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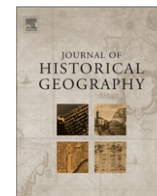
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Review

Hayden Lorimer and Charles W.J. Withers (Eds), *Geographers: Biobibliographical Studies*, Vol. 28. London, Continuum, 2009, Pp. xii + 176, £90 hardcover.

I like a good biography, especially if it is about a geographer. There are ten new ones in the latest volume of *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies*. My favourites were those that melded their subjects' lives and work and set both in context. Not all of them worked, but those that did moved seamlessly between the details of an individual life lived, and its larger political context. That context could be as different as the English civil war and restoration in seventeenth-century England, the rise of Nazism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and the emergence of East European state communism after the Second World War.

Before reading the book, I knew of only three of the ten geographers the volume featured: Dick Chorley, Marion Newbigin, and Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier. In various ways, though, they were less interesting than many of the others I didn't know. The first three chapters were especially gripping, and in each case about a geographer I had never heard of, practising a geography in which previously I had no interest.

Robert Mayhew's elegantly written memoir of Peter Heylyn (1599–1662) shows that there has never been anything 'mere' about 'mere geographical description'. Heylyn's *Microcosmos* (1621) and *Cosmographie* (1652) informed readers of the known world, but were also ciphers, witnesses to Heylyn's belief in monarchy and Laudian theology. Henrik Larsen's essay on Gudmund Hatt (1884–1960), Denmark's only professor of human geography, castigates him as 'one of Hitler's creatures in Denmark,' making 'a whore of [the] science' he practised (p. 22). More poignant is Róbert Györi's life of the Hungarian human geographer Tibor Mendöl (1902–1966), whose brilliance was dimmed by first facism and then totalitarian communism. Under the latter, the university of Budapest's department of human geography, where Mendöl held his chair, became the department of economic geography, governed by strictly enforced Marxist principles which left Mendöl the subject of re-education and canonical critique.

These first three essays vividly integrated lives and times, texts and contexts. The next chapter, Toshihiro Okada's memoir of Koji Iizuka (1906–1970) should have done the same. There was great material to work with – Iizuka's Vidalian regionalism joined with Marxism, and Japan's lurching from imperialism to Allied occupation to economic miracle. But the material was weakly integrated and biography became hagiography. Perhaps Richard John Chorley (1922–2002) deserved canonisation. He was after all a religious man, telling his friend, Peter Haggett, co-author with David Stoddart of this chapter, that he expected to have a full English breakfast when he arrived in heaven. This and similar anecdotes that make

up this chapter are charming, but I would have liked more edge and historical context. Chorley helped put physical geography on a new scientific footing, freeing it from the influence of William Morris Davis. By contrast, J.W.K. (Karl) Oestreich (1873–1947), 'the founding father of Dutch academic physical geography' according to Eduard Koster (p. 95), worshipped Davis. A German, Oestreich was appointed in 1908 to the first professorship in physical geography at the university of Utrecht. He stayed there for the rest of his career, but politics again intervened, this time when the German invasion of the Netherlands in the Second World War left him stateless.

Charles Patrick Daly (1816–1899) became interested in geography after a meeting with Alexander von Humboldt in 1851, but he used his presidency of the American Geographical Society, according to Karen Morin, to further his commercial interests and even acted as 'the institutional point man' (p. 112) for the notorious exploitation of the Congo by Leopold II, king of the Belgians. By contrast, Marion Newbigin (1869–1934), as Avril Maddrell suggests, made very little money out of geography, never obtaining a permanent university post and often struggling to survive. One of the first British woman academic geographers, she was a prolific writer and an influential editor of the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*. The French female geographer, Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier (1917–1995) fared better than Newbigin, suggests Hugh Clout. In 1960 she was elected professor at the Sorbonne. Her energy and purpose were extraordinary: she produced sixteen monograph titles between 1960 and 1980. As she put it, 'I perform [geography] constantly; I live within it' (p. 138). Closing the collection is Jamie Bruce Lockhart's chapter on Hugh Clapperton (1788–1827). A British naval officer, Clapperton joined two expeditions between 1822 and 1827 to find and map the source of the Niger in west Africa. At first it seemed like a boy's own adventure story; but then the bodies started piling up. Before beginning the search the expedition had to cross the Sahara, and then contend with local wars, jealous Sultans and their armies, and, worst of all, the rainy season that brought dysentery, malaria, and diarrhoea. The expedition was of course an imperial venture, but it was hard not to feel sorry for the party as so many of them keeled over. Clapperton himself succumbed in 1827, but not before he completed his important colonial map, 'the southern part of the route of the Niger' (p. 158).

In *Biography for Beginners* (1905) Edmund Clerihew Bentley famously wrote, 'Geography is about maps/But Biography is about chaps'. This volume and its twenty-seven predecessors belie the couplet. Geography is also about biography, and not only those of

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