

This paper argues that the literary function of the *Bios Euripidou* by Satyrus of Callatis is in need of a critical re-appraisal. The fragmentary dialogue, since 2004 accessible in the excellent edition by Stefan Schorn, has always been regarded as a central text in the development of Greek literary biography. Until today, it seemed perfectly fine to most scholars to read the *Bios Euripidou* as an early contribution to the history of literary biography, generally assumed to unfold in a linear development and to proceed from rustic to more refined forms of expression and presentation.

However, my study of the *Bios Euripidou* has unearthed quite a different picture. My paper shows that the *Bios Euripidou* can be read as an ancient, perhaps even the 'first' (extant) Greek commentary on, rather than contribution to, biographical writing. As a close reading of the text reveals, the characterisation of the interlocutors as well as the dynamics of the narrative allow us to draw conclusions about the possible function of the dialogue. Inverting the peripatetic classroom situation, the authority of speaker A is constantly undermined by the comments, suggestions and questions of speaker B. This has gone unnoticed to date. Instead, scholars tend to ascribe gender-exclusive qualities to speaker A and B and, departing from these judgements, draw conclusions about the value of the contributions by the two speakers. However, this is at odds with the fact that the biographical discussion is in the *Bios Euripidou* presented in the form of a dialogue.

The choice of this well-established literary form enabled Satyrus not only to present opposing views on Euripidean tragedy and the life of Euripides, it also provided him with a means to imitate peripatetic classroom conversations as well as the dramatic dialogues of Euripidean tragedy. As Satyrus himself announces in fr. 1, imitation (*paramimesasthai*) is on the agenda of the *Bios Euripidou*. In fact, the literary technique of 'imitation in the commentary mode' is consistent with both the subject matter and the genre of the *Bios Euripidou*. *Paramimesis* hence determines the design of the *Bios Euripidou* on two levels of the narrative: (1) on the level of the interlocutors who imitate positions one might take when discussing Euripidean tragedy and (2) on the level of the narrative presentation of the conversation itself, in which speaker B comments on (and criticises) speaker A's biographical method of interpreting Euripidean drama.

I discuss three illuminating examples from the extant text: first, fr. 39 XIII, in which speaker B argues with Socrates for the difficulty to judge the behaviour of individuals properly. Second, fr. 39 XIV, which reveals the classroom situation speaker A creates in order to maintain his interpretative authority regarding Euripides and Euripidean tragedy. And third, fr. 39 XX, in which speaker B expresses her impatience with speaker A's self-fashioning.

Lefkowitz (1981), Arrighetti (1987), Frickenschmidt (1998), and Schorn (2004) all agree that the *Bios Euripidou* is an important text for our understanding of the biographical tradition of Euripides and of ancient literary biography more generally. However, the precise literary mechanisms of the *Bios Euripidou* have not been fully explored and exploited yet. My paper shows just how important the *Bios Euripidou* is for a better understanding of the dynamics of ancient literary biography, and provides a glimpse at the mechanisms of commenting on the literary biographical tradition from within. As a result, insights into the reception and canonization of Euripides and Euripidean drama will be, or so I hope, both challenged and augmented by my paper.