INTRODUCTION

1 THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

The *Agricola*, as it is conventionally known,[1] is described by its author at the start as a biography (1.4 'narraturo mihi uitam defuncti hominis'),[2] a form of writing which even today is seen as problematic and hard to define. 'Is biography a genre?', begins a recent book on the subject, and, if it is a genre, what are its characteristics?[3] T. says that his purpose in writing is to honour his father-in-law (3.3 'liber honori Agricolae soceri mei destinatus'). Some readers have certainly seen a problem here, since in the modern world 'we expect factual information' rather than encomium in a biography; but this is to misunderstand the ancient equivalent, since in the classical world 'biographers were free to be encomiastic'.[4] Cicero makes this point in one of his letters to Atticus, when, discussing various autobiographical accounts of his consulship, he assures his friend in a playful paradox that they are 'not encomiastic but historical' (*Att.* 1.19.10 'non ἐγκωμιαστικὰ sunt haec sed ἱστορικά').[5] Indeed T. himself alludes to the connection between biography and encomium when he chooses 'criticising' as the term with which to describe the opposite of 'biography' (1.4 *narraturo . . . uitam* ~ *incusaturus*) and 'admiration and praise' as an implied description of the *Agricola* itself (46.2 'admiratione . . . et laudibus').

A theoretical distinction between biography and history, such as that implied by Cicero, was famously mentioned in the biographical writings of Nepos in the first century BC (*Pelop.* 1.1 'uereor . . . ne non uitam eius enarrare sed historiam uidear scribere') and of Plutarch in the early second century AD (*Alex.* 1.2 'we are not writing histories, ἱστορίας, but lives, βίους').[6] Although T. defines the *Agricola* as biography, many readers have

[1] The manuscripts vary between *de vita Iulii Agricolae* and *de vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae*.

[2] Despite T.'s own description, 'The precise nature of the literary genre into which the *Agricola* should be fitted has taxed scholars for generations' (Hanson (1991) 1746).

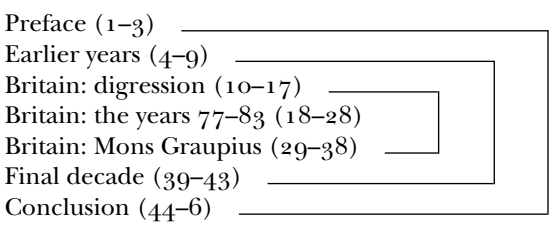
[3] Hägg (2012) 2, with a helpful summary of the issues (2–8).

[4] The quotations are from Momigliano (1993) 15. See also Hägg (2012) 3: 'In criticism of biography, modern and ancient, one often finds a naïve demand that it should be "true", in the sense of verifiable and historically correct.'

[5] Elsewhere (*Brut.* 112) Cicero uses the terms 'Cyri uitam et disciplinam' to refer to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, which Diog. Laer. describes as ἐγκώμιον (6.84). Cf. also Plb. 8.8.6, 10.21.8.

[6] Duff (1999: 14–22) argues that the latter passage is applicable only to the *Lives of Alexander and Caesar* and should not be elevated into a general statement about generic differences, but he acknowledges both that the passage does distinguish between the two genres and that the distinction is also to be found at Plut. *Fab.*

questioned this definition and have preferred to see the work as some kind of historical monograph not unlike, for example, Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum*. Reasons for this preference emerge from a consideration of the work's contents, which are conveniently illustrated by analysis of the work's structure. The preface (1–3), which has the phrase *posteris tradere* in its opening line, is balanced by a conclusion (44–6), which has the words *posteritati . . . traditus* in its last line;[7] and within this outer frame an account of A.'s earlier years (4–9) is balanced by that of his final decade (39–43). But these seventeen framing chapters, amounting to 35 per cent of the whole work, are significantly outnumbered by the twenty-nine central chapters (10–38), which are devoted to Britain and especially to A.'s governorship of the province in the years AD 77–84. On the structure of these central chapters more than one view is possible. Chapters 10–17 comprise a two-part digression or excursus on Britain, dealing successively with its ethno-geography (10–13.1) and its earlier history (13.1–17.2), and it may be argued that this digression is an entirely self-contained section which is used to separate and set off the year-by-year narrative of A.'s governorship.[8] If that is the case, the narrative of A.'s seven-year governorship pivots around the central year (AD 80), which is the shortest of all (23), and climaxes in the battle of Mons Graupius in AD 83 (29–38). Alternatively one may regard the digression on Britain as an integral part of the narrative, as Gudeman suggested (below, p. 4), and as balanced by the battle of Mons Graupius, with the years AD 77–83 constituting a central panel:



On this view the work as a whole is an almost perfect example of circular or 'ring' composition,[9] the correspondence between the digression and Mons Graupius residing not only in length of treatment but also in theme. With its description of a foreign country, surrounded

16.6. It is conventional to refer also to *Rhet. Herenn.* 1.13, Cic. *Inv.* 1.27, Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* 1.253.

[7] There are numerous other parallels between preface and conclusion (see nn.), of which the most obvious is 1.4 *narrare* ~ 46.4 *narratus*.

[8] So e.g. O–R 164.

[9] See esp. Giancotti (1971) 253ff., though his scheme is slightly different from that adopted here. Scholarly views on the structure of the work are surveyed by Wille (1983) 5–8.

by Ocean and characterised by recalcitrant barbarians, the digression symbolises the many-faceted task with which A. was confronted when he first landed; by the time Mons Graupius is reached, the Romans have conquered nature itself in their penetration of Caledonia (33.2, cf. 30.3) and have outdone the achievements of previous armies and commanders (33.3): with this final victory there is no one left to conquer, and they are free at last to embark on the circumnavigation which in the digression is invoked to confirm the insular status of the country (38.3–4 ~ 10.4).

Whichever view of the structure one prefers, it is clear that 65 per cent of the work is less biographical than historical: the digression is of the kind which is inserted into major works of history by Sallust, Livy and T. himself elsewhere (p. 12), while the remainder is a conventional historical narrative of the years AD 77–84 and, arranged year by year as it is, it resembles the kind of narrative one meets routinely in the major Roman historians.[10] Since so much of the *Agricola* therefore looks like 'history', some scholars have questioned whether the work as a whole is to be classed generically as biography. But this too is to misunderstand its nature.

Ancient literary theorists laid down rules for various types of writing, including encomium. Thus Menander Rhetor, who wrote in the late third century AD, prescribed the following elements (368.8–377.2):[11] preface (προοίμιον), native land (πατρίς), family (γένος), birth (γένεσις), nature (φύσις), upbringing (ἀνατροφή), behaviour (ἐπιτηδεύματα), deeds (πράξεις) and finally comparison with others (σύγκρισις). Since the genres of biography and encomium were so closely related, as we have seen, there is no reason why these prescriptions should not be applied to biography; and, as Gudeman was the first to point out, all of them are directly applicable to the *Agricola*.[12] The correspondence between the first seven elements and chh. 1–9 of the biography (1–3 Preface, 4–9 Earlier years) is clear and does not require elaboration here; but the remaining two elements are less straightforward. Menander stipulated that 'deeds' should be divided into 'times of peace and times of war, and put war first, if the subject of your praise has distinction in this'

[10] See e.g. C–L 5, where it is suggested that T. was providing his contemporaries with 'the measure of his genius' by displaying his intimate familiarity with earlier historians and with the fundamental techniques of historical narrative.

[11] References and translations are taken from Russell and Wilson (1981), who use Spengel's numeration. Though Menander wrote much later than T., it is generally accepted that his recommendations are based on earlier examples and Cairns (1972) has argued that it is valid to use his work to help elucidate earlier texts: see Du Quesnay (1981) 53–62. References to Menander are given in the Commentary where they are most relevant.

[12] Gudeman 311–22. Menander's prescriptions are also applicable to Plutarch; for the war narrative embedded in Plutarch's *Caesar*, for example, see Pelling (2011a) 219, 226–7.

(372.25–8). The prominence which T. gives to A.'s military exploits in Britain (18–38) exactly fulfils this prescription. But Menander also said that, when treating deeds of war, 'you should describe the natures and situations of the places where the wars took place, rivers, harbours, mountains, plains, and whether the country was bare or wooded, <level or> rocky' (373.17–20). This description is precisely what T. has provided in the ethno-geographical part of his digression (10–13.1); in the remaining part (13.1–17.2) his survey of the earlier history of Britain encompasses A.'s predecessors from Julius Caesar to Julius Frontinus and 'dwells as far as possible on the unsuccessful features of the Roman administration. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the survey of previous governors is included for purposes of *synkrisis*.'[13] Thus T. elevates by contrast the achievements which are about to be attributed to his father-in-law. In other words, the biography as a whole conforms remarkably to the rules for encomium as laid down by Menander Rhetor, and its 'historical' features are to be regarded in this light.

Some might still object that the presence of formal speech, both indirect (15.1–5) and direct (30–4), crosses the boundary into historiography proper.[14] Yet the boundary was never absolute in practice: Nepos, who in his *Life of Pelopidas* expressed the distinction between biography and historiography (above, p. 1), proceeded to imply that he was going to combine both genres (cf. *Pelop.* 1.1 'utrique rei occurram'). Such generic combinations are, after all, a regular feature of verse literature, whether we are talking about genres in the conventional sense (such as epic or elegy) or in the 'Cairnsian' sense (such as 'propemptikon' or 'klētikon'); and the regularity of their appearance is explained precisely because poets liked to surprise or frustrate the literary expectations of their readers.[15] There is certainly plenty of evidence that biography and historiography were closely related.[16] In his prescriptions for historiography, for example, Cicero said that an author should deal with the life and nature of any famous protagonist in the narrative (*De or.* 2.63 'de cuiusque uita atque natura'). The fact is that in the ancient world

[13] McGing (1982) 16–17. It should not be thought that comparison is restricted to this section of the work; as McGing comprehensively shows, it is a technique which T. uses throughout.

[14] Speeches are found in Plutarch's biographies but they are not common and tend to be short. 'Extended speeches always illustrate important themes' (Pelling on Plut. *Ant.* 84.4–7, q.v.).

[15] For a recent study of the former type, associated above all with W. Kroll ('Kreuzung der Gattungen'), see Harrison (2007); for 'sending-off poems' and 'summoning hymns' and the like see Cairns (1972).

[16] See e.g. Stadter (2007), Kraus (2004) and (2010); further bibliography in Duff (1999) 17 n. 13. For historiography note Marincola (1999), esp. 318–20 for the *Agricola*.

biography and historiography were both rhetorical genres and authors would resort to any appropriate technique to move and impress their readers. A good example of this is to be found in the conclusion to the work (44–6). Here T. deploys many of the commonplaces which are to be found in various types of 'death literature' such as the *conquestio* or *consolatio* and which are yet again to be found in theoretical form in Menander.[17] Yet T.'s deployment is hardly different from that of the Tiberian historian Velleius Paterculus, who resorted to exactly similar motifs in order to make his account of Cicero's murder as moving and effective as possible (66.3–5).[18] Velleius' history affords a further comparison as well. His concentration on the imperial figures of Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius means that he is an excellent representative of 'biographical history', a trend which inevitably became common under the empire;[19] the *Agricola*, being a 'historical biography', is the converse of this and can even be seen as a textual as well as a moral challenge to the *princeps* under whom A. achieved his highest distinction: in the 'historical' section of the work it is A. whose role is central, while Domitian is not mentioned.

By the time T. came to write the *Agricola*, he was about forty years old and an experienced orator. He had been born early in the principate of Nero at some time between the years 56 and 58. It is usually thought that his birth-place was southern Gaul, but Trier in Gallia Belgica has been suggested as an alternative:[20] it is generally accepted that the Cornelius Tacitus who is mentioned by the elder Pliny as procurator in Gallia Belgica (*NH* 7.76) was the historian's father. In 76 T. was engaged and subsequently married to A.'s daughter, who was then about twelve or thirteen years old and a girl 'of exceptional promise' (*Agr.* 9.6 n. *egregiae*). If a fragmentary inscription (*CIL* 6.41106) has been correctly identified as T.'s epitaph, and if its last two lines have been correctly restored, he will have served as military tribune in a province. 'Why not suppose', suggests A. R. Birley, 'that Tacitus served in Britain, in one of the four legions in the army of his father-in-law? He could well have stayed there for two to three years, from 77–79.'[21] However that may be, the inscription next tells us that T. was *quaestor Augusti*, probably in 81: the quaestorship brought with it entry to the senate, and it was a mark of special favour to be one of the emperor's two personal quaestors. It is noteworthy that for the last third of the year 81 the emperor was Domitian, who draws such fierce criticism from T. in the *Agricola*. According to T.'s own later account (*A.* 11.11.1),

[17] See Gudeman 321–2, and nn. in the Commentary. [18] See W. ad loc.
[19] See Woodman (1977) 51–6, Pelling (1997), (2011a) 32–3 and (2011b).
[20] For a full study of T.'s life and career see Birley (2000a).
[21] Birley (2000a) 237–8, cf. *RGB* 281.

he was praetor in 88 and, having already had the distinction of appointment to one of the priestly colleges (the *quindecimuiri sacris faciundis*), he helped supervise the Secular Games which Domitian put on in that year. We know that T. and his wife then soon left Rome, since he tells us that, when A. died on 23 August 93, they had already been away four years and did not have the comfort of paying their last respects to him before his death (*Agr.* 45.5). T.'s absence from Rome meant that he also missed not only the trial of Baebius Massa (*Agr.* 45.1n. *Massa*), of which an account was later sent to him by Pliny (*Ep.* 7.33), but – almost certainly – the condemnation and execution of Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio as well (2.1n. *legimus*, 45.1n. *mox*), events which marked a dramatic development in Domitian's reign of terror. Four years later, in 97, T. was suffect consul, possibly holding office in the autumn of that year.[22] Although Domitian had been assassinated in September of 96, T.'s appointment had almost certainly been approved by Domitian: T. thus continued to the last the favour he had enjoyed from the *princeps* throughout his reign. We know from Pliny that during his consulship T. delivered the funeral oration for the aged Verginius Rufus. Pliny describes T. on this occasion as 'laudator eloquentissimus' (*Ep.* 2.1.6), just as elsewhere he describes him in a court case as having spoken 'eloquentissime et – quod eximium orationi eius inest – σεμνῶς' (*Ep.* 2.11.17): the Greek adverb is difficult to translate but suggests solemnity and majesty.

It was during or immediately after his consulship that T. embarked on writing the *Agricola*.[23] (If the argument of his preface has been correctly interpreted,[24] he had planned to write the biography as soon as A. died in the summer of 93 but was obliged to defer his project when news reached him at his posting abroad that Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio had very recently been executed for having written the biographies of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus respectively and had had their books burned.) Biographical writing, like almost all other Greek and Latin genres, had a long tradition behind it and would-be authors were extremely conscious of the tradition in which their work would take its place.[25]

[22] See Birley (2000a) 238. Under the empire *consules suffecti* or 'replacement consuls' regularly took over from the *consules ordinarii* who had begun the year. The 'ordinary consuls' gave their name to the year (cf. 44.1), enjoyed more prestige than the suffects, and remained in office for a month or two before being replaced; there could be several pairs of suffect consuls in any one year, as was the case in 97.

[23] See the Commentary on 3.1.

[24] See the Commentary on 1.4–2.1.

[25] For studies of classical biography see Leo (1901), Stuart (1928), Dihle (1970) and (1987), Geiger (1985), Moles (1989), Momigliano (1993), Ehlers (1998), Burridge (2004), Kraus (2010), Pelling (2011a) 13–25, Hägg (2012); scholars tend to distinguish between biographies of historical or political figures and those

Isocrates and Xenophon, both born in the 430s BC, wrote encomiastic accounts of Evagoras and Agesilaus which are normally invoked as models for the *Agricola*: indeed it has been remarked that 'one should compare the epilogue chapters of the *Agricola* (44–46) sentence by sentence with the concluding chapters of the *Agesilaos* (10–11) in order to see clearly the close dependence of Tacitus on Xenophon in detail'.[26] Tacitus thus exemplifies the influence which Cicero attributed to Xenophon's work over a century and a half earlier (*Fam.* 5.12.7 'unus enim Xenophontis libellus in eo rege laudando facile . . . superauit').[27] The works of only two Latin biographers have survived, and that in part. Cornelius Nepos, the friend and dedicatee of Catullus, wrote the lives of several hundred individuals according to category: of this vast output we possess in its entirety the *De excellentibus ducibus exterarum gentium* and two lives (the attenuated *Cato* and the more substantial *Atticus*) from the *De historicis Latinis*.[28] Suetonius, a younger contemporary of T., wrote lives of the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Domitian;[29] he also wrote a *De uiris illustribus* on various literary men: we possess the *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* and individual lives of a very few poets including Horace.[30] None of these Latin works is at all comparable with the *Agricola*. Almost all of them are brief and sketchy; the exception is Suetonius' *Caesares*, but Suetonius' narrative mode, unlike that of T., is less chronological than thematic, as he explains in his *Life of Augustus* (9.1): 'proposita uitae eius uelut summa partes singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint' ('having displayed his life's (so to speak) totality, I shall go through its elements individually, not chronologically but thematically, so that they can be demonstrated and understood more clearly'). Another contemporary was Plutarch, whose biographies are different again: he writes paired lives, in which a Roman is compared with a Greek counterpart.[31]

of philosophers or writers. For a brief introduction to the modern genre see Lee (2009).

[26] Münscher (1920) 92–3.

[27] Cicero is here talking of 'clari uiri', the same two words with which T. opens the *Agricola*.

[28] For the latter see Horsfall (1989).

[29] The standard study of Suetonius is Wallace-Hadrill (1983). Suetonius is invoked as a model by the so-called *Historia Augusta* or *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, a series of imperial biographies from AD 117 to 284. Almost everything about this weird collection is controversial, though most scholars now agree that it was written by a single author in the late fourth century.

[30] See Kaster (1995) for the former.

[31] For Plutarch see Duff (1999) and Pelling (2002) and (2011a). Burridge (2004: 124–84) compares various Greek and Latin biographical writings, including the *Agricola*, with one another on the basis of a series of generic features.

There is no reason to doubt T.'s own statement that he was inspired by *pietas* to write the biography of his father-in-law (3.3). Though it was natural that a devoted son-in-law with literary aspirations would want to commemorate his wife's beloved father after his death, especially when that father had performed deeds worthy of commemoration, it is very likely that T. was encouraged in this direction by a sub-genre known as the *exitus illustrium uirorum*, which flourished in the first century AD.[32] Whether or not that was the case, the biography was written against a background of rapid change and considerable political uncertainty. Nerva had been *princeps* for little more than a year when he was compelled by events – including an attempt at rehabilitating Domitian – to adopt Trajan as his successor in the autumn of 97; by late January 98 Nerva himself had died and been succeeded by Trajan (3.1nn.), who was away on the Rhine at the time of his succession.[33]

None of these vicissitudes is mentioned in the text of the biography. On the contrary, the preface depicts Nerva and Trajan as presiding over a new era of hope, promise, confidence and security (3.1). This sunlit scene naturally emphasises by contrast the dark account of Domitian's reign by which the preface is framed (1.4–2.3 ~ 3.2) and which occupies the concluding chapters of the work (39–45); but it also serves another purpose. If Domitian's reign had been as detestable as depicted by T. here and by Pliny in his letters and *Panegyricus*, which adopts exactly the same contrast, there arose in retrospect the question of guilt by association: what of those numerous men whose careers had not only prospered during Domitian's reign but had been actively promoted by the *princeps* himself? Not least among these men was the new biographer, whose every senior magistracy had been held under Domitian or achieved with his support. T.'s strategy in confronting this problem is twofold. On the one hand he uses all his rhetorical skill to underline the tyranny and terror of Domitian's fifteen years, impressing upon his readers that contemporaries of the emperor had little choice but to accede to his wishes. On the other hand, the support expressed for Nerva and Trajan served as a reminder that T. was not alone in having received honours from Domitian. They too had held consulships during Domitian's reign, Nerva in 90 and Trajan in 91, and the first-person plurals by which their naming in the preface is surrounded (2.3 *dedimus*, *nos*, *perdidissemus*, *nostra*, 3.2 *nostri*, *sumus*, *uenimus*) implies that T.'s numerous fellow collaborators included the two *principes* who now ruled the Roman world. The assassination of Domitian marked a break with the past and a new start; but the new start was in the hands of those

[32] See Plin. *Ep.* 3.10.1, 5.5.3, 8.12.4 and Sherwin-White's nn.
[33] See Eck (2002) for these events.

who had enjoyed power and success in the past. Nerva and Trajan represented continuity, as if Domitian himself had been an awful aberration.

It is one of the tenets of Agricolan scholarship that, in writing the biography of his father-in-law, T. was at the same time presenting a defence of his own career under Domitian. This feature illustrates the phenomenon called 'transference' or 'automimesis', which is very well recognised in literature and art and 'is in fact so common that one might argue that biographies differ only in the degree to which this happens, or is observable':[34]

> One of the reasons is evidently that biographers from the start tend to choose figures that resemble themselves (in occupation, temperament, situation in life). Novelists and poets depict great literary figures, politicians trace political careers, women prefer women. A related factor is that the biographer has to rely on introspection to reconstruct the inner life of the subject. Primarily what he or she recognises from self-experience is likely to be included in the characterisation. Sympathy and empathy are key concepts.

Although this analysis does not fit all cases by any means, its relevance to the *Agricola* is clear. Born in AD 40, A. had the misfortune to spend his young adulthood and much of his maturity under the emperors Nero (54–68) and Domitian (81–96).[35] His progress through the *cursus honorum* to a suffect consulship in 76 and the governorship of Britain thereafter was uninterrupted and, if T. is to be believed, almost pre-ordained; more significant, as T. presents it, was his style of life and in particular the way in which the *gloria* and *fama* of his military achievements were counterbalanced by compliance, self-effacement and quietism.[36]

The problem is raised in A.'s very first posting as military tribune in Britain, where 'there entered his soul a desire for military glory which was unwelcome in times when a sinister construction was put on eminent men and there was no less danger from a big reputation than a bad one' (5.3). He spent 65, the year after his quaestorship, and 66, the year of his tribunate of the *plebs*, 'quiete et otio', being well aware of the times under Nero when 'inertia pro sapientia fuit' (6.3). There was the same 'silent tenor' to his praetorship in (probably) 68 (6.4 'idem . . . tenor et silentium'). Sent to Britain again during the civil wars of 69–70, he displayed *obsequium* and *uerecundia* (8.1, 3) and, having learned by the example of

[34] Hägg (2012) 5–6. Remarkably he does not comment on this aspect of *Agr.*

[35] Almost all of the known details of his life are owed to T.'s narrative. For modern accounts see Raepsaet-Charlier (1991), with a summary at 1856–7, and *RGB* 71–95. A. naturally features prominently in the many books on Roman Britain (below, n. 98); there are also more specialised monographs such as Hanson (1987).

[36] For A. and *fama* see Hardie (2012) 273–84.

his earlier posting (5.3 'gloria in ducem cessit'), he allowed his commanding officer to take all the credit (8.3 'ad . . . ducem . . . fortunam referebat'); nor did he seek *fama* later when governor of Aquitania (9.4).

He continued the same policy in 77, his first campaigning season as governor of Britain (18.6 'dissimulatione famae'), when the reticence of his official reports ('ne laureatis quidem gesta prosecutus est') was repeated at the end of his tour of duty after the victory of Mons Graupius (~ 39.1 'nulla uerborum iactantia epistulis Agricolae auctum'). His return to Rome in 84 was the very opposite of that expected of a great man (40.3–4): 'he drew deep breaths of calm inactivity' (40.4 'tranquillitatem atque otium penitus duxit'). When the time came for him to be considered for the proconsulship of Africa or Asia, men arrived from Domitian to praise *quies* and *otium* (42.1): as a result, Domitian was assuaged 'because neither by truculence nor by the empty flaunting of freedom did he invite his fame and his fate' (42.3). There follows a famous verdict (42.4):

> sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos uiros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac uigor adsint, eo laudis excedere quo plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt.
>
> Those who are accustomed to admire illegality should know that even under evil *principes* there can be great men, and that compliance and modesty, if accompanied by industry and energy, can reach the same level of praise as many persons do by precipitous routes; but the latter, with no benefit to the commonwealth, have achieved their distinction by an ostentatious death.

obsequium and *modestia* aptly summarise the guiding principles of A.'s life, while their counterpoise by *industria* and *uigor* epitomises the balance which he retained from his very earliest years (4.3 'retinuitque . . . ex sapientia modum'). The challenging and defensive tone is unmistakable but invites speculation about why it is there, since men of this balanced type were no new phenomenon.[37] Perhaps it is the suggestion that such men qualify for greatness which is the explanation: none of the previous exponents of this lifestyle could boast of a similarly impressive military record. But it is also the case that, by the very attributing of greatness to A., his biographer was defending *a fortiori* the similar behaviour of lesser achievers such as himself.[38]

[37] See W. on Vell. 88.2.

[38] See also Sailor (2008) 112–13. It is usually thought that *plerique* at 42.4 is a critical reference to the Stoics, but whether that is the case is uncertain (see ad loc.).