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Genre

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Crafting a literary work does not happen in isolation. Imitation and creative adaptation of extant models are regular parts of the creative process. Imitation and adaptation result in the formation of literary "genres" or types that conform to certain patterns, generating expectations on the part of readers.[1] Genres are thus inevitable wherever literature is created.[2] In some contexts, generic patterns may be more formally recognized and described by theorists, but genres are operating whether formally recognized or not.

Genres in Classical Literature

The development of well-defined genres played an important role in the history of classical literature. Reflecting on how these literary types functioned is useful for understanding how genre works in John.[3] Genres with ideal norms governing literary production are found in Athens of the fifth

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1. On issues of genre in general, see John Frow, *Genre: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2006); Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982); and Adena Rosmarin, *The Power of Genre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), who suggests a "pragmatic" approach to the process by which genres are defined in the reading process.

2. Mikail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryle Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origin of Genres," *NLH* 8 (1976): 159–70, see esp. 163 for genres as "horizons of expectations" and "models of writing" for authors. Such horizon-defining models come about through a continual process of transforming various speech acts and subsequently established forms (167, 169).

3. Joseph Farrell, "Classical Genre in Theory and Practice," *NLH* 34 (2003): 383–408.

century BCE, where dramatists had to conform to institutionalized expectations to see their works performed. Ancient theorists, particularly Aristotle (384–322 BCE), built on that practice in understanding genres, and his theory formed the foundation of the study of genre from antiquity to the modern period. As Joseph Farrell points out, however, the archetypical paradigms did *not* in fact always govern the ways in which ancient authors actually worked. As he puts it:

> With time one finds an ever greater sense of adventure until, by the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it comes to seem that testing and even violating generic boundaries was not merely an inevitable and accidental consequence of writing in any genre, but an important aspect of the poet's craft.[4]

Poetic play on genre is visible in the work of artists such as Horace (65–8 BCE). The Roman poet theorizes about the purity of genres that ought not be mixed, but he does so within the context of a didactic poem, the *Ars poetica*, that does that very thing. In the world of Hellenistic and Roman literature, as Jacques Derrida long ago noted, genres were regularly mixed, or, as I have suggested, "bent."[5] Genre bending may be the way that creative literary figures always work; it was certainly the way they worked in first-century Greek and Latin literature.

Genres in Second Temple Jewish Literature

What is true of the world of classical literature is also true of contemporary Jewish literature. While there is no Hebrew or Aramaic *Poetics* or *Ars poetica*, there are observable commonalities in Jewish literary products of the Second Temple period. Though theoretical discussion of genre was absent, mimetic plays on literary models within a literary tradition was common.[6]

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4. Ibid., 388.

5. Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *CI* 7 (1980): 55–81. On genre "bending," see Harold W. Attridge, "Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 121 (2002): 3–21.

6. See Carol Newsom, "Pairing Research Questions and Theories of Genre: A Case Study of the Hodayot," *DSD* 17 (2010): 270–88; Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report from Genology," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel, and Dennis R. Margy (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 437–50; Benjamin Wright, "Joining the Club: A Suggestion about Genre in Jewish Texts,"

One way of describing the phenomenon is that authors worked with an "idealized cognitive model," a pattern of literary production that would be widely recognized. Thus a genre would be a paradigm "conventionalized, though not institutionalized," as were classical genres.[7]

Even when there are not putatively normative genres at play, there may well be literary models with some expected features with which authors of a particular work could interact, in much the same way as classical poets and Hellenistic novelists interacted with the genres that theoretically governed their literary worlds.[8]

An Example of Genre Adaptation

One example of genre adaptation or "bending" comes from ancient historiography, where actual "genres" were not as clearly defined as in classical poetry but where recognized models defined types of historiogra-

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DSD 17 (2010): 288–313; Robert Williamson Jr., "Pesher: A Cognitive Model of the Genre," *DSD* 17 (2010): 336–60. In his useful study of the genre of rewritten Bible or pesher, George J. Brooke, "Genre Theory, Rewritten Bible and Pesher," *DSD* 17 (2010): 361–86, usefully appeals to Derrida ("Law of Genre," 65) that "every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging. And not because of an abundant overflowing or a free, anarchic, and unclassifiable productivity, but because of the trait of participation itself" (370). In other words, playing with generic conventions is a fact of literary life.

7. For the terminology, inspired by Wittgenstein's theory of universals, see Hindy Najman, "The Idea of Biblical Genre: From Discourse to Constellation," in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner, Ken M. Penner, and Cecilia Wassen, STDJ 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 307–22. Her approach is applied in George J. Brooke, "Reading, Searching and Blessing: A Functional Approach to the Genres of Scriptural Interpretation in the Yahad," in *The Temple in Text and Tradition: A Festschrift in Honour of Robert Hayward*, ed. R. Timothy McLay, LSTS 83 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 140–56.

8. Other examples of creative appropriation of generic conventions appear, for example, in "apocalypses" and "testaments." On the former, see the discussion by John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 6–11. On testaments, which have a long history in Jewish and Christian traditions, see Vered Hillel, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Structure, Source, Composition* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2013), which highlights the "paradigmatic" (48–86) as well the "modified" (87–125) and "deviant" (125–64) structures found in the texts.

phy.[9] One ideal type was the work of Thucydides (455–400 BCE), who wrote about contemporary political and military events, tested eyewitness sources, and strove for accuracy in reporting the facts of historical events, while making allowances for creativity in reporting speeches. In the Hellenistic period, Polybius (ca. 200–118 BCE) followed that model in recounting the rise of Roman hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean. The satirist Lucian (ca. 120–180 CE) later defended the model in *How to Write History*, which criticized the imperialistic historiography about the Parthian war of 162–165 CE.

Another model, ultimately derived from Herodotus (ca. 484–420 BCE), explored not contemporary political and military affairs but broader history and culture. The model found echoes in the early imperial period in the works of Diodorus Siculus (first century BCE), whose *Bibliotheca historica* compiled ancient myths and legends, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BCE), whose twenty-volume *Roman Antiquities* offered a Greek alternative to the Latin celebration of Rome's past in Livy.

The Jewish historian Josephus (b. 37/38 CE) shaped the programmatic statements of his *Jewish War* to conform to the Thucydidean-Polybian model. His preface claims that this is the *only* way to write history.[10] Some twenty years later, his *Jewish Antiquities* clearly imitated the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. That there were different subgenres of historiographical writing with different expectations is evident. Polybius, for example, defines his kind of history over and against a despised other, tragic drama. Criticizing his contemporary Phylarchus, Polybius writes:

> The object of tragedy [i.e., the kind of thing that, according to Polybius, Phylarchus was up to] is not the same as that of history, but quite the opposite. The tragic poet should thrill and charm his audience for

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9. See Harold W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the* Antiquitates Judaicae *of Flavius Josephus*, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976); Attridge, "Historiography," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. Michael E. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 157–84; and Attridge, "Josephus and His Works," in Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple*, 185–232. More recently, see John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Roberto Nicolai, *La storiografia nell' educazione antica*, Biblioteca di materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici 10 (Pisa: Giardini, 1992).

10. Josephus, *J. W.* 1.13–16, where Josephus castigates the Greeks as untrustworthy while articulating as his own the principles of Thucydidean-Polybian historiography.

the moment by the verisimilitude of the words he puts in his characters mouths, but it is the task of the historian to instruct. (*Hist.* 2.56.11 [Paton])

These cases enshrine a discourse about history as a genre. Authors felt free not only to write things in different subgenres, as Josephus did, but also to "bend" or "tweak" the models to which they paid allegiance. Both Polybius and Josephus admit doing so, when they introduce into their political and military accounts "tragic" elements like lamenting the fate of the peoples conquered by Rome. Historical genres, like poetry, also could be transformed even while being celebrated and affirmed. From the way "genre" works in the first century CE, one should probably expect that any creative author would be engaged in "bending" whatever genre he was employing.

A Generic Model?

The Fourth Gospel undoubtedly had some literary model, an account of the deeds of Jesus, such as a "signs source" or the Synoptic Gospels supplemented with other traditional materials.[11] In either case, the model was probably something like the classic definition of Mark, "a passion narrative with an extended introduction."[12] In reworking the model, the evangelist also exploited other "idealized cognitive models," drawing on them precisely as other contemporary authors did in adapting their genres.

John is clearly not dependent on any of the gospels in the way that Matthew and Luke, according to the usual two-source theory, are dependent on Mark. The evangelist probably used other sources, and, insofar as he appropriated anything, he did so with considerable freedom. Yet there is persuasive evidence that John did indeed know the Synoptics.[13] Particularly

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11. For a history of this hypothesis, see Gilbert Van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis*, BETL 116 (Leuven: Peeters, 1994). For a recent defense, see Volker Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt: Wiederherstellung und Kommentar*, SIJD 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

12. Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, trans. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 80. For a reflection on the application of Kähler's summary, coined for the Gospel of Mark, to John, see Raymond F. Collins, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel*, LTPM 2 (Leuven: Peeters; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 87–88.

13. On the history of the issue, see D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels:*

telling are the connections in the passion and resurrection narratives. Decisive is the connection between John and Luke in the appearance stories, where the two appearance accounts of John 20:19–29 are clearly built on pieces of the one Easter appearance story in Luke 24:6–43, which the evangelist has deconstructed and recomposed, a technique he uses elsewhere.[14] It is highly likely that the evangelist knows Mark and Luke and may well know Matthew.[15]

The Synoptic Gospels do not offer a simple generic model. Defining their genre usually appeals to some form of Hellenistic literature, particularly biographies. Some scholars argue that all the gospels are in some sense *bioi*, or "lives."[16] Others nuance that judgment and find particular gospels displaying features of other literature, including Jewish novels, manifestos, and others.[17] However the gospels related to ancient *bioi*, other literary elements were also at play, as is surely the case with the Fourth Gospel.

The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); for the recent scholarly debate, see Michael Labahn and Manfred Lang, "Johannes und die Synoptiker: Positionen und Impulse seit 1990," in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums: Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, ed. Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle, WUNT 175 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 443–516; Roland Bergmeier, "Die Bedeutung der Synoptiker für das johanneische Zeugnisthema: Mit einem Anhang zum Perfekt-Gebrauch im vierten Evangelium," *NTS* 52 (2006): 458–83.

14. See especially Manfred Lang, *Johannes und die Synoptiker: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Analyse von Joh 18–20 vor dem markinischen und lukanischen Hintergrund*, FRLANT 182 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

15. Recent commentators arguing for the dependence of John on the Synoptics include Hartwig Thyen, "Johannes und die Synoptiker: Auf der Suche nach einem neuen Paradigma zur Beschreibung ihrer Beziehungen anhand von Beobachtungen an Passions-und Ostererzählungen," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 81–108, and Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). Arguing for mutual influence between John and the Synoptics is Paul N. Anderson, "Aspects of Interfluentiality between John and the Synoptics: John 18–19 as a Case Study," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Gilbert van Belle, BETL 200 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 711–28.

16. Richard Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Burridge, "Gospels," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 432–44. On the complexity of the genre, see Thomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

17. For novel, see Michael E. Vines, *The Problem of Markan Genre: The Gospel*

While the evangelist might find attractive Mark's element of mystery or Luke's dramatic encounters, he is not satisfied that any earlier narrative achieves what it should. In departing from his predecessors, the evangelist apparently does what Farrell suggested classical genre benders regularly did: they defined the Y that they were writing as a non-X. The X that the Fourth evangelist had in his sights was most likely the Gospel of Luke. The Third Gospel is, to be sure, a complex literary work but one with literary pretentions that at least evoke the ideals of historiography. The language of Luke's prefaces is not quite at the level of sophisticated historiography.[18] The narratives of the Gospel of Luke and Acts, whatever their precise relationship,[19] is not exactly the work of critical historiography,[20] although scholars still defend the historical value of Luke's two volumes.[21] Whatever the final judgment on Luke's effort, it is hard to ignore the gesture toward historiography in the claim to "set down an orderly account [*diēgēsis*] of the events that have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:1).[22] The tone of Luke's preface is echoed in the efforts to synchronize the story of Jesus with imperial and local history (Luke 1:5; 2:1–2; 3:1–2). Whatever it may in fact be doing, Luke-Acts presents itself as an effort to tell a historical tale accurately. Serious historians, as noted above, ought not be writers of

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of Mark and the Jewish Novel, AcBib 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For manifesto, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Is Mark's Gospel a Life of Jesus? The Question of Genre* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1990); Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 15–44.

18. Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1*, SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and more recently, Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles*, LNTS 298 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2005).

19. Mikeal Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), and, for another perspective, Andrew F. Gregory and C. Kavin Rowe, *Rethinking the Unity and the Reception of Luke and Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

20. So Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), and Pervo, *Acts*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009). For a critique of the comparison of Acts with ancient novels, see Craig Keener, *Introduction and 1:1–2:47*, vol. 1 of *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 62–83.

21. See, e.g., Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, WUNT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), and the nuanced treatment by Keener, *Acts*, 1:166–220, in a section entitled "Approaching Acts as a Historical Source."

22. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of biblical texts are my own.

drama. The Fourth Evangelist, by contrast, frames his account of Jesus as something quite different from a simple *diēgēsis*.[23]

Objectifying Narrative or Dramatic Encounter

Scholars often describe the Fourth Gospel as "dramatic," and some have made a more formal case for the term.[24] Four elements bend the narrative in the direction of drama. The first is the Prologue, with its cadenced celebration of the Word. Unlike anything in Mark or Matthew, this introduction has a parallel in Luke's prefaces. But, apart from the similarity in the general function, the Lukan prefaces are remarkably different. They are a prosaic, and somewhat apologetic, appeal to the reader, similar to the prefaces found in historiography[25] and in specialized technical manuals.[26] John's quasi-poetic Prologue hints at many elements of the gospel's thematic world: the contrast between light and darkness, the relationship between Father and Son, the stark juxtaposition of those who accept the Word and those who do not, the contrast between what Jesus offers and what Moses provided, the emphasis on the presence of the Word in flesh, and the resultant experience of seeing and understanding flowing from encounter with the Word. Not an afterthought, the Prologue belongs

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23. Plato, *Resp.* 392d, frames the distinction between "narrative" (*diēgēsis*) and "imitation" (*mimēsis*). Aristotle classifies tragedy, with epic poetry, as a mode of "imitation" (*Poet.* 1.1447a15) and argues that a tragedy works *drōntōn kai ou di' apangelias* (*Poet.* 6.1449b27). I. Bywater usefully translates this as "in a dramatic, not a narrative form" in Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols., Bollingen Series 71.2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:2320.

24. Ben Witherington III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 4–5, labels it a "dramatic biography," listing as dramatic elements: initial hymn, irony, magnitude of main character, dualisms, crescendo effect, self-contained scenes, rhetoric at key points, on stage triads, surprising revelations. See also Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 73 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Stibbe, *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives*, NTTS 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1993); G. Rochais, "Jean 7: Une construction littéraire dramatique, à la manière d'un scénario," *NTS* 39 (1993): 355–78; Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).

25. See above, n. 18.

26. As argued by Loveday Alexander. See n. 16 above.

where it stands, at the beginning of the gospel in its final form. There it functions precisely as does the "hypothesis" of a Greek drama, telling the audience what to expect.

Another trope has received considerable recent attention, the gospel's pervasive irony.[27] The gospel displays many kinds of irony, but the first and most obvious is "dramatic" in the technical sense. Irony in general is the trope of saying one thing and meaning another. Dramatic irony is the kind that occurs "on stage," when a clueless character says something true, which the audience understands. Or a character may deny the truth of something that the audience knows to be true. The dramatist and his audience know something that the characters do not, a situation exemplified in unmistakable form in Euripides's *Bacchae*.[28]

The characters interacting with Jesus in the Fourth Gospel strongly resemble Pentheus in the *Bacchae*. They resist the presence of the divine in their midst; they deny truths that the audience knows, as does Nicodemus's question about rebirth (3:4). They articulate a truth that they do not grasp, as do the "Judaeans,"[29] who, as the narrator suggests, believe that Jesus was "making himself equal to God" (5:18). The opponents of Jesus ironically describe themselves when they say that no one will know of the messiah's origin (7:27). The incredulous question of the crowds about going to the Greek diaspora (7:35) points to events that begin to unfold in chapter 12. An ironic gem is the statement of Caiaphas, "It is better for you to have one man to die for the people" (11:50).

Also richly ironic is the gospel's central claim that in being "lifted up" (Greek, *hypsoō*) on the shameful tree of the cross, Jesus is "lifted up in glory" (Greek, *doxazō*), which evokes awe and wonder. Irony is not a

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27. See Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), and Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

28. See George W. MacRae, "Theology and Irony in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Word in the World: Essays in Honour of Frederick. L. Moriarty, S.J.*, ed. Richard J. Clifford and George W. MacRae (Cambridge, MA: Weston College, 1973), 83–96.

29. Translating *hoi Ioudaioi* is controversial. The most common rendering, "the Jews," which nourished a long history of Christian anti-Judaism, probably reflects the polemical situation of the evangelist in opposition to the Jews of his day held responsible for the expulsion of his community from "the synagogue" (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2). Yet, within the narrative the term usually refers to the leadership of the Jerusalem community and may have a more narrow connotation than the usual translation suggests. This ambivalent use of the term connects the audience to the dramatic situation.

casual literary device embellishing dramatic encounters, it is a conceptual device at the heart of the narrative.

Both a prologue as "hypothesis" and pervasive irony are very much at home in a drama. A third element, the "delayed exit" of Jesus in the last supper discourses, explains a discontinuity in the narrative.[30] After announcing that it is time to go to Gethsemane (14:31), Jesus continues teaching for two chapters about abiding in the vine, the Paraclete, and the coming persecution. He then offers a prayer (ch. 17) before finally moving to the garden. In drama, such delayed exits often occur when a leading character is on the verge of death, which conventionally takes place off-stage. The protagonist hints at that conclusion but then pauses and continues speaking, offering reflections on the significance of the coming separation.[31] What happens in John 15–17 conforms to that technique.

Dramatic conventions are not the only generic features of the Farewell Discourse. The evangelist combines in John 13–17 elements of many generic types, including "testaments" of patriarchs, philosophical or rhetorical messages of consolation, and symposia.[32] Yet whatever else is present, a dramatic device plays a major role.

Another regular part of the dramatist's toolkit, the recognition scene, shapes the Fourth Gospel in significant ways.[33] The Samaritan woman in John 4 through her dialogue with Jesus comes to recognize that he might indeed be the messiah (4:29). However tentative, she experiences a moment

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30. The dramatic parallels are pointed out by George L. Parsenios, *Departure and Consolation: The Johannine Farewell Discourses in Light of Greco-Roman Literature*, NovTSup 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

31. For examples, noted by Parsenios, see the delay of Cassandra in Aeschylus, *Ag.*, lines 1290–1331; Sophocles, *Phil.* 1402–1415; *Ant.* 883–930; Euripides, *Tro.* 294–461.

32. See Harold W. Attridge, "Plato, Plutarch, and John: Three Symposia about Love," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi et al., STAC 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 367–78. Important analyses of the Farewell Discourse include Johannes Beutler, *Do Not Be Afraid: The First Farewell Discourse in John's Gospel*, NTSCE 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011); trans. of *Habt keine Angst: Die erste johanneische Abschiedsrede (Joh 14)*, SBS 116 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984); Fernando F. Segovia, *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); D. Francois Tolmie, *Jesus' Farewell to the Disciples: John 13:1–17:26 in Narratological Perspective*, BibInt 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

33. On this device, see Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John*, BibInt 93 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

of recognition, an *anagnoresis*, which leads to that of other Samaritans (4:42). Mary Magdalene, weeping outside Jesus's tomb and wondering what has become of his body, recognizes, at the sound of the voice calling her name, that her beloved Lord is present. She, too, at the verbal signal that recalls the sheep and their shepherd (10:27) experiences a moment of *anagnoresis*. Thomas, the famous doubter, comes to faith through the very tangible sign of a scarred but resurrected body that enables him to confess his recognition, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28).

Stimulating a Dramatic Encounter through Identification with a Character

The Fourth Gospel is a particularly "dramatic" narrative of a special life and death. The generic adaptation seems designed above all to ensure that the reader/hearer has the possibility of an encounter with the resurrected Christ himself. Creation of a vivid "drama" illustrating encounters between Christ and various characters provided potent images, but such adaptation might not suffice to engage a reader or audience. Accounts of encounters could easily be historicized and vacated of their allure to foster a similar encounter with the resurrected Christ. To achieve that, the evangelist further "tweaked" the gospel paradigm by playing with the category of "eyewitness," a term that played an important role in historiographical literature.[34] In doing so, he challenges antiquarians like Luke or Papias, who valued such testimony.

Essential to the appeal to an eyewitness in ancient legal transactions is that the witness be identifiable.[35] It is hardly the case that the identity of the Beloved Disciple, obliquely identified as the eyewitness to the events of the gospel (19:35), is readily available. Rather, the gospel systematically precludes an identification.[36] Instead, it returns the reader to

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34. On eyewitnesses in general, see Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

35. See Howard M. Jackson, "Ancient Self-Referential Conventions and Their Implications for the Authorship and Integrity of the Gospel of John," *JTS* 50 (1999): 1–34.

36. On anonymity, see David R. Beck, "The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 143–58, and Beck, *The Discipleship Paradigm: Readers and Anonymous Characters in the Fourth Gospel*, BibInt 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Adele Reinhartz, "Anonymity and Character in the Books of

the text, searching for the identity of the eyewitness only to encounter the one who bears witness to the truth (18:37).[37] When the reader encounters and accepts him, she becomes another beloved disciple and witness to his truth. The trope effects the kind of "identification" that Aristotle identified as a feature of drama,[38] not with the protagonist, but with one as close to the protagonist as any ordinary mortal may be (13:23; 19:26; 20:8). The gospel thus enables the kind of dramatic encounter that it describes.

Drama's Conceptual Foundation: A Riddling Arabesque

Two other features make the Fourth Gospel a distinctive kind of drama: its engagement with conceptual issues and its vivid imagery. Despite its simple Greek, the gospel is replete with tensions, in Christology, eschatology, soteriology, and much more. In the past, these tensions have often generated theories of source and redaction. More recent Johannine scholarship instead has explored their function as deliberate "riddles."[39]

The phenomenon of paradoxes or riddles used as a literary device is not confined to the Fourth Gospel. Riddles appear in Jewish literature such as 4 Ezra, where an angel leads the seer to comprehend theodicy (see, e.g., 4 Ezra 4:5–7, 50; 5:36). Riddling is a key element in the Nag Hammadi text Thunder: Perfect Mind (NHC VI 2).[40] Riddling is

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Samuel," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 117–41, and Reinhartz, "*Why Ask My Name?": Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

37. See Harold W. Attridge, "The Restless Quest for the Beloved Disciple," in *Early Christian Voices: In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols; Essays in Honor of François Bovon*, ed. David H. Warren, Ann Graham Brock, and David W. Pao, BibInt 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 71–80.

38. For Aristotle, the aim of tragedy is "catharsis" of pity and fear (*Poet.* 6.1449b28) achieved primarily through a well-designed plot but also through characters who were morally attractive and realistic (*Poet.* 15.1454a16–1454b14).

39. Herbert Leroy, *Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannesevangeliums*, BBB 30 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1968); Tom Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore*, SBLMS 53 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Thatcher, "Riddles, Repetitions, and the Literary Unity of the Johannine Discourses," in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle, Michael Labahn, and Petrus Maritz, BETL 223 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 357–77; Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

40. Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 77–78. This is also noted by

also a psychagogic technique in a Hermetic tractate resembling John 3, Corp. herm. 13,[41] where Hermes instructs a befuddled Tat about rebirth (*palingenesia*).[42] Clement of Alexandria treated riddles at length (*Strom.* 5),[43] and Origen calls attention to the importance of such language, citing standard Stoic paradoxes about the sage (*Comm. Jo.* 2.10). Despite differences in content, the basic point is clear: riddling and paradoxical statements can play a significant educational role.

The Fourth Gospel deploys its riddles not as discrete units but as interconnected chains.[44] One might think of this phenomenon as the Johannine "arabesque," a pattern of interwoven vines found in ancient and medieval art. The presence of these reflective strands suggests that this dramatic narrative was meant for use in a Christian "study group." The gospel facilitates an encounter with the resurrected Christ but in a context where theoretical issues arising from that encounter are of concern. It offers suggestions about resolving those theoretical issues but does not provide a definitive resolution. It is not, therefore, a work of systematic or philosophical theology, although it displays acquaintance with theoretical discourse.[45] While it does not argue a case, it leads read-

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Pheme Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 124–34.

41. See C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), and more recently, M. Eugene Boring, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe, eds., *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 254–55.

42. See Brian Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), cited in Boring, Berger, and Colpe, *Hellenistic Commentary*, 254.

43. See Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 2nd ed., SHR 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), particularly his treatment of "Mosaic Riddles," 92–108.

44. On the phenomenon, see Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972): 64, who comments on "the elucidation of themes by progressive repetition"; Jörg Frey, "Love-Relations in the Fourth Gospel: Establishing a Semantic Network," in Van Belle, Labahn, and Martiz, *Repetitions and Variations*, 171–98; Ruben Zimmermann, "Metaphoric Networks as Hermeneutic Keys in the Gospel of John: Using the Example of the Mission Imagery," in Van Belle, Labahn, and Martiz, *Repetitions and Variations*, 381–402; and on "glory," Nicole Chibici-Revneanu, *Die Herrlichkeit des Verherrlichten*, WUNT 2/231 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), esp. 325–30.

45. See Harold W. Attridge, "An Emotional Jesus and Stoic Traditions," in *Stoicism*

ers to consider complex issues and thus serves as a psychagogic program,[46] always keeping the theoretical questions subordinated to the encounter with Christ.

The theme of judgment is an important strand of the "arabesque." The theme's tensions, which have long attracted attention,[47] begin with the first declaration of John 3:16–17 that God did not send the Son to judge the world, a notion repeated frequently (5:22; 8:15; 12:47). Alongside these affirmations is the insistence that judgment does take place, brought about by the action of Jesus (3:18; 5:30; 8:16; 8:26). These apparently contradictory affirmations find some degree of resolution in 12:48–49, when Jesus speaks of a judgment by the word that he has spoken. The implicit resolution is confirmed in 16:11, which assigns a judgmental role to the Paraclete.[48] In short, judgment happens but not in the manner of traditional eschatological or apocalyptic scenarios, such as Matt 25:31–46. Jesus brings judgment but not from the bench of a great assize. He proclaims the word given him by the Father; reaction to that word, belief or rejection, determines the verdict.

Intertwined with the sequence about "judgment" is another strand of tensive reflection concerning the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the salvific process. Some readers find here a rigidly determinist scheme; others a space for human responsibility. Some are content to affirm that the gospel, perhaps like other Jewish sources,

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in Early Christianity, ed. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 77–92.

46. On psychagogy in general, see Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy*, NovTSup 81 (Leiden: Brill, 1995). For a more theoretical approach, see Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the* Gospel of Philip *and the* Exegesis on the Soul, NHMS 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

47. The classic treatment is Josef Blank, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg: Lambertus, 1964).

48. The language (*elenxei*) is clearly forensic, as is the title Paraclete, whatever its precise connotations. See Michel Gourgues, "Le paraclet, l'esprit de vérité: Deux désignations, deux fonctions," in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle, Jan G. van der Watt, and P. Maritz, BETL 184 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 83–108; David Pastorelli, *Le Paraclet dans le corpus johannique*, BZNW 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006); Lochlan Schelfer, "The Legal Precision of the Term '*παράκλητος*,'" *JSNT* 32 (2009): 131–50.

holds that the two principles are mysteriously compatible.[49] Yet others relate the tensive principles to the gospel's social circumstances.[50] The variety of interpretations attests the presence of another riddle.

From chapter 3 on, the gospel juxtaposes two principles: that origins are determinative and that one can reset the point of origin and be "born *anōthen*." Feints in one direction or another entice a reader, wondering how the tension is to be resolved. Finally, in chapter 12, in combination with the resolution of the "judgment" theme, the reader learns that what one loves determines whether one will accept the opportunity to accept or reject the revealer (12:43). The evangelist concludes with an implied account of divine sovereignty and human responsibility not unlike that of classical Stoicism. The divine will exercise a strong influence, inviting belief, making it possible and attractive, but God does not force a decision. There is room for the individual to assent or reject the invitation to believe. The latter move is simply "sin."[51]

Drama's Visual Embellishment

Deploying riddles is one way that the evangelist bends the dramatic narrative. It grounds the term "theologian" that tradition applied to him, but it is only one part of the "arabesque." In addition to the Fourth Gospel's riddles, usually revolving around important faith claims, another thematic strand weaves through the story of Jesus: a complex array of visual images—visual flowers, as it were—on the conceptual tendrils of the arabesque. Johannine imagery has received much attention,[52] and the

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49. So, e.g., Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:571–74, discussing John 12:37–45.

50. See, e.g., Enno Ezard Popkes, "Exkurs: Die sukzessive Entfaltung des Prädestinationsgedankens im Erzählverlauf des Johannesevangeliums," in *Die Theologie der Liebe Gottes in den johanneischen Schriften: Zur Semantik der Liebe und zum Motivkreis des Dualismus*, WUNT 2/197 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 204–11, with reference to other literature.

51. Harold W. Attridge, "Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility in the Fourth Gospel," in *Revealed Wisdom: Studies in Apocalyptic in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. John Ashton, AJEC 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 183–99.

52. See, e.g., Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Dorothy A. Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbol, Gender, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: Crossroad, 2002); Jörg Frey, Jan G. van der Watt, and Ruben Zimmermann, *Imagery in the Gospel of John:*

Johannine treatment of imagery, working like cubist art, formally resembles the play on generic features. Life, light, shepherds, vines, blood, and water flow through the text in interwoven streams, emanating from and refracting the central image of the cross, that ironic symbol at the gospel's center.[53] If the arabesque's riddles appeal to the mind, its images appeal to the senses, but they do the same kind of work as the whole of the dramatic enterprise; they facilitate an encounter with the living Christ.

Conclusion

Ancient literary practice sheds light on how "genre works" in the Fourth Gospel. Ancient literature of all stripes developed genres, but even when they were explicitly theorized, as in the Greek and Roman traditions, they were regularly the subjects of literary play, often by defining one's own version of a genre against another. Our evangelist was writing in an environment in which historicizing impulses were at work. The story of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection was a way of connecting people to him. Our evangelist shared the rhetorical goal, but for him, mere historicizing narrative was inadequate to do the job. The story of Jesus had to be reconceived along the lines of other types of literary production. Most importantly and most clearly, the story needed to be dramatized, to display and to invite transformative encounters with the crucified and resurrected Way, Truth, and Life. But neither would a simple dramatized narrative suffice. Drama offered the possibility of encounter, through identification of the reader with a character in the story, but other dimensions of experience required other tools. The dramatic narrative was further bent toward a bit of conceptual artistry that would at the same time bedazzle and perplex but ultimately transform the attentive reader.

Terms, Forms, Themes and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language, WUNT 200 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

53. Harold W. Attridge, "The Cubist Principle in Johannine Imagery: John and the Reading of Images in Contemporary Platonism," in Frey, van der Watt, and Zimmermann, *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 47–60.