

Kasper Bro Larsen (ed.)

The Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic



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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AcBib	Academia Biblica
AGWB	Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Wirkung der Bibel
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972–
ASH	Ancient Society and History
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDR	<i>Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Friedrich Rehkopf</i> . Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch. 16. ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BHHB	Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible
Bib	Biblica
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BRLJ	Brill Reference Library of Judaism
BRS	The Biblical Resource Series
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BThS	Biblich Theologische Studien
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary

CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DNP	<i>Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> . Edited by H. Cancik and H. Schneider. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1996–2003
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HbS	Herders biblische Studien
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HThKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LS	<i>Louvain Studies</i>
LXX	Alfred Rahlfs, ed. <i>Septuaginta: Id est vetus testamentum graec iuxta lxx interpretes</i> . 2 vols. Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935

NA ²⁸	<i>Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece</i> . Edited by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster. 28th revised edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NHS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	<i>The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version</i> . Edited by Wayne A. Meeks. New York: HarperCollins, 1993
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTGr	Neue Theologische Grundrisse
NTL	The New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
OTL	Old Testament Library
PNTC	Pelican New Testament Commentaries
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Edited by Theodor Klauser et al. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>RPP</i>	<i>Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion</i> . Edited by Hans Dieter Betz et al. 14 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2007–2013
SA	Studia Anselmiana
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLBSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SDSS	Studies in Dead Sea Scrolls & Related Literature
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
<i>Sémiotique</i>	<i>Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage</i> . Edited by Algirdas Julien Greimas and Joseph Courtés. Langue, Linguistique, Communication. Paris: Hachette, 1979
SNTA	Studiorum Novi Testamenti Auxilia
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTSU	Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt

SP	Sacra Pagina
SQAW	Schriften und Quellen der alten Welt
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
TBT	<i>The Bible Today</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TQ	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZKT	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
ZNT	<i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Preface

The present volume is a study of the Fourth Gospel in light of ancient and modern genre theories and practices. The core of the book consists of a selection of papers from the conference *The Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic*, which took place at Aarhus University (Denmark) on 23–26 June 2014. In addition, a number of other international Johannine scholars with a special interest in John and genre have agreed to contribute to the book. The editor expresses his sincere gratitude to all contributors—and not only as a matter of complying with generic conventions!

The conference commenced exactly one year ago on the Eve of St. John—the Baptist, that is—with a keynote lecture by Professor Harold W. Attridge (Yale University) and a beautiful celebration of Midsummer with bonfires at the wooden boats marina in Aarhus. As the organizer of the conference, I wish to thank all conference participants for stimulating papers and inspiring discussions during the following days. A word of thanks is also extended to the conference assistants Anne Pedersen and Gitte Grønning Munk, who made it possible for the rest of us to focus on what we came for: scholarship. Further information on the conference is available on the website of the *Research Unit in New Testament Studies* at Aarhus University (<http://nt.au.dk>).

The conference was generously sponsored by the *Danish Council for Independent Research* (FKK), the research program *Christianity and Theology in Culture and Society*, and the *School of Culture and Society* at Aarhus University. The present publication was made possible by a substantial grant from the *Aarhus University Research Foundation* (AUFF). I wish to thank all the benefactors who made the project possible.

Finally, a word of appreciation is due to Copy Editor Moritz Reissing and Dr. Elke Liebig at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht publishers in Göttingen for a smooth and professional publication process.

Kasper Bro Larsen

Aarhus, the Eve of St. John, 2015

Kasper Bro Larsen

Introduction: The Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic

1. John and Genre: From Form Criticism to Genre Criticism

In recent decades Johannine scholarship has developed an increasing interest in how the Fourth Gospel interacts with literary conventions of genre and form in its ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman context. A new exegetical genre criticism has emerged, which is not so much focused on the early formation of the Jesus tradition, nor on generic classification, but on how genre perspectives permit new insights on the Gospel in terms of ideology, theology, and social location. This interest in generic conventions and transformations regards the Johannine Gospel as a whole (for instance, *bios*,¹ drama,² historiographical writing,³ and novel)⁴ as well as the various generic parts that contribute to the Gospel, for

1 References in the present and the following footnotes identify conspicuous and recent examples of studies engaging in different aspects of John and genre. On John's Gospel (and the gospels) as *bios*, see Clyde Weber Votaw, *The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970); Christopher H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, LEC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 46–76; and Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, SNTSMS 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

2 Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004); George L. Parsenius, *Departure and Consolation: The Johannine Farewell Discourses in Light of Greco-Roman Literature*, NovTSup 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); and idem, *Rhetoric and Drama in the Johannine Lawsuit Motif*, WUNT 258 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

3 Richard Bauckham, "Historiographical Characteristics of the Gospel of John," *NTS* 53 (2007): 17–36; idem, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

4 Lawrence M. Wills, *Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (London: Routledge, 1997); Jo-Ann A. Brant, "Divine Birth and Apparent Parents: The Plot of the Fourth Gospel," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. Ronald F. Hock, J. Bradley Chance, and Judith Perkins, SBLSymS 6 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 199–211.

example, prologue,⁵ dialogue,⁶ riddle,⁷ betrothal type-scene,⁸ miracle narrative,⁹ homiletic midrash,¹⁰ forensic oratory,¹¹ parable,¹² farewell discourse,¹³ symposium,¹⁴ *consolationes*,¹⁵ prayer,¹⁶ *ultima verba*,¹⁷ and recognition scene.¹⁸

-
- 5 The secondary literature is immense. Among recent contributions that discuss genre questions are Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 94 (2001): 243–84 and Matthew Gordley, "The Johannine Prologue and Jewish Didactic Hymn Traditions: A New Case for Reading the Prologue as a Hymn," *JBL* 128 (2009): 781–802.
 - 6 C. H. Dodd, "The Dialogue Form in the Gospels," *BJRL* 37 (1954): 54–67; Paul N. Anderson, "Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crises in the Johannine Situation," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer, SemeiaSt 63 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 133–59; Johnson Thomaskutty, *Dialogue in the Book of Signs: A Polyvalent Analysis of John 1:19–12:50*, BIS 136 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
 - 7 Herbert Leroy, *Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannes-evangeliums*, BBB 30 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1968); Tom Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore*, SBLMS 53 (Atlanta: SBL, 2000).
 - 8 P. Joseph Cahill, "Narrative Art in John IV," *Religious Studies Bulletin* 2 (1982): 41–48; Lyle Eslinger, "The Wooing of the Woman at the Well: Jesus, the Reader and Reader-Response Criticism," *Literature and Theology* 1 (1987): 167–83.
 - 9 Ruben Zimmermann, ed., *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Band 1. Die Wunder Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013), 659–777.
 - 10 Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*. NovTSup 10. Leiden: Brill, 1965.
 - 11 Harold W. Attridge, "Argumentation in John 5," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, ed. A. Eriksson, Th. H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker, Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8 (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2002), 188–99.
 - 12 Ruben Zimmermann, "Are there Parables in John? It is Time to Revisit the Question," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 9 (2011): 243–76.
 - 13 Fernando F. Segovia has a fine discussion of the genre of the discourse in idem, *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 1–58. For a more recent generic approaches, see Parsenios, *Departure and Consolation*; John Carlson Stube, *A Graeco-Roman Rhetorical Reading of the Farewell Discourse*, LNTS 309 (London: T&T Clark, 2006); Kasper Bro Larsen, "At sige ret farvel: Jesus' afskedstale i genrehistorisk belysning (Joh 13–17)," in *Hvad er sandhed: Nye læsninger af Johannesevangeliet*, ed. Gitte Buch-Hansen and Christina Petterson (Frederiksberg: Alfa, 2009), 85–102; and Ruth Sheridan, "John's Gospel and Modern Genre Theory: The Farewell Discourse (John 13–17) as a Test Case." *ITQ* 75 (2010): 287–299.
 - 14 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. Edward Iricinschi et al., STAC 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 367–78.
 - 15 Manfred Lang, "Johanneische Abschiedsreden und Senecas Konsolationsliteratur: Wie konnte ein Römer Joh 13,31–17,26 lesen?" in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums: Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, ed. Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle, WUNT 175 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 365–412; Parsenios, *Departure and Consolation*.
 - 16 Carsten Claussen, "Das Gebet in Joh 17 im Kontext von Gebeten aus zeitgenössischen Pseudepigraphen," in Frey and Schnelle, *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums*, 205–232.
 - 17 Michael Theobald, "Der Tod Jesu im Spiegel seiner 'letzten Worte' vom Kreuz," *TQ* 190 (2010):

Of special inspiration to scholarship during the last decade—and to the present volume—was Harold W. Attridge’s presidential address delivered at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Denver, Colorado. Attridge introduced the concept of “genre bending” to Johannine scholarship and raised the following question: “Why does the Fourth Gospel exhibit so much interest in playing with generic conventions, extending them, undercutting them, twisting traditional elements into new and curious shapes, making literary forms do things that did not come naturally to them?”¹⁹

The present book contains a range of different attempts to discuss and meet the challenge formulated by Attridge. Of course, Attridge was not the first to discuss genre issues in relation to the Fourth Gospel; since the late 1960s such issues have in fact gradually ascended the priority list of Johannine scholarship. But even in the mid-1990s Mark W. G. Stibbe could describe the question of genre as “a surprising ‘gap’ in Johannine research.”²⁰ Stibbe did not explain *why* the “gap” was surprising—and in fact it is only so to a certain degree. It is of course remarkable that form criticism (*Formgeschichte*) to such a great extent bypassed the Gospel of John during large parts of the 20th century, given the fact that it was a well-established generic method in gospel research.²¹ However, the reason for Johannine studies to overlook this gap is not very unexpected since it (as several other tendencies in then-current scholarship) had to do with the extensive influence of Rudolf Bultmann. It is telling that Bultmann’s and Dibelius’s classic works of form criticism focused on the *Synoptic* Gospels, which they regarded as folkloristic “Kleinliteratur” formed by collective use of traditions. In contrast to the synoptics, John’s Gospel was taken to be a carefully crafted work produced by a more skillful mind in regard to both theology and literary artistry, and thus as an individual genius more independent of generic and formal constraints.²² This

1–31; Kasper Bro Larsen, “Famous Last Words: Jesu ord på korset i evangeliernes sammenhæng,” *Kritisk Forum for Praktisk Teologi* 111 (2008): 3–11.

18 R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 72–86; idem, “Cognition in John: The Johannine Signs as Recognition Scenes,” *PRSt* 35 (2008): 251–260; Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John*, BIS 93 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

19 Harold W. Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 20.

20 Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John’s Gospel* (London: Routledge, 1994), 54. Stibbe, one of the pioneers in narrative exegesis of the Fourth Gospel, attempted to fill the gap by reading John’s Gospel in relation to Northrop Frye’s theory of four generic archetypes.

21 A useful survey of pre-1980 scholarship on the literary forms in John, leading to a similar conclusion as Stibbe, is presented in Johannes Beutler, “Literarische Gattungen im Johannes-evangelium: Ein Forschungsbericht 1919–1980,” *ANRW* II 25.3:2506–68. See also the research historical part of Jörg Frey’s article in this book, where he touches upon Klaus Berger’s rhetorical *neue Formgeschichte* as a later German development (as presented in, for instance, Klaus Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* [Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1984], 9–24 and *Einführung in die Formgeschichte*, UTB 1444 [Tübingen: Francke, 1987], 13–18).

22 Dibelius was more explicit than Bultmann concerning their common tendency of contrasting

notion probably lies behind Bultmann's remarkable shift in method from his work on the Synoptic Gospels (form criticism, German: *Formgeschichte*) to his commentary on John (source criticism, German: *Literarkritik*).²³ Whereas form criticism suited the socio-literary study of collective traditions, source criticism (and history of religions) was considered a better method of capturing John's unique theological reception and transformation of existing sources. And since gospel literature as such was understood *sui generis*, it does not come as a surprise that Johannine scholars for decades regarded questions of form and genre as leading to a dead end as expressed in the following statement by Siegfried Schulz: "Aufs Ganze gesehen stellt die Formgeschichte im Joh-Ev einen toten Zweig dar."²⁴

Today the scholarly situation is obviously very different from that of the Bultmann paradigm. Historical exegesis has made the linguistic turn.²⁵ This certainly affects the way scholars think of genre. Attridge's abovementioned formulations concerning "genre bending" and "playing with generic conventions" disclose an implicit concept of genre that has changed radically since form criticism: from a romanticist or idealistic understanding of genre as restraints and shackles on authorial creativity to a poststructuralist concept of genre as the very laboratory of the literary and theological imagination. (The latter concept is characteristic of this book). Despite these differences in genre theory, however, there are also points of agreement across paradigms. Bultmann and Attridge (and exegetical scholarship in general) agree that John's Gospel represents a particularly creative take on tradition. In the context of scholarship after the linguistic turn, genre criticism has become an important exegetical tool to understand that Johannine take. Genre, in other words, is not only a means of comparing John with other contemporary texts in order to establish similarities, but it is first and foremost a window into the distinctiveness of John's Gospel in terms of theology, ideology, and literary artistry.

the collective, formal "Kleinliteratur" of the Synoptic Gospels to John's individual literary art; see Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 6th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971; [1st ed.: 1919]), 1–2. On the Synoptic Gospels as "Kleinliteratur," see *ibid.* and Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 7th ed., FRLANT 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967 [1st ed.: 1921]), 5.

23 *Idem*, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941). Bultmann's veneration for John as a theological thinker also becomes evident from the prominent place John held in comparison to the other evangelists in Bultmann's opus on New Testament theology (*idem*, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, *Neue Theologische Grundrisse* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1953]; see, for example, 360).

24 *Idem*, *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 76; cf. 75.

25 Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

2. A Mosaic of Tiles: Tiles in the Mosaic

The Gospel of John is a genre mosaic, and the present volume investigates the range of that metaphor. As a mosaic, the Gospel consists of tiles that are known, depending on the terminology we use, as primary/simple genres (Bakhtin), literary forms (*Gattungen*), micro-genres, or type-scenes (Alter). Several examples of such primary/simple genres have been given above, for instance, prologue (John 1:1–18), forensic oratory (John 5; 8), and prayer (John 17). These tiles can be observed closely in isolation, compared with other similar tiles in other works, and have their history reconstructed, but in the context of the composition the tiles are first and foremost contributors to the overall picture—an overall picture which is also on a larger scale related to genre, namely, secondary/complex genres (Bakhtin) or macro-genres such as, for example, *bios*, novel, and tragedy) A crucial exegetical question thus becomes how the tiles and the whole composition interrelate, a question that was made essential to genre theory by Mikhail M. Bakhtin in his discussion of the relation between primary/simple and secondary/complex speech genres.²⁶ How does the primary/simple genre contribute to and function in the text as a whole, and how does the whole color the primary/simple genre and its traditional ideologies and functions? Questions of this sort are addressed in different ways in this book as scholars discuss the relation between the parts and the whole of the Gospel. The purpose of the contributions is to illustrate how genre critical approaches contribute to an exegetical understanding of John's Gospel.

The generic approaches to Biblical texts in this book generally involve both a historical and a literary dimension as authors work with the Gospel as literature in a historical context. In terms of the literary dimension, however, generic approaches must be differentiated from the “autonomous” literary readings of texts in exegesis inspired by, for instance, New Criticism and structuralist narratology. According to genre critical approaches no text is an island. Texts make sense by relating to other texts in a process of imitation, mimicry, and transformation; and this interrelation over time establishes literary habits and conventions of genre—that are at the same time modified every time they are being used. When we study genre in texts, we are undertaking a comparative task by investigating how texts evoke general conventions of form, content, and function. Genre criticism is thus a “dialogic” (Bakhtin) and an “intertextual” (Kristeva) endeavor, yet not any kind of intertextual enterprise. Some precision may be gained from Gérard Genette's division of intertextuality or transtextuality (which

26 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 60–102 (62). See also Sheridan, “John's Gospel and Modern Genre Theory.”

is his rather idiosyncratic term to describe the phenomenon) into five different types of which only the fifth has to do with genre: (1) paratextuality, which appears when a given text is attended or surrounded by other texts (for example titles, footnotes, back cover texts); (2) intertextuality proper, which appears when a text contains other texts (for example citations and allusions); (3) meta-textuality, which is when a text is about another text (for example commentary and sermon); (4) hypertextuality, where a given text (the hypertext) is grafted upon another text (the hypotext) from which it derives (for example reproductions, fan fiction, rewritten Scripture, the synoptic tradition, and apocryphal gospels); and, finally, (5) architextuality, which relates to conventions of genre and mode established by already existing texts. According to Genette, architextuality (and thus genre) is the most implicit of the types since works (or parts thereof) do not always explicitly declare their generic quality. However, it is just as important as the other types since it to a considerable degree determines the expectations and thus the reception of the reader.²⁷

The contributors to the present volume have not been asked to declare allegiance to a particular or a shared genre theory, but there seems to be agreement that genre becomes exegetically stimulating when it is less about taxonomic classification and more about how texts communicate and establish room for interpretation. On this point, exegesis seems to be on par with the main genre theoretical contributions of the 1970s and 1980s.²⁸ Moreover, there is agreement that “genre bending”—and “genre blending” for that matter—is not only a phenomenon of modern literature but certainly, as is argued in Attridge’s contribution to the book, was intrinsic to the production of meaning in ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. John’s Gospel, in other words, presupposes a competent author (or authors) and readers socialized into contemporary habits of writing and reading—whether or not we are dealing with conscious use.

27 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Stages 8 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–10. The five types are not mutually exclusive, but are textual strategies that may appear together in a given text. The examples given in parenthesis are partly my own. Genette seems to be paraphrasing Todorov’s famous understanding of genre as “models of writing” for authors and “horizons of expectation” for readers (Tzvetan Todorov, “The Origin of Genres,” *New Literary History* 8 [1976]: 163).

28 Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 37 and Carol A. 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 et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 437–50.

3. The Present Volume: Presentation of Contributions²⁹

3.1 The Gospel of John and Genre Theory

The contributions to the book are arranged in three main parts. The first main part, “The Gospel of John and Genre Theory,” contains two articles discussing the Gospel in relation to both ancient and modern genre theory. Harold W. Attridge, professor at Yale University and Yale Divinity School, Connecticut (USA), opens the volume by asking how “genre matters” in the Gospel of John. Attridge advances his concept of “genre bending” from the 2002 article and argues, as already mentioned, that playful, artistic, and transformative genre practices are not only a modern phenomenon but were common in classical Antiquity as well as in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. John writes in continuance of the Synoptics; but unlike Luke, who created a historicizing gospel, John bends his narrative in the direction of drama (with prologue, irony, “delayed exit,” recognition scenes, and identification/catharsis). This generic transformation serves the same purpose as the riddling and symbolic dimensions of the Gospel, which Attridge describes as a narrational “arabesque”: to facilitate a transformative encounter between the reader and the risen Christ.

Sune Auken, scholar of literature from the University of Copenhagen (Denmark) and head of its research group in genre studies, introduces recent trends and tenets in genre studies with particular focus on North American rhetorical genre studies (RGS). Whereas *literary* genre studies had its heyday in the 1970s and 80s, genre studies has become a much broader field dealing with habitual and programmed action in everyday language and practice. Genres are “social action” (Carolyn Miller)—an idea that should not strike exegetes as totally alien, given the legacy of form criticism in biblical studies. Auken draws particular attention to concepts such as “genre chain” and “uptake” as potentially fruitful for literary and exegetical study. In the final part of his article, Auken presents a tentative reading of the arrest and the trial before Pilate (John 18–19) in light of these analytical concepts.

3.2 The Mosaic as a Whole

The second main part of the book deals with “The Mosaic as a Whole.” As the title indicates, the articles in this part relate genre questions to the *entire* Gospel, discussing questions concerning secondary/complex genre. The approaches

²⁹ In the whole book, Bible quotations in English are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) where nothing else is stated.

range, as far as the editor is concerned, from articles with emic foci on historical genres (Conway, Persenios, and Brant) to those with etic emphases on theoretical genres (Petersen and Davidsen). In the first contribution, Colleen M. Conway, professor of religious studies at Seton Hall University, New Jersey (USA), discusses how Johannine gender ideology relates to the question of the Gospel's genre. Conway approaches the Gospel from various generic perspectives (*bios*, romance, and drama), claiming that the text does not "belong" to a specific genre but simultaneously "participates in" (Derrida) and evokes different contemporary genres. As regards the role of female characters in the Gospel, they are (as in the *bioi*) the narrator's instrument for staging the masculine self-mastery of Jesus. This is a matter of fact even when he appears in the presence of women who speak or act in erotic ways (as in the romances). Female characters confirm the narrative's patriarchal world-view, but nevertheless, in some instances, they represent a socio-cultural "otherness" (as in the dramas), out of which they lend voice to the evangelist's controversial theological ideas.

George L. Parsenios, associate professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey (USA), examines the relationship between *diēgēsis* ("narration") and *mimēsis* ("imitation") in the Gospel, i. e., the two modes of discourse famously discussed by Plato in the *Republic*. Parsenios draws attention to examples in ancient narrative (for example, in Thucydides) where the narrator in the course of diegetic narrative becomes unexpectedly absent or silent. When the narrator withdraws, the characters in the story-world are left to interact without the narrator's guiding comments. This creates a mimetic or dramatic effect. In John, such features are particularly present in ch. 1, where Parsenios finds a parallel to the *stichomythia* of ancient tragedy (alternating lines spoken by alternating characters), and in chs. 3 and 14. John's Gospel is thus a narrative that, time and again, lapses into drama.

Anders Klostergaard Petersen, professor of the study of religion at Aarhus University (Denmark), seeks to determine the distinct character of the Fourth Gospel vis-à-vis the Synoptic Gospels in terms of genre and mode. In discussion with previous attempts like Ernst Käsemann's "naïve docetism" and Kasper Bro Larsen's "narrative docetism," Petersen advocates for "generic docetism" as a proper description of the Johannine gospel. In John, narrative development is reduced to a minimum, and the voice of Jesus in the story-world and of the implied author on the discourse level, respectively, have become so unison that the Gospel virtually ceases to be a narrative (in the narratological sense, with reference to Genette and Greimas). By means of the Johannine miracle stories as primary examples, Petersen argues that in John's Gospel the discourse (enunciation) has in fact appropriated the story-world (enunciate). John thus undermines the "narrative Christology" of the Synoptic Gospels in order to present a "discursive Christology."

Ole Davidsen, associate professor at Aarhus University (Denmark), discusses the Gospel of John in light of universal and cross-cultural genres of narrative. Taking Aristotle to be an “early narratologist” (in the *Poetics*), Davidsen understands the Gospel as *mythos* and further specifies: It is a religious narrative (“fiction”) with a propositional truth-claim (“history”). Davidsen then applies Patrick Colm Hogan’s cognitive anthropological theory of the existence of three cross-culturally dominant and prototypical narrative genres in human culture: the heroic tragicomedy, the sacrificial tragicomedy, and the romantic tragicomedy. In Davidsen’s reading, John’s plot is a blend of all three genres since Jesus acts as heroic protagonist competing for power (“the Lord”), as sacrificial scapegoat (“the Lamb”), and as philial or romantic companion (“the Lover”). According to Davidsen, the Gospel’s participation in these universal genres may even help to explain the Gospel’s cross-cultural and cross-historical success.

In the final contribution to the first main part of the book, Jo-Ann A. Brant, professor of Bible, religion, and philosophy at Goshen College, Indiana (USA), brings John’s Gospel into conversation with the ancient novels. Brant neither claims that the Gospel *is* a novel nor that it is directly dependent on them—most novels are later than the Gospel—but they share propensities that throw light on John’s particular way of narrating the gospel. Brant focuses on two points: The novels have, in contrast to epic, a “Menippean” tendency toward satire or parody, a tendency which is also present in the Johannine bending of generic conventions and synoptic traditions. The second point relates to novelized time, where Brant observes that the novels and John’s Gospel share a more complex use of time (subjectivity, layers of time) than is generally custom in the biographies. According to Brant, it is thus reasonable to talk of elements of “novelization” (Bakhtin) in the Fourth Gospel.

3.3 Tiles in the Mosaic

The third and final main part of the book is also the largest. It contains a number of case studies of “Tiles in the Mosaic,” i. e., various primary/simple genres or literary forms (“Gattungen”) that contribute to the larger Gospel text. Contributions focus on specific genres and pericopes—from “exegetical narrative” and *peristaseis* in the prologue to the final recognition type-scenes in chs. 20–21—but they also discuss how these individual parts relate and contribute to the Gospel as a whole.

In the first case study, Ruth Sheridan, research fellow at Charles Sturt University, New South Wales (Australia), presents a reading of the Johannine prologue, not as a didactic hymn, but in continuation of and critical evaluation of Peter Borgen’s and Daniel Boyarin’s interpretation of the prologue as homiletic

midrash. Sheridan understands the prologue as an “exegetical narrative” (Joshua Levinson) of Genesis and Exodus. The prologue retells the biblical story and encourages the reader to hold together in dialogue the interpreted Biblical narrative (the Genesis and Exodus narratives) and the interpreting Christological narrative (the Johannine Jesus narrative). According to Sheridan, however, the dialogue between the narratives ultimately serves a monologic rhetorical purpose in John’s textual community vis-à-vis its opponents.

The second case study is also on the prologue. Douglas Estes, assistant professor at South University, South Carolina (USA), discusses the prologue in light of conventions of beginning in ancient narrative. According to Estes, the prologue is carefully crafted in accordance with the so-called *peristaseis* (*circumstantiae*) discussed in ancient rhetoric since Hermagoras of Temnos in the mid-2nd century BCE: *who, what, when, where, why, in what way, and by what means* (*quis, quid, quando, ubi, cur, quem ad modum, and quibus adminiculis*). According to Estes, John approaches and guides the implied reader from the very outset of his Gospel by answering these basic questions—in order to elaborate on them in the course of the subsequent narrative.

In his article, Jörg Frey, professor at University of Zurich (Switzerland), turns toward miracle stories. He argues that John has transformed miracle stories into *sēmeia* narratives in light of the Gospel’s overall purpose of communicating, from a post-Easter perspective, a “significant” deep-level narrative about Jesus and his salvific works. In the course of his argument, Frey offers a research-historical survey of the “miracle narratives” genre in Johannine scholarship, and presents a reading of the first prototypical sign (the wedding at Cana, 2:1–11), the paradigmatic healing of the man born blind (9:1–41), the signs of John 20, as well as a discussion of how the cross (i. e., the death and resurrection of Jesus) plays the role of ultimate sign or the designatum of all other signs. The *sēmeia* narratives are, according to Frey, exemplary narratives of the Johannine gospel narrative in its totality.

Tyler Smith, doctoral candidate at Yale University, presents a theoretical discussion of the concept of type-scene, which was introduced to Biblical studies by Robert Alter in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981). Smith discusses the concept in relation to John 4 (“betrothal type-scene”) and develops a critique of the “list-of-features” and “family-resemblance” approaches to type-scenes found in Alter and subsequent Johannine scholarship. Looking to research in the cognitive sciences on the construction of categories in general, Smith suggests prototype theory as more helpful and precise way of talking about the type-scene in John 4. According to Smith, prototype theory better captures the way type-scenes function for primary audiences and allows for degrees of participation in a given type-scene (more or less resemblance with the prototype), avoiding the binary logic of earlier standard approaches (either participation or not). Smith

argues that Genesis 29 (Jacob and Rachel) is the best prototype for a primary readership in a genre-oriented reading of John 4.

In his article, David Svärd, doctoral candidate at Lund University (Sweden), offers a reading of the anointing of Jesus (John 12:1–8) in light of royal anointing scenes in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. Svärd reconstructs the pattern of the type-scene with its ten recurrent generic elements—this would probably qualify as a list-of-features approach in the terminology of the previous author—and contends that the fourth evangelist employed and twisted this pattern in order to substantiate his presentation of Jesus as the royal Messiah. John bends the genre and thus indicates how Jesus' kingship differs from that of predecessors such as Saul, David, and Jehu. Mary of Bethany's anointing of Jesus depicts him as a spiritual temple and as the bridegroom Messiah who is about to display a new kind of authority in his death and resurrection.

Eve-Marie Becker, professor at Aarhus University (Denmark), asks how the Fourth Gospel revises early Christian historiography. Her answer to the question takes the form of a reading of the footwashing scene in John 13:1–20. Becker understands the scene as a Johannine attempt at establishing a so-called “counter memory” (Foucault) that not only omits, but also suppresses and substitutes previous memories, in this case particularly the Lukan memory of the Last Supper. Whereas Luke represents an institutional approach to history-writing, John writes exemplary history (*hypodeigma*). John's Gospel thus embodies a certain kind of historiography that attacks and subverts existing memories in the mnemonic culture of early Christianity.

In his contribution, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, professor at the University of Copenhagen, argues that the unity, structure, and coherence of the farewell discourse in John 13:31–17:26 becomes clear when seen through a particular generic lens: *paraklēsis*. Engberg-Pedersen describes the text as a farewell discourse that engages in *paraklēsis* taken in the double sense also known from Paul: (1) “comfort encouragement” concerning the disciples' understanding in the presence and (2) “exhortation encouragement” concerning the disciples' behavior in the future. In the rhetorical *propositio* of the speech (13:31–35), both aspects are introduced and the speech subsequently alternates between the two: 13:36–14:31 (comfort encouragement), 15:1–16:15 (exhortation encouragement), 16:16–33 (comfort encouragement), and finally 17:1–26 (exhortation encouragement). It is the Spirit-Paraclete that holds the different aspects and time horizons of Johannine *paraklēsis* together.

Ruben Zimmermann, professor at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz (Germany) and research associate at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein (South Africa), investigates one of the Gospel's most overlooked parables, the parable of the woman in labor in John 16:21. In the course of the article, Zimmermann expresses criticism of the general neglect of parables in Johannine

scholarship since Jülicher, presents a definition of the parable as a generic family of necessary and optional elements, argues that John 16:21 complies with the definition, situates the parable's metaphorical language in the textual and cultural context, and finally offers a catalogue of open interpretations of the parable (for instance, christological, feminist, and anthropological interpretations)—in compliance with the nature of the parable genre.

The volume's final paper, by Kasper Bro Larsen, associate professor at Aarhus University (Denmark), seeks to demonstrate how the recognition type-scenes (*anagnōriseis*) of the Gospel tend to have a reciprocal structure comparable to so-called "double recognition" in Aristotle and ancient narrative and drama. When Jesus identifies human characters (for example, Nathanael, the Samaritan woman, and Mary Magdalene), they recognize him. The pervasive Johannine language of reciprocity and mutuality, in other words, not only contains *ontological* and *ethical* dimensions, but also a *cognitive* dimension: "I know my own, so my own know me" (10:14, Larsen's translation). This "covenantal epistemology" of divine action and human *reaction*, well-known from biblical tradition and central to the Gospel's understanding of God and human beings, is played out and dramatized in the Johannine recognition scenes.

This introductory chapter has presented the general research questions and the content of the present book. As mentioned, it is the purpose of the book to show how genre critical approaches, in all their variety, contribute to Johannine studies. Genre critical approaches provide a map of literary, ideological, and theological possibilities that were available to John—and identify the particular paths he chose to follow. However, this book does not close the longstanding "gap" of form and genre criticism in Johannine scholarship; on the contrary, it serves as an invitation to further research and conversation on John and genre. The epilogue statement in John 21:25 is not very optimistic on behalf of the world's ability to contain all the books that could be written on the Johannine Jesus. But hopefully the world is able to contain the present book—and other books that may appear—on the ever-fascinating Johannine genre mosaic.

Part I: The Gospel of John and Genre Theory