: Furneaux saw the *Agricola* as a political apology for those who, like Agricola and Tacitus,

⁹⁹ G.B. Townend, 'Suetonius and his Influence', in *Latin Biography*, ed. Dorey, p. 93.

¹⁰⁰ Dorey, "'Agricola" and "Domitian"', p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Pelling, 'Plutarch's Adaptation', *JHS* (1980), p. 138.

¹⁰² See Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, pp. 67–71 and Hamilton, *Alexander*, pp. xxiii–xxiii.

¹⁰³ Brenk, *In Mist Apparelled*, p. 274.

had held office under Domitian.¹⁰⁴ There is polemic against vainglorious opposition and apologia for quiet obedience 'sub malis principibus' (42.4). However, this is not his total purpose: 'The *Agricola* is, then, neither a political pamphlet nor a personal apologia.'¹⁰⁵ Plutarch is aware of the polemic about Cato, and sometimes he corrects false views or accusations made in other *Lives*.¹⁰⁶ Philostratus wishes to defend Apollonius against mistaken views, such as Moiragenes' (I.3). The *Apollonius* has also been seen as pagan polemic against the Christians; certainly βίοι are used in this way soon afterwards by Iamblichus and Porphyry, and similarly with Eusebius' reply, the *Origen*.¹⁰⁷ As for Apollonius himself, Hierocles attempted to draw a parallel between him and Christ, refuted again by Eusebius.

Thus βίοι are written to fulfil many different intentions, from the polemical to laudatory, from didactic to entertainment – and several, or even all, of these can coexist in any one work. As Pelling says, the genre was 'an extremely flexible one',¹⁰⁸ and we should beware of rigid prescriptions about the necessary purpose of the genre or of simplistic deductions from genre to purpose.

8 Summary

From this study of the internal generic features, a clear pattern has emerged: the settings of βίοι focus on the subject, and they include a selection from standard topics. Style and atmosphere can vary: some are high-brow and serious (*Agricola*, *Cato Minor*), others may be popular and lighter (*Demonax*, *Apollonius of Tyana*). This is seen in what the text reveals of its social setting and occasion. The quality of the characterization is usually quite good, although always with the possibility of stereotype. Finally, βίοι have many intentions and purposes, often several at the same time.

¹⁰⁴ Furneaux, 1898 edn, pp. 10–15; see also Dorey, "'Agricola" and "Domitian"', and Syme, *Tacitus*, vol. 1, pp. 26–9 and 125–31.

¹⁰⁵ Ogilvie, *Agricola*, p. 19; see also, Goodyear, *Tacitus*, pp. 6–7 and Mattingly's introduction to his translation, pp. 16–17.

¹⁰⁶ See n. 81 above and also Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, pp. 195–6, and Geiger, 'Munatius Rufus', *Athenaeum* (1979), esp. pp. 54–6.

¹⁰⁷ See Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*.

¹⁰⁸ Pelling, 'Plutarch's Adaptation', *JHS* (1980), p. 139; see also, 'Plutarch and Roman Politics', p. 159.

Conclusion

Three of these βίοι date from soon after the gospels, while the other two have taken us further into the development of the genre. Our survey of ten works in total has provided a clear picture of the βίος genre: there is a family resemblance, yet the overall impression is of a diverse and flexible genre, able to cope with variations in any one work. The major determining feature is the subject; all these works concentrate on one individual. However, there is a high degree of flexibility in the treatment: in some cases there is an even-handed coverage of every area of his life, while others stress just one period; some concentrate on the subject's deeds and the chronology of his life, while others focus on certain topics; teachings or virtues in a non-chronological manner. The βίος genre is often signalled at the outset by using the subject's name in either the title or opening features.

Internal features of content are similar, such as topics and motifs. However, although there are some similarities of style, level, atmosphere, social setting and occasion between these works, there are also indications that the range may vary considerably; Lucian's *Demonax*, and hints elsewhere, suggest that the genre spread further down the social spectrum than extant works might suggest. Features shared are not merely those of content, but include more structural, external features: βίοι tend to be of similar appearance, length and structure, mode of representation and units of composition, which all play an important rôle in communicating the genre, or confirming the initial generic impression mediated by the individual subject, title or opening forms.

However, it should not be assumed that there are no boundaries, or that the genre includes everything. This list of features enables us to see clearly works at the fringes of the genre, especially at the start of its existence (*Evagoras*), and on its way out into novel and hagiography towards the end of the imperial period: as we have noted, the *Apollonius of Tyana* sometimes shows quite different results from our other examples, e.g. as regards its size and scope, and this indicates generic movement. These features also help us to clarify the blurred frontiers between biographical history and historical biography. Thus the *Agricola*, despite the debate about its genre, is shown to belong to the family nonetheless.

We may conclude, therefore, that there is an overall pattern or

family resemblance of generic features which identify this group as the genre of βίος. To belong to this family, a work must show at least as sufficient of the common generic features as these works do, within the limits of diversity, and so now we may turn at last to undertake a similar analysis of the gospels.

8

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A third hypothesis about the purpose of the gospels that once was quite popular has now been abandoned altogether: The gospels were not written as biographies of Jesus, nor can a biography be extracted from them.¹

The form of the gospels most closely resembles that of Hellenistic biographies.²

The fact that general introductions to the New Testament can assert with confidence and certainty such statements which appear blatantly contradictory indicates the continuing disarray concerning the genre of the gospels. Clearly, the idea of the gospels as biographies certainly has *not* 'been abandoned altogether'. On the contrary, after the dominance of the kerygmatic hypothesis for so long, 'more recent discussion of the genre of the gospel has reopened the question of the gospels as biography, however cautiously'.³ We have suggested consistently that there are two main causes of this disarray: inadequate literary theory of genre and a lack of understanding of Graeco-Roman biography. Therefore, we have identified a range of generic features and used them to analyse Graeco-Roman βίοι, both on the fringes of the genre and indubitably classic examples. A clear family resemblance has now been established, and so we can proceed with the same exercise on the gospels. Stanton has considered Mark similarly with respect to a number of features, but concludes that several would have 'puzzled readers familiar with the techniques of ancient biographical

¹ John B. Gabel and Charles B. Wheeler, *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction* (OUP, 1986), p. 185.

² Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (London: SCM, 1986), p. 145.

³ Helmut Koester, 'From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels', *NTS* 35 (1989), pp. 361-81, quotation from p. 364.

What are the Gospels?

A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography

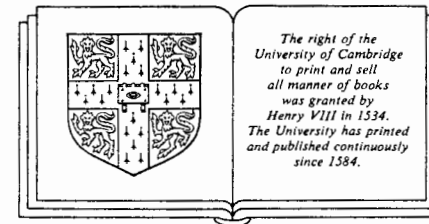
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