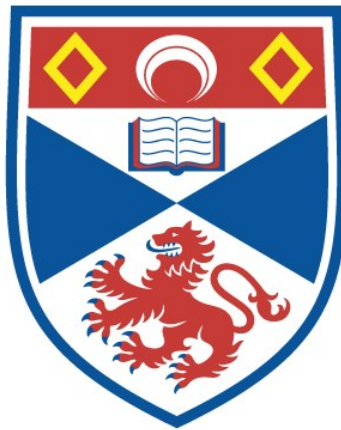


THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN THE CONTEXT OF ANCIENT BIOGRAPHY

Francis Aldo Rouvinez

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



2019

Full metadata for this thesis is available in
St Andrews Research Repository
at:

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this thesis:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/17453>

This item is protected by original copyright

This item is licensed under a
Creative Commons Licence

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

The Gospel of Mark in the Context of Ancient Biography

Francis Aldo Rouvinez



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
at the University of St Andrews

December 2018

Candidate's declaration

I, Francis Aldo Rouvinez, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

I was admitted as a research student at the University of St Andrews in September 2014.

I confirm that no funding was received for this work.

Date

Signature of candidate

Supervisor's declaration

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date

Signature of supervisor

Permission for publication

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews we understand that we are giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. We also understand, unless exempt by an award of an embargo as requested below, that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that this thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use and that the library has the right to migrate this thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis.

I, Francis Aldo Rouvinez, confirm that my thesis does not contain any third-party material that requires copyright clearance.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the publication of this thesis:

Printed copy

No embargo on print copy.

Electronic copy

No embargo on electronic copy.

Date

Signature of candidate

Date

Signature of supervisor

Underpinning Research Data or Digital Outputs

Candidate's declaration

I, Francis Aldo Rouvinez, hereby certify that no requirements to deposit original research data or digital outputs apply to this thesis and that, where appropriate, secondary data used have been referenced in the full text of my thesis.

Date

Signature of candidate

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the Gospel of Mark reflects the assumptions, purposes, and conventions of ancient Jewish biographical writing rather than those of Greco-Roman biography. It offers a sustained critique of the view that the gospels are Greco-Roman biographies and argues that it is based on an exaggeration of the flexibility of the genre, insufficient attention to its most fundamental and distinctive characteristics, and an inadequate evaluation of the significance of resemblances and differences. It also seeks to remedy the hereto lack of adequate assessment of and comparison to the manner in which life and career stories are told in ancient Jewish literary traditions.

Chapter 1 offers a review of the conditions that have proved favourable to the emergence and endurance of the current consensus. Chapter 2 proposes a fresh analysis of Greco-Roman biography between 200 BCE and 100 CE. It gives close attention to the modes of representation of the genre, as well as its philosophical and cultural underpinnings, with relevant substantiation from the works of the main authors of the period. Chapters 3 and 4 bring to light the strong Jewish biographical tradition that exists both in the Jewish Scriptures and Second Temple literature. A typology of these biographies is proposed which delineates their conventions, *topoi*, and lines of development. An analysis of later Jewish adaptations to the cultural expectations of Greco-Roman audiences and the conventions of Greco-Roman biography is also included. Chapter 5 demonstrates that the ethos, narration, and style of Mark conform to those of Jewish biography. Finally, chapters 6, 7, and 8 evaluate leading interpretations of Mark's introduction, main narrative, and Passion Narrative through the lens of Greco-Roman biography. Each of these chapters then demonstrates Mark's use of modes of representation and categories of content typical of Jewish biography to present Jesus as the fusion of biblical prototypical figures and the embodiment of messianically-interpreted texts from the Jewish Scriptures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for all the guidance and support I have received for the writing of this thesis.

I would like to thank the University of St Andrews, and its Divinity Department and Student Services, all of which have provided substantial assistance.

I would like also to express a deep debt of gratitude toward Victor and Rosemary Walker, who have accompanied and helped our family most generously. This would not have been possible without them.

I would like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Shively for her role in bringing me to the University of St Andrews, for her early supervisory counsel, feedback, and availability as resident Markan scholar. She was instrumental in leading me to consider developments in genre theory that eventually deeply stimulated and shaped my own research questions.

I am very grateful to Professor Jason König from the St Andrews University School of Classics, who took interest in my project and provided invaluable feedback as I researched Greco-Roman biography. His readiness to read through a number of chapter drafts, meet, and offer feedback although I was not his student has been remarkable.

The journey of my doctoral studies started with Professor NT Wright, who would subsequently become my supervisor. Reading *Jesus and the Victory of God* was instrumental in helping me formulate my thinking on the far-reaching importance of the Jewish background of early Christianity. Professor Wright's supervision was a treasure trove of experience and deep knowledge of the Scriptures, ancient primary sources, and scholarship old and new. He was ever patient, supportive, and encouraged me even as I had to face difficult circumstances. I am also very grateful to him for allowing me to explore and express the originality of my thinking and approach to issues. This work could not have been produced otherwise.

Finally, I am most thankful to my wife Alix, who has been a constant support throughout this project. Her insightful scholarship and feedback, practical help, and devotion to myself and our children have been more vital than words can tell.

As I worked through this project, many prayers were offered and answered. I am very grateful for this and hope that my work will help others better appreciate the Gospel of Mark's presentation of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL OF MARK AS BIOGRAPHY	1
1. Previous Paradigm: The Gospels as <i>Sui Generis</i>	1
2. Winds of Change: The Gospels as <i>Bioi</i>	1
3. Critiques of the Consensus View	6
4. Family Resemblance Limitations	10
5. Alternatives to Family Resemblance	11
6. Reasons for the Stalemate	12
7. The Way Forward	17
CHAPTER 2: GRECO-ROMAN BIOGRAPHY (200 BCE – 150 CE).....	19
1. Representative Texts: Rationale and Selection Criteria.....	19
1.1 Background and Rationale	19
1.2 Exclusions	23
1.2.1 Antecedents to Biography	23
1.2.2 The Hellenistic Period: Fragments and Testimonia.....	25
1.2.3 Late Biographies	28
1.2.4 Josephus, Philo, and Autobiographies	29
1.3 Inclusions	30
2. The Ethos of Graeco-Roman Biography.....	31
2.1 Cornelius Nepos' <i>Excellentium Imperatorum Vitae</i>	32
2.1.1 General Characteristics	32
2.1.2 Size.....	35
2.1.3 Structure and Content	35
2.1.4 Emphases and Purposes	36
2.1.5 The Role of Philosophy	37
2.1.6 Conclusion	37
2.2 Nicolaus of Damascus' <i>Vita Caesaris</i>	38
2.3 Plutarch's Parallel Lives.....	41
2.3.1 General Characteristics	41
2.3.2 Programmatic Statements	41

2.3.3	Philosophical Framework	46
2.3.4	Moralism	47
2.3.5	Conclusion	49
2.4	Tacitus' <i>Agricola</i>	49
2.5	Suetonian Biography	52
2.5.1	Introduction	52
2.5.2	De Viris Illustribus	52
2.5.3	De Vita Caesarum	54
2.6	Diogenes Laertius' Biographies	57
2.6.1	Introduction	57
2.6.2	The Lives of Philosophers as Professional Biography	58
2.6.3	Structure and Content	59
2.6.4	Biography, Successions, and Doxography	60
2.6.5	The Lives' "Bios" Sections	64
2.7	Conclusions	65
3.	The Topoi of Graeco-Roman Biography	66
3.1	Preliminary Remarks	66
3.2	Introductory Topoi	68
3.3	Concluding Topoi	72
3.4	Topoi of the Main Section	76
3.4.1	Suetonius	77
3.4.2	Nepos	78
3.4.3	Plutarch	79
3.4.4	Diogenes Laertius	80
4.	Conclusion	82
CHAPTER 3: BIOGRAPHY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT		84
1.	The Case for OT Biography	84
2.	Inclusions and Exclusions	87
3.	The Ethos of OT Biography	88
4.	The Characteristics of OT Biography	88
4.1	Subject Types	89
4.1.1	Patriarchs	89
4.1.2	Founding National Leaders	91
4.1.3	Judges	93
4.1.4	Kings	95

4.1.5	National Prophets.....	97
4.2	Structures and Topoi	98
4.2.1	Prologues.....	99
4.2.2	Ancestry	99
4.2.3	Birth Narratives.....	100
4.2.4	Childhood and Youth.....	100
4.2.5	Divine Calling.....	101
4.2.6	Prophecies	101
4.2.7	Prayers and Hymns	102
4.2.8	Farewell Speeches.....	103
4.2.9	Death and Burial	103
4.2.10	Epilogues.....	104
4.3	Style.....	104
4.3.1	General Characteristics	104
4.3.2	Narration	106
4.3.3	Characterisation	107
4.4	Conclusion.....	109
CHAPTER 4: SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH BIOGRAPHY		110
1.	Intra-Jewish Biographies	110
1.1	Introducing the Biographies	110
1.1.1	First Maccabees	110
1.1.2	The Genesis Apocryphon.....	111
1.1.3	Jubilees.....	111
1.1.4	Pseudo-Philo's Moses.....	112
1.1.5	Lives of the Prophets	112
1.2	The Paradigmatic Influence of OTB	112
1.3	New Perspectives and Developments	113
1.4	Conclusions	115
2.	Proselytising Biographies	115
2.1	Artapanus, Eupolemus, and Pseudo-Eupolemus.....	115
2.2	Philo of Alexandria (1 st c. CE).....	117
2.3	Flavius Josephus (c. 37 - 100 CE).....	121
3.	Conclusions.....	125
CHAPTER 5: THE BIOGRAPHICAL CONTOURS OF MARK		126
1.	Biographical Ethos.....	126

2. Structure.....	128
3. The Role of the Narrator	129
4. Narration Style	130
5. Literary Sources	135
6. Conclusion	135
CHAPTER 6: THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SON OF GOD.....	136
1. Introduction.....	136
2. Mark 1:1-13 and Greco-Roman Biography	137
2.1 Titular Sentence.....	137
2.2 The Baptiser	137
2.3 Baptism and Temptation	137
2.4 Evaluation.....	138
3. Mark 1:1-13 and Jewish Biography	141
3.1 Titular Sentence.....	141
3.2 Induction Narrative	142
4. Conclusion	144
CHAPTER 7: THE CAREER OF THE SON OF GOD	145
1. Story Context	145
2. Subject Type	147
2.1 Unprecedented Fusion of Subject Types.....	148
2.2 Fusion of Roles in the Second Temple Period	149
2.3 OT Prototypes and Messianic Expectations.....	150
2.4 Greco-Roman Parallels	150
3. Jesus' Claims to Fame	151
3.1 Parables	151
3.2 Logia.....	154
3.3 Miracles.....	160
3.3.1 Greco-Roman Parallels	160
3.3.2 Second Temple Parallels.....	164
3.3.3 Old Testament Sources	167
3.4 Disciple-Making.....	176
4. Conclusion	179
CHAPTER 8: THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD	180
1. The Passion Narrative and Greco-Roman Biography.....	180
2. The Passion Narrative as Jewish Biography	184

2.1	Introduction	184
2.2	The Passion as Biographical Climax.....	185
2.3	The Passion as Divine Plan	187
2.4	The Passion as Messianic Vocation	189
2.4.1	The Prophet like Moses	189
2.4.2	The Son of David	191
2.4.3	The Suffering Servant	193
3.	Conclusion	197
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS		199
BIBLIOGRAPHY		204

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL OF MARK AS BIOGRAPHY

The question of the genre of the gospel of Mark appears to have settled in the last quarter century: the majority of scholars now hold that the gospels are written according to the conventions of Greco-Roman biographies (GRBs).

1. Previous Paradigm: The Gospels as *Sui Generis*

The current consensus came about as an overthrow of Bultmann's lasting and influential view that the gospels are *sui generis*, an unprecedented literary genre. According to Bultmann, the gospels are not much more than assemblages of oral traditions. Although he believed that their constitutive stories were based on Hellenistic and rabbinical forms, he saw the gospels as a collection of loosely connected stories designed to serve the kerygmatic needs of the Church. The genesis of the gospels was therefore not the fruit of deliberate literary composition based on a previously existing genre. Pointing out that the gospels lacked focus on Jesus' personality, and descriptions of his appearance, character, origin, education, and development, had no literary sophistication, and served cultic purposes, he particularly insisted that they were not biographies.¹

2. Winds of Change: The Gospels as *Bioi*

Bultmann's view came under increasing attack in the mid-1970s. In 1974, Stanton argued that while the gospels were not GRBs, they were to be read "against the background of biographical writing in the ancient world."² He regarded this as likely, since the gospels had been written in a Hellenistic environment whose influence was felt even in Palestine.³ He pointed out that there were analogues to the gospels' thematic arrangements in GRB.⁴ More

¹ Bultmann 1963, 372.

² Stanton 1974, 117-118.

³ Ibid., 119.

⁴ Ibid., 121.

significantly, he set out to show that what Bultmann argued the gospels lacked to qualify as biographies was not as problematic as he claimed.

For instance, Stanton pointed out that character development is not always explicit and subjects are not always physically described in GRBs.⁵ Although he still considered that there was “a wide gulf between the gospels and ancient biographical writings”⁶ — especially the lack of personal anecdotes, widely-used stock situations, or traveller tales — his work was portent of things to come: more challenges to Bultmann’s view, an increasing interest in the potential generic relationship between the gospels and GRB, and arguments purporting to show that characteristics of the gospels previously perceived as objections to this generic classification could be overruled.

Shuler went a step further in his doctoral thesis, arguing that the gospel of Matthew was in fact a *bios*.⁷ Shuler emphasised what he called the “*bios* factor,” which he described as the undeniable fact that the gospels were written not merely to emphasise traditions, but even more so, to focus on “the person around whom they were formulated.”⁸ This, he argued, warranted paying close attention to biographical writing contemporaneous with the gospels. Recognising encomiastic tendencies in GRBs and their generic distinctiveness from historiographies, he argued that the gospels belonged with the subtype of “laudatory biography.”⁹ To support his claim, Shuler documented Quintilian’s and Hermogenes’ lists of topics for encomium, many of which are also found in the gospels.¹⁰ While Shuler’s typology of “laudatory biographies” failed to convince the majority, he made a lasting contribution in his emphasis on the need to reckon with the biographical shape of the gospels.

At nearly the same time, Talbert undertook to dislodge Bultmann’s leading objections against identification of the gospels as GRBs.¹¹ Talbert objected that Bultmann had confused characteristics of modern and ancient biography. In his view, the fact that the character of Jesus is not developed in the gospels was congruent with the assumption in *bioi* that character is static.¹² Since Bultmann observed that the gospel writers did not have the sort of authorial

⁵ Ibid., 121-4.

⁶ Ibid., 124.

⁷ Shuler 1982.

⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰ Ibid., 53-4.

¹¹ Talbert 1977.

¹² Ibid., 3.

presence one finds in biographies, Talbert objected that the evangelists' personalities could be detected in their artistry and theological purpose, and that there was comparable lack of literary sophistication in the anonymous biographies of Aesop and Secundus.¹³ Additionally, he argued that Jesus was presented as a GR *theios aner* and pointed out that some biographies of rulers and philosophers had "cultic connections."¹⁴ In his view, the gospels were functionally similar to biographies with apologetic or propagandist purposes, especially those of philosophers.¹⁵ Although the concept of *theios aner* and Talbert's analyses of GRB would both come under criticism, the suggestion that the gospels were to be compared to the biographies of philosophers has remained influential to this day.

A decade later, Aune gave new impetus to the discussion of the relationship of the gospels to GRB. He argued that the gospels "constitute a subtype of Greco-Roman biography primarily determined by content, reflecting Judeo-Christian assumptions."¹⁶ In his estimation, their structure was "indistinguishable from Greco-Roman biographies."¹⁷ Of particular interest to the present study, he offered analysis and comparison of aspects of Mark (singled out as the first gospel) with GRB, maintaining that the account of John the Baptist was "functionally equivalent to the role of ancestry, birth, and education in Greco-Roman biography," yet appropriate to "a Jewish ambience."¹⁸ The term "beginning" in the titular sentence was described as a virtual *terminus technicus* in GR historiography and biography.¹⁹

Moreover, he considered that the whole of Mark "was cast in the dramatic literary *topos* of the persecution and vindication of an innocent person" as evidenced by the broad outline of exposition (Mk 1:1-13), rising action or complication (Mk 1:14-8:21), climax or crisis (Mk 8:22-10:52), falling action (11:1-13:37), catastrophe (14:1-15:39) and denouement (15:40-16:8).²⁰ He found the sustained plot of the Passion Narrative comparable to those of Greek romances, Mark's summary reports to those in Philostratus' *Apollonius*, and saw analogies to the gospels' temple dialogues, miracle stories, sayings, anecdotes and the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 108.

¹⁵ Ibid., 126-7.

¹⁶ Aune 1987.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 48-9.

disciples' misunderstandings of divine revelation in GR biographies and other GR literature.²¹

Aune's contribution was eloquently presented and he popularised a type of argument that would be frequently used thereafter: appeals to variegated kinds of shared themes and motifs from GR literature, in and out of biography, which seem to suggest that the gospels are imbibed with GR literary and cultural elements, and thus all the more likely to have used a GR genre, namely, *bios*. In this sense, and although he did not justify this approach with a specific genre-critical theoretical model, Aune anticipated the subsequent use of Family Resemblance in the debate. The tide had not yet turned, but the idea that the gospels were *bioi* was gaining in momentum and credibility.

It was the work of Burrige that finally succeeded in convincing the majority of NT scholars that the gospels were GRBs.²² Burrige was the first to anchor the discussion to a specific theory of genre criticism. He argued that the element his predecessors had been missing to make a better case for the classification of the gospels as *bioi* was Wittgenstein's concept of "Family Resemblance," subsequently applied to generic studies by Fowler.²³ By contrast to an Aristotelian rule-based method of generic classification, this approach focuses on the networks of often overlapping relationships that connect members of a same "family," even if there is not even one trait common to them all. Burrige had found support on which to rest his subsequent depiction of GRB as a fluid and highly flexible genre.²⁴

Additionally, Burrige significantly enlarged on his predecessors' work by providing a detailed analysis of generic features of GRB: the central importance of the subject, its opening features (title, opening words, prologue, or preface), and features both external (mode of representation, meter, size or length, structure or sequence, scale, sources, methods of characterization) and internal (setting, topics, style, tone, mood, attitude, values, quality of characterization, social setting, occasion of writing, author's intention or purpose).²⁵ After analysing these characteristics in an eclectic pool of ten early and later GRBs and comparing his results with the gospels, he concluded that there was "a sufficient number of shared

²¹ Ibid., 53-57.

²² Burrige 2004 (the first edition was published in 1992).

²³ Wittgenstein 2009; Fowler 2002.

²⁴ Ibid., 37-77.

²⁵ Ibid., 105-123.

features” to establish that the latter are *bioi*.²⁶ The impact of Burridge’s work has been momentous. Many scholars embraced both the concept of Family Resemblance as a useful approach to generic studies and his conclusion that the gospels were GRBs.

Frickenschmidt’s contribution five years later, less known, is nonetheless significant.²⁷ His voluminous monograph adopted Family Resemblance as well and largely agreed with Burridge’s conclusions. However, unlike Burridge, Frickenschmidt’s pool of texts was nearly exhaustive, referring to 142 GRBs. Arguing that biographies are built on a conventional tripartite scheme (ἀρχή, αἰχμή, and τέλος), he catalogued and described an impressive number of recurrent motifs in each of these sections. He then gave a separate analysis of each gospel in light of these *topoi*, considerably more detailed and precise than Burridge’s. To date, Frickenschmidt’s work remains the most substantial catalogue of analogies and resemblances between the gospels and GRB and GR literature generally. It is also the most sustained attempt to provide a reading of each gospel in light of these parallels.

A quarter century after the publication of Burridge’s monograph, the view that the gospels are *bioi* is regarded as the consensus with relatively few detractors. McKnight recently described it as “now established conclusions” and Keener as the view of “the majority of scholars today.”²⁸ It is widely referenced in Bible dictionaries, introductions, and commentaries on the gospels.²⁹ This wide acceptance is probably the reason little has subsequently been published to expand on the foundational work of Burridge, Frickenschmidt, and their predecessors.

A rare exception, *The Limits of Ancient Biography* explores aspects of GR and Jewish works that can be considered biographical yet tend toward other genres. In addition to GR literature, the work includes chapters on the OT story of David, the gospels, and Acts.³⁰ It largely rests on Burridge’s view of the genre of the gospels and acceptance of Family Resemblance, featuring a chapter in which Burridge himself recapitulates his view.³¹

²⁶ Ibid., 212.

²⁷ Frickenschmidt 1997.

²⁸ McKnight 2011, 61; Keener 2016, 3.

²⁹ See Walton 2015, 81–93.

³⁰ McGing and Mossman (eds), 2006.

³¹ Ibid., 31–50.

However, very little has been published that draws out the significance of classifying the gospels as GRB.³² This probably reflects the fact that this generic classification has yet to be shown to shed considerable light on their interpretation.

3. Critiques of the Consensus View

Despite wide endorsement, the case for classifying the gospels generically as *bioi* is far from being tight. Adela Collins has been an influential voice of dissent with notable contributions to the debate before and after the publication of Burridge's monograph. In a subsequently published lecture, Collins faulted Aune's claim that John the Baptist's activity at the beginning of Mark was functionally equivalent to the role of ancestry, birth, and education in GRBs. She pointed out that what follows Mark's opening sentence is a mixed scriptural quotation which places accent not on ancestry, but on the fulfilment of Scripture, certainly a foreign emphasis to GRB openings.³³ Moreover, she observed that while the word ἀρχή is found at the beginning of sections in histories, this is not the case in GRBs,³⁴ and reiterated a point acknowledged by Aune which remains a valid objection to his thesis: unlike GRBs, Mark does not focus on Jesus' character.³⁵

Beyond these specific points of argumentation, her most incisive critique was that Aune was only able to establish common ground between Mark and GRB by defining their respective functions at a higher level of abstraction and generalisation.³⁶ In her view, Mark is not a biography, but a GR historical monograph with a significant Jewish eschatological mode. However, the arguments she offered in support of her own proposal were too thin to be convincing and failed to dislodge the consensus view.

In the introduction to her commentary on Mark, published over a decade after Burridge's monograph, Collins remained unconvinced that a satisfactory explanation had been given for the absence in this gospel of any account of Jesus' birth, ancestry, education,

³² See for instance, Aletti 2017. This includes proposed biographical readings for two pericopes in Mark. Bauckham and his students argued that as GRBs, the gospels must have not been written for isolated communities (Bauckham 1997; Klink III 2010; Smith 2015). Keener et al. have focused on implications that bear on historicity in (Keener and Wright 2016).

³³ A. Collins 1990, 28.

³⁴ Ibid., 28-9.

³⁵ Ibid., 32.

³⁶ Ibid., 34.

and childhood.³⁷ She also pointed back to Talbert who had so broadly formulated his definition of “didactic” function that “a hortatory or propagandist purpose may be attributed to almost any life.”³⁸ In her view, BurrIDGE’s attempts to find analogies in the gospels to the focus of GRB on character in terms of vices and virtues could not dismiss the fact that Jesus’ portrayal “belongs to a different cultural context and has a purpose beyond the exemplary.”³⁹

Of particular interest for the present study, she faulted BurrIDGE for failing to give better consideration to the role of OT biographical material in shaping Mark and observed that “BurrIDGE’s case for defining the Gospels as βίοι (“lives”) appears strong in large part because he did not seriously consider any alternative.”⁴⁰ Aligning herself with the prevailing view in OT studies that there is no biography in the OT, she preferred to classify stories such as those of Moses and Elijah as historiography. Since Jewish intertestamental historiography adopted Hellenistic conventions (e.g., Maccabees, Josephus), she considered that Mark also adapted OT background material to such conventions. Pointing out that some GRBs had “the same aims as historiography,”⁴¹ she concluded that one could classify Mark as either historical biography or monograph, depending on where one perceives the greatest emphasis to be: on Jesus himself or the significant event in which he was the central figure.⁴² This was an attempt, despite her rejection of BurrIDGE’s view, to offer a more conciliatory version of her earlier proposal.

Edwards’ chapter in *The Limits of Ancient Biography* also offered a noteworthy critique, pointing to significant fallacies in the type of arguments on which the case for the gospels as *bioi* rests.⁴³ First, he objected to claims that the presence of a feature or motif in both Mark and *bioi* is evidence of a generic relationship when this feature is not distinctively unique to GRB. For instance, introductory titular sentences like Mark 1:1 with titles and some form of ancestry, positioned at the beginning of the narrative, and the celebration of the deeds of the central protagonist are also found in Icelandic sagas.⁴⁴

³⁷ A. Collins 2007, 25.

³⁸ Ibid., 27.

³⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁴¹ Ibid., 32.

⁴² Ibid., 29-33.

⁴³ Edwards 2006: 50-62.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 57-8.

Second, he denounced claims that the absence of an *important* feature of GRB from Mark can be ignored if another or a few other GRBs can be shown to lack it as well. Thus, the fact that the *Life of Secundus* does not have any information on his education is not a sufficient basis to conclude that it is irrelevant as potential evidence that Mark might not be a *bios*.⁴⁵ What is more, in counter-balancing the volume's (and Burridge's) focus on the boundaries of the genre, Edwards reminded us that classification must first proceed on the basis of "the most ubiquitous and transmissible properties of a species" and not excessively depend on appeals to exceptional cases. As he memorably put it, one could otherwise mistakenly conclude that "birds are mammals because the Platypus lays eggs."⁴⁶

Third, he protested against over-emphasising similarity by ignoring or minimising significant differences. While it is true, for instance, that *bioi* end with death accounts like the gospels do, he maintained that there still was no true functional analogue to the Passion Narrative in GRB.⁴⁷

Lastly, he warned against explanations of Markan differences from GRB as deliberate subversions of biographical conventions as, for instance, the suggestion that Mark ironically substitutes a theology of the Cross where an aretalogical focus on glory might be expected.⁴⁸ Edwards concluded that despite claims to the contrary, "a paratactic summary of legends surrounding a single man is difficult to parallel in Greek or Latin prose." Rather, "The 'mighty works' or δυνάμεις of Mark's hero are prefigured in the Biblical accounts of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha."⁴⁹ As invaluable as Edwards' critiques were, they were not accompanied by a new or concrete proposal that could replace the consensus view.

Other scholars made similar suggestions. The leading proposed alternatives have remained that Mark is *sui generis* or historiography. Like Collins, Dormeyer and Becker both found the classification of Mark as *bios* problematic.⁵⁰ Finding no satisfactory biographical alternative from the OT and other Jewish literature, they too concluded that the answer has to be sought within GR literature. Aware that GR historiography is a difficult fit, both authors sought to propose a more sophisticated solution. For Dormeyer, Mark combines "ideal

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 57-8.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Dormeyer 1989; Becker 2006.

biography” (as Baltzer defined it, see discussion below) with GR conventions of historiography. For Becker, Mark best approximates GR historiography but remains *sui generis*.

In his rather brief discussion of the genre of Matthew, Luz protested that there has been failure to take seriously enough the fact that “the claim of the Gospel of Matthew... is much higher than that of a biography” and that “Matthew follows biblical and not Hellenistic models.”⁵¹ His own proposal is offered without development or substantiation:

With his story of Jesus Matthew tells a new foundation story that permits him to understand Israel’s previous foundational text, the Bible, in a completely new light. In my judgement, here in the framework of the biblical-Jewish tradition and literary activity something completely new, a revolution, happened.⁵²

This would appear as another *sui generis* proposal with greater OT emphasis.

Green, for his part, recognised that there has to be OT generic influence, pointing to the stories of Abraham and Elijah as possible precursors and “their shared undertaking to represent the outworking of the divine will in historical narratives.”⁵³ He also questioned whether to speak of Mark’s gospel as biography really captured the essence of the story which is also “a story about God.”⁵⁴ Yet in the end, Green kept to the moderate suggestion of “a potential debt” to the OT.

Baum proposed a more inclusive solution. He also agreed that the gospels are not close to learned biographies like those of Nepos, Suetonius, or Plutarch, and saw the anonymity, simpler style, episodic narration, and taste for dialogue as closer to those of “popular” biographies such as the Lives of Aesop and Secundus.⁵⁵ In his view, however, these aspects of the gospels have more in common with the biographical stories of the OT. He also found resemblance to rabbinic biographical stories using many of the same devices and featuring some stories with close analogues in the gospels. Pointing to the absence of rigid rules for biographical writing in antiquity, Baum concluded that the gospels are probably a mixed form, “biographies of Jesus in Old Testament and rabbinic style with comparatively slight Graeco-Roman influences.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ Luz 2007, 14.

⁵² Ibid., 15.

⁵³ Green 2006: 142.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 144.

⁵⁵ Baum 2018.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 58.

Regrettably, while most of Baum's observations are accurate, his approach is beset by excessive dependence on resemblances to establish generic relationships. What his study illustrates is *precisely* that similarities can often be found across different genres from diverse cultural horizons. GR popular biographies, OT and rabbinical biographical stories, all are anonymous, of simple style, episodic, and prize dialogue and direct speech. However, one cannot conclude on this basis alone that rabbinical stories were influenced by GR popular biographies or vice-versa. Generic study cannot be reduced to a tally of shared characteristics; it requires a thorough-going analysis of the ethos, values, and primary purposes of each genre.

Correspondingly, the more crucial questions are left unaddressed: Are episodes in GR popular biographies completely comparable to those of the OT, or are there distinguishing elements? If so, can any of these distinctive marks be found in the gospel analogues? Are the similarities between rabbinic biographical stories and the gospels indicative of direct influence, or of their shared OT and Jewish heritage?

Finally, Baum only spoke of the genre of the gospels collectively. While this is understandable since they are clearly interrelated generically, it does not follow that they were all influenced by other literary sources in the same way or to the same degree.

In summary, the critiques of the view that the gospels are *bioi* agree that this consensus rests on problematic arguments, that it does not satisfactorily account for the gospels' distinctive functions and content, and that they have affinities with and extensively use OT sources. However, a better alternative has yet to be offered.

4. Family Resemblance Limitations

In parallel to the critiques discussed above, a number of voices have also pointed to the limitations and misuse of the concept of Family Resemblance, which has been so instrumental to bolster the claim that the gospels are *bioi*. Family Resemblance sought to counter reductionist approaches to classification but did not produce clear methodology whereby one may determine whether "resemblance" does indeed signify family relationship.⁵⁷ Thus, although Burridge approves of a number of Fowler's finer-tuned genre

⁵⁷ See Swales 1990.

criticism principles,⁵⁸ he did not sufficiently heed the latter's warning that Family Resemblance is insufficient for the task.⁵⁹

Indeed, Fishelov's observation that literary critics have tended to use Family Resemblance negatively (to deny the notion of clear definitions), instead of using it to demonstrate how works within a genre are related to each other through a network of relationships,⁶⁰ aptly describes how Burridge and his followers have applied the concept. As a result, the alleged participation of the gospels in the GRB genre has proved too vague a relationship to be useful for interpretation. Although Burridge believes that it was the flexibility of GRB itself that made this generic classification "less helpful,"⁶¹ the late classicist Tomas Hägg's appraisal is much more accurate:

What is proven is that the investigated features of the gospels are not unique in ancient biographical literature; but no control group is established to show which features may be regarded as significantly typical of this literature, in contrast to the biographical writings of other times or cultures. Are the gospels 'Graeco-Roman βίοι, or just 'biographies'? [...] some circular argument is involved, and no systematic attempt is made to prove that not many of the genre-constitutive characteristics are universal.⁶²

Hägg then suggested OT biographical accounts as more influential on the gospels than Greek literature.

5. Alternatives to Family Resemblance

In recent years, better models of generic analysis, derived from the gleanings of cognitive science, have come to the notice of biblical scholars, particularly Prototype Theory and subsequent developments.⁶³ Although they are still underused, several studies illustrate

⁵⁸ Burridge 2004, esp. 39-40.

⁵⁹ Fowler 2002, 42.

⁶⁰ Fishelov 1991, 125.

⁶¹ Burridge 2004, 248.

⁶² Hägg 2012, 154-5.

⁶³ For Prototype Theory, see among many other publications of hers, Rosch 1999, 259-260). Her observations on family resemblance are of particular interest (Rosch and Mervis 1975: 573-605). Other more recent treatments and developments of the science of categorisation, which also apply to literary categories include Margolis and Laurence 1999, Murphy 2002, and Geeraerts 2009. For application specifically to genre criticism, see especially Sinding 2002: 181-219 and 2010: 465-505.

how they can profitably be applied for generic studies to produce more precise and meaningful results than Family Resemblance theory.⁶⁴

The most helpful basic concept is that while categories may elude rigid lists of features, they have a distinctive Gestalt, a particular combination, which despite some variability, makes its exemplars recognisable as instances of the category.⁶⁵ Chandler's Schema Theory draws a distinction between compulsory, default, and optional features of a category, which allows one to understand why a toothless albino tiger with a missing leg can still be recognised as member of the species, despite lacking several of its ubiquitous traits.⁶⁶ A tiger must have tiger DNA (compulsory), will normally, but not always, have four legs and an orange robe with black stripes (default), and has been known to kill and eat humans (optional).

Moreover, Fowler's aforementioned work beneficially illustrates that more than one type of generic relationship may account for how works are related. Overlap may indicate a common genre, but also partial influence (mode) or a common parent (sub-genre).⁶⁷ These models all provide a better understanding of how genre may be evaluated in a way that does justice to complex relationships and the originality of individual works, without straying into meaningless generalisations, abstractions, and misinterpretations of mere resemblances. Although the space constraints of this study prohibit a detailed demonstration, these models have been influential on its approach and will be referenced where applicable in subsequent chapters.

6. Reasons for the Stalemate

Three factors have posed obstacle to the quest for a better solution to the question of the genre of the gospels. First, the works of Burridge and Frickenschmidt are substantial. In order to challenge their conclusions, a fresher, more accurate examination of the characteristics of GRB, tailored to address the questions most relevant to a comparison with the gospels, and sufficiently precise and robust to compete with theirs, is required -- a daunting task that no critic has yet undertaken.

⁶⁴ See Newsom 2005, 437–50; Williamson Jr. 2010: 336–60; Shively 2018: 273-292.

⁶⁵ See especially Lakoff 1987.

⁶⁶ Chandler 1997.

⁶⁷ Fowler 2002, 106-129.

Second, the influence of Bultmann's negative view of the OT contribution to the genre of the gospels still lingers in NT studies. For Bultmann, an OT text could only be considered the source of gospel material if it matched its form or exact vocabulary and had a similar function. With regard to Jesus' miracles, for instance, Bultmann denied any influence from Moses traditions, only entertained the "possibility" that Elisha's multiplication of bread in 2 Kings 4:42-44 contributed to the gospels' 'feeding stories,' and, a few lines later, declared that one must look to Hellenistic and Second Temple Jewish literature rather than the OT for sources.⁶⁸

A similar dismissive stance can be observed in *Semeia*'s volume investigating the potential backgrounds for Jesus' Pronouncement Stories. It includes chapters on all the major potential literary sources for the gospels, whether Jewish or GR, except the OT.⁶⁹

There have been studies on the relationship between the depiction of Jesus in the gospels and that of specific OT figures, but these studies have been too narrowly focused to illumine the question of the genre of the gospels. Dabek, for instance, interpreted the Transfiguration as pointing to Jesus as the New Moses and New Elijah, but beyond remarks on typology, does not investigate the possibility of broader generic influence from these prototypical stories and others on the gospels.⁷⁰ Kline proposed that Mark is patterned on the book of Exodus and portrayed Jesus as new great Covenanter like Moses⁷¹ and Brown argues that Mark presents Jesus in relation to John the Baptist like a new Elisha (who was Elijah's successor and performed more miracles than he).⁷² These studies only provide insight into *select* aspects of how Jesus is portrayed in the gospels, and the parallels have not been analysed from the vantage point of biography. Such an atomistic approach is also what led Aune, after examining each possible relationship separately and finding that none could sufficiently explain Jesus, to reject the pertinence of the OT for the question of the genre of the gospels.⁷³ No one has looked beyond individual figures and associated texts to investigate whether the gospels exhibit characteristics that are conventional in OT biographical stories.

⁶⁸ Bultmann 1963, 229-31.

⁶⁹ Tannehill 1981.

⁷⁰ Dabek 1942.

⁷¹ Kline 1975: 1-27.

⁷² Brown 1971: 85-104.

⁷³ Aune 1987, 36-43.

Lastly, while NT scholarship has finally recognised the biographical shape of the gospels, this has yet to take place with regard to the many OT biographical stories. Much like Bultmann's appreciation of the nature of the gospels as compositions was obscured by his excessive focus on oral traditions and forms, OT scholarship has largely spurned the value of studying biographical narratives and prefers to describe the nature of these texts with form-critically derived generic categories such as family and heroic sagas or cycles. The problem is compounded by the reasons advanced by both OT and NT scholars for refusing to consider narratives focused on a person's life or career from birth/accesion to death as biography: they betray the *tendency to judge these texts on the basis of the conventions of modern biography or of GRB*.

Coats, for instance, argues against considering the stories of the patriarchs in Genesis 12-50 as biographies because "the concern is not simply to describe the hero as he really was or as he really acted... but rather to interpret the hero according to stereotyped, but imaginative, categories."⁷⁴ If Coats' criterion is considered applicable, however, many *bioi* or *vitae* would not be classified as biographies either. Only a naive or limited understanding of GRB would allow one to think that these biographies "simply" describe their subjects as they were or acted, and not according to stereotyped and imaginative categories.

Similarly, Westermann rejects the possibility that the stories of the patriarchs might be biographical in thrust. His reasoning is that biography concerns individuals that are important for a nation, and that the patriarchs and their families were not at the time that the traditions on which their stories are based arose.⁷⁵ Thus, Westermann's view of the stories of the patriarchs is very similar to Bultmann's conception of the gospels as loosely connected assemblages of traditions. Yet even assuming the prehistories of the text posited by Westermann and other OT scholars to be accurate, all it would indicate is that the building blocks of the finished product were not *originally* composed as biography. This cannot mean, any more than it does for the gospels, that the finished product does not have a biographical shape and quality. Moreover, the evangelists would not have read these stories according to modern form-critical categories but more likely as life stories that could have influenced them as they set out to write Jesus' biography.

⁷⁴ Coats 1983, 6.

⁷⁵ Westermann 1995, 28.

Mayes' chapter on the story of David in *The Limits of Ancient Biography* largely reproduces the same type of approach and, unsurprisingly, reaches similar conclusions.⁷⁶ Its opening sentence clarifies the author's view: "A strictly formal approach to the subject of biographical or autobiographical writing in the Old Testament would yield meagre enough results."⁷⁷ He compares this to tomb biographies in ancient Egypt and their focus on the individual, although ancient Egyptian literature "never produced true 'biographies,'" that can compare to "later classical biography."

Instead of investigating the characteristics of the entire story of David as it is presented in the Primary History, Mayes opts to limit his analysis to the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2), considered to be of independent origin, and to assume, on the basis of Gunkel's and Gressmann's classifications of literary types, that its genre is that of a hero saga.⁷⁸ Arguing that the story of the rise of David serves an ideological purpose that legitimatises the reign of Josiah, he concludes that the story as we have it consists of elements that have been collated by the Deuteronomist and which had no prior existence as biography.⁷⁹

All the problematic elements we have already observed are replicated in Mayes' approach: a presupposed and negative bias against the existence of biography in the OT, supplanting generic categories apparently dispensing of the need to study the biographical characteristics of these narratives, an approach to the text as too truncated an artifact of composition history to be considered on its own terms, and the use of "classical biography" as the standard of what qualifies as biography.

Unfortunately, there is, to my knowledge, only one full monograph related to the topic of biography in the OT at all: Klaus Baltzer's *Die Biographie der Propheten*, and it is more concerned with tracing the development of the prophetic office in the OT than to offer a generic study of OT biography *per se*.⁸⁰ He argues that OT biographies were influenced by the "idealised" autobiographical speeches from Egyptian tombs from the Old Kingdom on, in which the defunct is portrayed as describing and praising his life achievements from beyond the grave.

⁷⁶ Mayes 2006: 1–12.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁰ Baltzer 1975.

The idea of biography is subsequently largely assumed rather than clearly defined. Baltzer includes quite a bit of discussion on biographical narratives in the OT outside of the prophets, but always and mainly, from the vantage point of tracing the prophetic element, and its development in the offices and activities of prophetic figures. This focalisation does not permit a broader analysis of the characteristics and conventions of biography in the OT. For instance, the examples of ideal biography Baltzer proposes — the autobiographical Egyptian speeches and “the last words of David” in 2 Samuel 23.1-7 — are not readily comparable to the OT life stories that would be most relevant to the study of the gospels. The stories of Moses or David, for instance, are not only much more developed narratives, but include episodes that cast a negative light on their subjects and that would not have been included in ideal biographies.

In light of these peculiarities, Baltzer’s work has not been regarded as a convincing demonstration that biography is a legitimate OT generic category. Both Burridge’s and Frickenschmidt’s rejection of the relevance of the OT for the question of the genre of the gospels are almost exclusively based on evaluating Baltzer’s work.⁸¹ Nevertheless, his analysis has helpfully drawn attention to a recurrent feature of OT biographical narratives to be discussed later in this study: the *Einsetzungbericht* (the induction/installation narrative).

Otherwise, the closest there is to a substantial study of biography in connection with the OT is Louis Feldman’s series on biographical portraits in Josephus’ *Antiquities*.⁸² While, as is widely recognised, Josephus consciously adapted biblical narratives to the style of GR historiography, the fact that Feldman’s characterisation of Josephus’ portraits of biblical figures as biography has been so widely accepted reveals the bias against biography in OT studies. After all, Josephus’ “biographies” are patterned after biblical counterparts that scholars deemed *not* biographical.

The confusion that reigns both in NT and OT studies with regard to the question of what may constitute biography in the OT can be seen in Keener’s recent discussion of the genre of the gospels. In his view, only Ruth, Judith, Jonah, Esther, Daniel, and Tobit in the Greek OT can be considered as somewhat biographical narratives that could have had a general (rather than specific) influence on the genre of the gospels.⁸³ He explains elsewhere that other narratives in which individuals feature prominently do not qualify because “the

⁸¹ Burridge 2004, 19, 300-304; Frickenschmidt 1997, 118-36.

⁸² Much material originally found in separate articles are gathered in Feldman 1998.

⁸³ Keener 2016, 31.

treatment of an individual is part of a larger narrative.”⁸⁴ The stories Keener included are precisely those that Baum rejected and those Keener rejected precisely those Baum included!

In summary, the inability of critics of the claim that the gospels are *bioi* to propose a specific or more convincing generic category recalls the state of affairs before NT scholars undertook to delineate the characteristics of GRB: suggestions of analogies to the gospels were made and a few examples provided, but it was only once Burrige and Frickenschmidt provided a more thorough investigation of GRB and comparison with the gospels that the question was significantly advanced.

7. The Way Forward

The present study will seek to address these gaping needs. In chapter two, I will offer a fresh evaluation of the generic characteristics of GRB with close attention to the relationship between content, form, and function. I will demonstrate that there are primary purposes, presupposed values, and specific functions that contribute to the Gestalt of GRB. These characteristics define the distinctive identity of GRB and are much more essential for generic comparison with the gospels than observing analogies and resemblances. In fact, it is these distinctive aspects of the genre that provide the means of determining whether analogies and resemblances *as well as differences* with the gospels are generically significant at all.

This will be followed by a thorough examination of the characteristics of biographical stories in OT and Second Temple Jewish literature (chapters 3 and 4). I will argue that although they are embedded in larger histories, biographies constitute an important generic family in the OT. A typology of these texts and analysis of their generic characteristics will be provided with a view to compare them to the gospels.

On the basis of these fresh studies of ancient biographical writing from the two cultural and literary horizons that were closest to and most likely to have influenced the evangelists, chapters five to eight will examine how the Gospel of Mark compares with each. Although reference will occasionally be made to the other gospels, the present study will focus on Mark only and does not presuppose that its conclusions should be applied to the other gospels without paying close attention to their specificities. A comparative analysis of broader characteristics such as purpose, ethos, and narration style and strategies will first be

⁸⁴ Keener 2012, 25.

provided. This will be followed by a detailed investigation of the biographical movement and content of Mark's introductory section, middle/career section, and the Passion Narrative.

I will conclude with a synthesis of findings, their relevance for the interpretation of Mark, and the prospects they open for further study in relation to the other NT gospels.

CHAPTER 2: GRECO-ROMAN BIOGRAPHY (200 BCE – 150 CE)

This chapter presents a fresh analysis of the characteristics of GRB. Its distinctive ethos, underlying values, primary purposes, and conventions are analysed in greater detail than in the characterisations of the genre by Burridge and Frickenschmidt, with a view to laying the foundations for a reassessment of the genre of Mark's gospel.

1. Representative Texts: Rationale and Selection Criteria

1.1 Background and Rationale

The studies comparing the NT gospels to GRB in the last decades have not sufficiently distinguished between observations applicable to the genre over its whole history¹ and those that pertain more specifically to the period when the gospels were written. Biblical scholars have sought to draw on the conclusions of classic studies of the genre, but almost all of the latter, from the beginning of the last century to the present, are attempts to trace the major phases of development of the genre in order to characterise its overall genus.² It should not be surprising that endeavours to define a genre over a millennium have been an exercise in frustration. This has also contributed to the currently prevailing notion that any venture to provide a satisfactory definition of GRB is doomed to failure.

Moreover, while Leo's learned theory of the development of biography through the influences of Peripatos and Alexandrian scholarship was justifiably critiqued in subsequent major treatments of the subject (principally, Wolf Steidle and to a lesser yet still significant extent, Stuart and Momigliano), this push back unfortunately largely resulted in renouncing further attempts to provide a typology of ancient biography in favour of a more descriptive

¹ The period typically ranges from early precursors (fifth century B.C.E.) all the way to late Antiquity and can even include the hagiographies of the Middle Ages.

² Leo 1901; Stuart 1928; Steidle 1963; Momigliano 1993; Hägg 2012; Sonnabend 2002.

approach.³

In biblical studies, the seminal monographs of BurrIDGE and Frickenschmidt have explored characteristics of GRB for the express purpose of comparison with the NT gospels. Their attempts to describe the genre, however, are excessively conditioned by their intent to show that the gospels belong therein. As a result, their studies fail to consider the possibility that the gospels could be related to the genre in other ways than “in” or “out” (e.g., partial influence) and apparently assume that the answer to this question must be the same for all four NT gospels. Additionally, they make no serious attempt to compare and contrast how similar materials (e.g., birth narratives) may be treated in Jewish literature with a view to identity to which tradition(s) and conventions the gospels stand closest. Finally, both BurrIDGE and Frickenschmidt’s explorations of the characteristics of GRB are partial to the assumption that the genre should be defined mainly as a vague and highly flexible notion based on “family resemblances,” an assumption that makes it possible to classify the gospels within the genre.

This can be seen in BurrIDGE’s unfortunate decision to base his analysis of the genre on a small eclectic pool of texts which, while it seemed to illustrate and support the claim that the genre is very flexible, mostly features generically questionable, unusual, and anachronistic exemplars.⁴ The selected texts cover too long an historical span and fail to give better attention to the large number of more representative works of the genre in our time period.

Frickenschmidt’s selection is exhaustive but resultantly, no less scattered. Despite recognising that the fully preserved collections of Nepos, Plutarch, and Suetonius offer considerably greater and better evidence of the genre than is available from fragments and

³ Aside from Frickenschmidt’s proposal that a distinction should be made between *kurz Biographie* and full biographies (1997, 207-209), there have been relatively few attempts to provide a typology of the genre. For a succinct discussion of the main proposals since Leo’s, see Adams 2013, 76-79. None have been widely accepted. Dihle has argued that biography only came into its own generically through Plutarch. His approach has been judged too restrictive and his underlying effort to argue for a more narrowly focused approach to the characterisation of the genre has largely been dismissed as relic of an obsolete (i.e., “Aristotelian”) conception of genericity. See Dihle 1991, 361–386. For a critique of Dihle’s approach, see BurrIDGE 2004, 88-90.

⁴ This pool of texts consists of merely ten works, including two encomia (*Agesilaus*, *Evagoras*), Satyrus’ fragmentary and uniquely dialogue-formatted *Vita Euripidis*, Philo’s *Vita Moysis* (a generic hybrid), *Agricola* (of debated genericity), and Philostratus’ *Apollonius of Tyana*, representing a later phase of development of the genre than that which concerns our period (more on this later).

precursors, his resolve to reject a tight definition of the genre⁵ leads him to refuse giving greater weight to more reliable and relevant evidence.⁶

A similar stance is represented in the more recent collection of essays, *The Limits of Ancient Biography*. The volume opens with the assertion that “no definition can possibly embrace the full variety even of those ancient texts that survive.”⁷ Rather,

Genre always involves a balance between consistency and innovation, framework and deviation. That is why a study of genre is always concerned with boundaries. And that means that the richest texts for generic studies are not the supposed archetypes (though these we also need) but those which explore the boundaries.⁸

Three key elements characterise this approach to the study of genre: (1) A preference for inclusiveness. The concern is that too “rigid” a definition can unduly exclude some texts from consideration or fail to provide a suitable description for them; (2) A focus on boundaries. Fringe elements are not to be excluded or neglected and are particularly amenable to challenging any all-encompassing (understood as reductionist) definition of the genre; (3) Opposition to the idea that GRB can aptly be defined except in very broad strokes. Rather, the genre is to be viewed as a “creative space” in which composition operates with complexity, originality, both in dialogue and tension with conventions.

Nevertheless, however sensible this approach may appear, it creates more problems than it solves. The first is the lack of a cogent explanation of the basis on which texts are included for consideration so as to attain such conclusions in the first place. Surely, not all texts that have a famous person as central subject are biographies. Even Momigliano’s oft quoted general description of biography as “an account of the life of a man from birth to death”⁹ is recognised to fail to correspond to every text that the authors would include in the “full variety” of biography. Without better clarity regarding inclusion criteria, one is left to wonder to which extent the problem of definition is circular: texts may be considered together

⁵ See Frickenschmidt 1997, 27-68, for his discussion of and counter-reaction to Dihle’s approach to the question.

⁶ See for instance, his discussion of the importance of Plutarch, about whom he immediately specifies that he cannot be considered a standard of biography (Frickenschmidt 1997, 210).

⁷ McGing and Mossman 2006, x.

⁸ Ibid., xiii.

⁹ Momigliano 1993, xi.

that should not be, making it impossible to find a definition that corresponds to them all.¹⁰

Moreover, classic studies of biographies have clearly shown that there are discernible phases of development in GRB (e.g., antecedents, late hagiographies, etc.) with characteristics that pertain to them more particularly, and that extant biographies can helpfully (though not rigidly) be categorised according to major subtypes (e.g., chronological versus topical, narrative versus lexicographic, men of action versus intellectuals, canonical versus “open,” etc.). It will not do to speak of the overall flexibility of the genre in a way that obscures the difference between general characteristics and those that are specific to subspecies. For instance, BurrIDGE uses the unusual format of Satyrus’ *Life of Euripides* to argue that the conventions of GRB are very broad and flexible.¹¹ However, the fact that a quadruped can exceptionally be born with only three legs does not indicate that the species should not correctly be described as four-legged! As mentioned in chapter one (cf. Idealized Cognitive Models and Gestalt theory), a category should be defined on the basis of prototypical exemplars, and only thereafter does it become possible to properly identify atypicality. In other words, it is not with atypical or fringe instances that investigation of the nature and characteristics of a genre should begin.

Finally, if greater attention is given to what distends and seems to deny any cohesion to GRB as a genre, how useful will the result be as a genre classification? It is arbitrary to relativize genre conventions enough to argue that broad inclusion is reasonable, only to refer thereafter to these conventions as authoritative guidelines for interpretation. Either GRB is a loose collection of texts in which conventions can be modified, adapted, or even abandoned at will (in which case they are no longer really conventional), or else the situation is not as disordered as has been claimed, and better definition can indeed be attained.

In light of the foregoing, more carefully defined selection criteria for representative texts will be used in this chapter. First, relevant texts should represent the stage of development of GRB when Mark was written. This needs not imply that only biographies contemporary with the gospels should be considered. However, our interest lies primarily

¹⁰ Keener rightly objects to Talbert’s use Pseudo-Callisthenes’ *Alexander Romance* and Lucian’s *Life of Secundus* as examples of ‘biographies’ that are less historically-grounded than what is customary. As Keener observes, the first is a novel and the second, a satire (Keener 2010, 9). This is but one example of a problem that is endemic to the study of GRB.

¹¹ It is one of BurrIDGE’s short selection of “representative” texts (2004, 124).

with biographies likely to have been in circulation and influential in the first century. After all, since there was no ancient textbook on biography when the gospels were written, influence would have had to come through familiarity with instances of the genre. This implies that biographies written later than the first half of the second century C.E. should only be considered *if* their relevance to the characterisation of GBR in our period can be preliminarily demonstrated.

The second criterion takes a pragmatic approach to the nature of the evidence. The study of ancient texts is necessarily limited by the kind, quantity, and quality of the surviving evidence. What conclusions are derived from this evidence could very well be quite inaccurate or only partially representative of what the situation actually was, but we must proceed on the basis of what we have. Correspondingly, it seems responsible to give priority to concrete and reliable evidence over against excessive speculation.¹² From what we can judge from allusions by ancient writers, there were probably hundreds of biographies that have since been lost. A number of them have only survived in small and discontinuous fragments that leave many questions unanswered. It is best to give this kind of evidence only a secondary supportive role and rest our analysis and conclusions more firmly on better preserved exemplars.

1.2 Exclusions

The criteria detailed above identifies three groups of GRBs which are either not or less relevant for our purposes: antecedents to biography, fragmentary/lost biographies, and most biographies written after 150 C.E.

1.2.1 *Antecedents to Biography*

Although one can find biographical interest as early as the fifth century B.C.E. in the works of Ion of Chios, Stesimbrotus of Thasus, and Skylax of Caryanda, very little evidence has survived. Ion is used as source by Plutarch, yet these few lines of summarised anecdotes or short quotations amount to too little to evaluate his work as a whole. We cannot even be

¹² See Geiger 1985, 11.

sure whether some of his works were biographies.¹³ As for Skylax's work, we only know of it because it is listed in the *Suda*.

It is also likely that some popular biographical stories such as that of Homer or Aesop circulated in oral and sub-literary forms even earlier.¹⁴ Yet the earliest extant *Life of Aesop* is from the 2nd century C.E. and the nature and extent of its relationship to earlier legends and stories is only material for speculation. Somewhat biographical sections can also be found in the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides,¹⁵ but while these texts have fully survived, they are so distant from actual biographies that they do not play a significant role in characterising GRB in our period.

The next important stage of development is represented by Xenophon's three diverse works in the fourth century B.C.E.: The *Memorabilia* (on Socrates), the *Education of Cyrus* (on Cyrus the Great), and *Agesilaus*. Although they all contain much biographical material, they are not biographies. The *Memorabilia* is not a *Life* of Socrates, but an apology in which scenes of Socrates' life and examples of his habits and teaching illustrate that he was good, just, and did not deserve his condemnation. Thus, the book does not open as biographies normally do, with lineage and place of birth. It is structured as a series of three speeches in which, despite a constant focus on his character, "the outer facts (of his life) are comparatively few and scattered."¹⁶ It is comparable in that regard to Plato's *Apology*, which likewise contains biographical elements without being a biography. Indeed, the latter lacks a unifying biographical focus and key elements of biography such as an account of Socrates' youth or death.

The content and structure of the *Cyropaedia* resemble much more what we normally find in biographies: it starts with a prologue and lineage, proceeds to childhood and youth stories, devotes most space to Cyrus' campaigns (including vividly narrated scenes and dialogues) and administration of his empire, and ends with an account of his death and an epilogue. Its size and overall flavour, however, correspond better to a biographical novel than

¹³ Of the twenty-six fragments of Ion's works, about a dozen may originate from a biographical work, most likely the *epidemiai* (an account of Ion's visits with famous contemporaries). The scholia on Aristophanes credits him with encomia, memoirs, and paeans, which may have been more or less biographical (e.g., not all encomia are biographical, since their subject does not even have to be a person).

¹⁴ See Hägg 2012, 99-101.

¹⁵ See Hägg 2012, 15.

¹⁶ Hägg 2012, 11.

to biography.¹⁷

Agésilas is a biographical encomium. Although much of its narrative structure and content overlap considerably with that of a biography, it is presented as a tribute, in the style of a speech that makes generous use of superlatives. Its primary purpose is to eulogise, and there is no effort to provide a more balanced depiction of the subject, such as acknowledgement and weighing of weaknesses and mistakes over against merits and virtues as would be the case in a biography. The same is true of *Evagoras*, the encomium from Isocrates, Xenophon's contemporary.

Since encomium (of a person)¹⁸ and biography can overlap considerably, it is helpful to clarify the differences between the two genres as one of primary purpose(s) and of degree to which certain elements are emphasised. "The primary aim of encomium is to praise... It is a branch of rhetoric, the art of persuasion. Biography may, but does not necessarily, have a similar purpose; where it does (as in Tacitus' *Agricola*) it becomes hardest to draw a sensible distinction between it and encomium."¹⁹

Encomiastic devices can certainly find their way in biographies *but are not central to what constitutes biography*. In fact, most extant GRBs are not encomiastic in the proper sense of the term, that is, they do not have most of the features described above, nor any in imposing proportion.²⁰ Thus *Agésilas* and *Evagoras* will not be considered as biographies.

1.2.2 The Hellenistic Period: Fragments and Testimonia

The fourth century B.C.E. and the first half of the third provide ample evidence that biography was coming into its own. The major representatives of that phase, in terms of

¹⁷ The ancient novel was characterised by its adventuresome content, love stories, and travels, forming a largely fictional narrative. Cf., Hägg 1991, 3. He notes that the *Cyropaedia* is too fictive to be a biography and has features (a love story, its tone and setting) that are novelistic (ibid., 113).

¹⁸ An encomium could be devoted to praising any subject such as a city or an animal.

¹⁹ See Wallace-Hadrill 1980, 37.

²⁰ In point of fact, many works that eulogise to varying degrees are not encomia and it confuses generic categories to refer to them as encomiastic (e.g., eulogies, panegyrics, some biographies, and — I would suggest — the NT gospels). It is revealing to contrast the one-sided praise of Alexander's virtues in Plutarch's *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander* with the biography he wrote on the same. In the first, his merits are obviously exaggerated. The biography, on the other hand, offers a more balanced view of the man including some of his less praiseworthy or outright reprehensible habits, character traits, and decisions. See Hamilton and Stadter 2013, xxiii-xxxiii.

testimonia and fragments, are Aristoxenus of Tarentum (b. c. 370 B.C.E.), Satyrus the Peripatetic, Hermippus of Smyrna (both fl. probably 3rd B.C.E.), and Antigonus of Carystus (fl. c. 240 B.C.E.).

The work of Hermippus, whose over eighty fragments are by far the most for any biographer of that period, illustrates the substantial limitations of the evidence.²¹ His biography of Pythagoras, which offers the most surviving material, consists of only seven short fragments.²² All that can be gathered from these fragments is that it contained its subject's lineage, some anecdotes, and some description of his philosophy. There is not enough material to infer the structure, overall tone, any certain purpose, or overall emphases of the work.

More can be known about Hermippus' biographical craft by comparing *all* of his biographical fragments. One can learn that he used *περὶ* followed by the class of subjects (e.g., lawgivers) as title for at least several of his works (suggesting serial biography). He wrote on varied types of subjects (sages, philosophers, rhetoricians, etc.). In one case, he refers to sources he compared. He commonly mentions the parentage of the subject and adds supplementary information such as a father's work, a grandfather's fame, or famous ancestors. He includes personal information such as on family and relationships (e.g., lovers), character traits, progression or regression of a subject, places of living, dress habits, description of demeanour, and some other details such as health in old age. He mentions professional information of different kinds such as training, teachers, titles to fame, works, achievements, skills, some account of teaching, beliefs, disciples, comparison to peers, famous witty exchanges, and memorable sayings.

He also recounts anecdotes and accounts of key events in the subject's life, which may have been part of a continuous narrative. His anecdotal material is quite varied: supernatural stories, multiple origin stories (for a practice, a myth, or a word), and even a recipe attributed to the subject! Finally, the element that is most commonly found in the fragments are death accounts (almost always bizarre). Most of this content accords very well with material types found in GRB.

All this seems to indicate that we can actually know quite a bit about Hermippus'

²¹ See Bollansée, FGrHist IV.A.3.

²² F21-27 in Bollansée, JCIV 1026.

biographical craft and on biography in the period if extant materials from other authors are also taken into consideration. Yet it is important not to lose sight of the fact that almost all these fragments are small bits of source material that were summarised or paraphrased in later sources without their original contexts. One can only speculate, for instance, about how these biographies were structured.²³

Satyrus' *Vita Euripidis* offers a better selection of primary text to examine, from a single biography. The work is cast in the form of a dialogue on Euripides, from which the audience learns of his style and talent, character, interest in philosophy, and some of his habits and life events (all common biographical topoi). Yet several characteristics of the work warn against jumping to conclusions regarding the relationship of this work to the genre of GRB. In addition to its format (which if it is a biography, would be its unique instance), the interlocutors are not simply interested in talking about Euripides; rather, they use discussion about his life as a platform to also more broadly discuss politics, philosophy, and societal values in the subject's time as well as their own. Another unusual characteristic of the work is that the tragedian's biographical data are apparently extrapolated from his plays.²⁴ As such, this "biography" is more obviously a creative and original fabrication that sets it further apart from historiography than is usual for GRB.²⁵

Moreover, while this represents more from a single biography than any other in this period, what has survived is still quite limited and fragmented. It is not clear how the whole was framed since both the introduction and conclusion are missing. Is it really a *Life* like Nepos' or Plutarch's, or a philosophical discussion framed around Euripides' life?

The survey of biography in this period shows much in common with biographies

²³ Mejer, likewise, reached the conclusion that the fragmented remnants of other such biographies "cannot serve as good evidence of how they were structured" (2007, 431). In light of this, we should object to excessive confidence as to what is likely about these biographies, such as, for instance, Stuart's assertion that Satyrus' *Vita Euripidis* must have started with parentage, birth, and childhood (1928, 185). This was of course frequently the case and thus would seem to be a reasonable conjecture. Yet it was not always the case (e.g., *Diog. Epic.*, 14) and Satyrus' unique format certainly makes this far from a foregone conclusion. Although Hägg 2012, 232, states that "the futility of trying to reconstruct Hellenistic biography on the basis of scattered fragments and late testimonia is clear to most scholars," discussions still tend to assume and assert much more than what we can positively know from this period.

²⁴ See Lefkowitz 1981, pp. 87 ff.

²⁵ Now, to be sure, it is often suspected that information about certain types of subjects, especially poets, were extracted from their works, often quite fancifully. Yet Euripides seems even more fanciful in this regard than, for instance, Suetonius in the *Vita Vergili*.

closer to the time of the writing of the gospels. However, this evidence is of limited usefulness. For instance, the fact that there is no later extant biography using Satyrus' format would seem to indicate that his approach passed out of usage. Moreover, nearly all the material available to us through which we may study these predecessors is that which their successors *chose* to include in their own works, that is, what was agreeable to their own approach to biography. Consequently, we do not actually learn much about GRB in our period of interest by looking back at the works of Hermippus and his contemporaries aside from what can be seen more fully and more clearly in the later biographies that reference them.

1.2.3 *Late Biographies*

Although Plutarch and Suetonius died in the first quarter of the second century, their literary activity is close enough to the time of the composition of the gospels and bears enough similarity to the ethos of other biographies of that period to be considered representative texts.

Likewise, despite having lived sometime in the third century, Diogenes Laertius' biographies are of definite interest to our period for several reasons. First, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (LEP) are the earliest extant complete biographies of teaching figures that remotely approximate a subject type like Jesus and illustrate how such subjects were portrayed in GRB. Second, he quotes so abundantly from previous biographers that he is also our best window into what biographies of philosophers contained in our period.²⁶

Third and by contrast to other late biographers, *LEP* reflect a broader biographical interest similar to what characterises other biographers in our period. Although Diogenes seems to have admired Epicurus, he presents the various sages, philosophers, and schools in a rather neutral manner. This sort of serial biography, which considers the chief representatives of a profession and invites comparison and a counterbalancing, is not found in contemporary polemical biographies.

Indeed, the biographies authored by Lucian of Samosata (c. C.E. 115-180), Philostratus (c. 170-250), Porphyry (c. 234-305), and Iamblichus (c. 250-330) represent a

²⁶ For a list of lost biographies of philosophers, especially from the Hellenistic period, see Mejer 1978, 90.

distinct phase of the genre that developed well after Mark was written. This new biography serviced philosophical and religious polemic, especially Neopythagoreanism and Neoplatonism's quarrel with Christianity.²⁷ Lucian inveighs against both Pythagoreans and Christians, while showing admiration for the Cynic Demonax and for Epicurus.²⁸ Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* produced a "new Pythagoras" that could compete as a miracle worker with the claims Christians made about Jesus.²⁹ The writings of Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus (founder of Neoplatonism) and after him, his own disciple, Iamblichus, display similar invectiveness.³⁰ Later, Eunapius would follow in Philostratus' footsteps by writing a second *Lives of Sophists* in the fourth century which aimed by his idealised depictions of Neoplatonists to rival with Christian hagiographies.³¹

While it may be objected that polemic is also present in earlier biographies, nothing on this scale appears in earlier extant full biographies.³² Moreover, what polemical interest there was, focused on politics, not religion and philosophy. There is simply too much that militates against the possibility that this kind of biography would be representative of our period of interest and could have influenced Mark.

1.2.4 *Josephus, Philo, and Autobiographies*

Two special types of biographies in our period of interest will be excluded as well. First and despite the shared biographical interest and overlaps, autobiographies constitute a

²⁷ N.B.: Compare the curriculum vitae of these later writers of *Lives* with their predecessors from our period: Lucian was a satirist; Porphyry a philosopher who authored, among others, the polemical work *Katà Xριστιανῶν*; Iamblichus was also a philosopher, Porphyry's student, and wrote in defence of polytheism. They do not have the same broad interest in literature and history that characterised the biographers of our period. Gone is the irenic manner in which biography evaluated contemporary norms and values in relation to the past.

²⁸ The tenor of Lucian's writings has been described as "devoted to fraud and the exposure of fraud" (cf., Clay 1992, 3408).

²⁹ See Hägg 2012, 282 ff. Philostratus also wrote *The Lives of the Sophists*, a work bearing similarities to biography but differing in focus, structure, and content. If it is biography, it is a distinct and new kind: "sophist biography." For additional description and discussion, see introductory notes in LCL 134, xii-xv.

³⁰ See Männlein-Robert 2016, 197–220. It has been suggested that it may even be misleading to speak of Porphyry's and Iamblichus' "*Lives*" as true examples of late biography. See Clark 2000, 29.

³¹ Cf., Momigliano 1987, 175 ff.

³² Later discussion of the genre of Tacitus' *Agricola* will highlight that its unusually pronounced polemical character is one of the reasons its generic classification is debated.

distinct genre with its own characteristics and Mark, of course, is not an autobiography. Second, Philo's *Vita Moysis* and the biographical stories of Josephus' *Antiquities* will be examined within the context of Jewish biography during the Second Temple period (chapter four) since they represent the extension of the latter toward GRB and not the other way around.

1.3 Inclusions

Since the very idea that an inclusive definition of GRB can be provided is so debated, a different point of departure will be used as the basis of this study. Scholars can all agree that there are enough substantial similarities between the stories of the lives or careers of famous people written by Nepos, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Diogenes Laertius to consider that they constitute a distinct class of writings, a genre, to which our closest modern analogue is biography. By contrast, Nicolaus' *Life of Augustus* and Tacitus' *Agricola* are other works in the same period which are frequently regarded as biography, but not as universally because of important differences and characteristics that tend to other genres (more on this later).

Furthermore, the notion that GRB is a genre is not merely a modern construct. The fact that Nepos, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Diogenes are all serial biographers strengthens the notion that their biographies belong to a specific class since, in spite of a certain degree of variability, there remains discernibly consistent traits within each collection and from one author to the next. In a very broad sense then, GRB could be defined as a core of characteristics that meaningfully describe these works as a category in contrast to other genres with which they can sometimes have much in common (e.g., encomia, historiography, apologies, and historical monographs). This is corroborated by clues that the ancients (including the biographers themselves) also regarded them as a distinct class of writings, often referred to as *bioi* or *vitae*. Whether they had sufficiently theorised, agreed on definitions and conventions, or were inconsistent in doing so, does not mean that conventions were not operative and that one cannot speak meaningfully of GRB as a genre.³³

The biographies of Nepos, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Diogenes Laertius are therefore *de facto* prototypical exemplars of the genre, from which we can work backward and forward

³³ This applies to the use of *bios* or *vita* as a designation/title, which is not systematic, but still common enough to indicate convention.

to trace antecedents and later developments, as well as outward to acquire a sense of what is typical as opposed to unusual.³⁴

A general description of characteristics that emerge from these prototypes, which will be substantiated and illustrated in this chapter, is provided here to provide orientation for discussions to follow: GRBs are self-enclosed works or discrete entries in a biographical series that portray the character and/or achievements of individuals who had a significant societal or professional impact, often for the purposes of appreciation, evaluation, comparison, and inspiration. What GRBs include is conditioned by the sources available to the biographer, as well as his own emphases and constraints. This means that the detail and content of biographies can vary from minimal biographical sketch to full-orbed development. The kind of illustrative content varies in relation to subject types. For instance, there is a lot of action in the *Lives* of generals but often none in that of philosophers, and there is usually more continuous narrative in the former and more sayings and anecdotes in the latter.

Biographies may reflect a positive or negative view of the subject, but their *primary* purpose is not to pay tribute (unlike encomium) or to denigrate (unlike invective). Thus, biography essentially answers two questions: who the subject was and what his/her claims to fame were (in biographical sketches, what is included may be no more than a listing of the person with basic identification and a description of any claims to fame). These two questions are answered through a stock of variously distributed conventional topoi: lineage, childhood stories, achievements, famous words, manner of death, etc.

2. The Ethos of Graeco-Roman Biography

As previously mentioned, a recognisable category is not constituted merely of concrete features but is also characterised by assumptions (Idealized Cognitive Models) that govern and bind these features in such a way as to give the whole a recognisable gestalt

³⁴ In accordance with cognitive science, then, these biographies are the “prototypical” instances of the genre available to the modern scholar for study. It is possible that the most prominent biographies in the literary consciousness of the ancient world included some of the works of which we now only have fragments, and others of which no evidence whatsoever has survived. Nevertheless, we can be reasonably confident that our apprehension of the genre approximates theirs, since the biographers of our period were firmly entrenched in biographical tradition, using their predecessors as sources, and, as we will see, demonstrating a great deal of conventionality as they wrote their own *Lives*.

(overall shape). Thus, much like a dish to the ingredients of its recipe, a genre is not simply a collocation of certain topics/forms/functions, but the particular way in which they are combined.³⁵ Although hardly original, this point has been largely set aside in the studies that have argued that the gospels are GRBs on the basis of a broad list of resemblances. In what follows, the work of each of the primary authors listed above will be examined in detail with a view to gain a solid appreciation of why they were writing, and how it shaped their writing.

2.1 Cornelius Nepos' *Excellentium Imperatorum Vitae*

2.1.1 *General Characteristics*

The twenty-four *Lives* in this collection are the earliest extant complete biographies. Like the other biographers in our period, Nepos was a scholar, well-connected with his peers. As biographer, he was probably influenced by his contemporary Marcus Terrentius Varro,³⁶ and his sources include Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, and Atticus to mention just a few.³⁷ He was closely connected to contemporary authors, notably Atticus, on whom he wrote one biography and to whom the collection is dedicated, and Cicero, on whom he also wrote a now lost *Life*.³⁸ The fact that the biographies in our period were written with such knowledge of what others had or were writing undoubtedly contributed to an environment that was favourable to imitation and over time, conventionalisation.

Besides the *vitae*, Nepos wrote the *chronica* (a work of history), some epistles, some verse, and the *Exempla* (to which we shall return). Thus, he had first-hand knowledge of the differences between biography and historiography, which he discusses in the introduction of the *Pelopidas*:

Pelopidas, the Theban, is better known to historians than to the general public. I am in doubt how to give an account of his merits (*virtūs*); for I fear that if I undertake to tell of his deeds, I shall seem to be writing a history (*historia*) rather than a biography (*vita*); but if I merely touch upon *the high points*, I am afraid that to those unfamiliar with Grecian literature it will not be perfectly clear *how great a man he was*. Therefore, I shall meet both difficulties as well

³⁵ Burridge 2004, 105.

³⁶ Geiger 1988, 249; 1998, 308; Stem 2012, 23.

³⁷ Lord 1927, 499.

³⁸ See, LCL 467, Fragments, 331, and 330 note 1.

as I can, having regard both for the weariness and the lack of information of my readers (1:1).³⁹

Correspondingly, while Nepos' *Lives* contain much material that would befit historiography, life events are selectively presented in an order that illustrates specified character traits (cf., *Timoth.* 4.6; *Lys.* 2.1). The result neither follows a strict chronology nor is a comprehensive account of all the major events of historical import in which the subject participated.

Since the purpose is to illustrate not merely the career but, more importantly, the character of the subject, there are more personal details than what might be found in historiography. For instance, material of Epaminondas' life such as his musical talent are included in his biography although they may seem "trivial and unworthy of the parts played by great men" to convey to readers the kind of person it was who distinguished himself and left his mark on posterity (*Prefatio* 1.1).⁴⁰

History matters in Nepos' *Lives* to the extent that the substance of narratives is historical, and characters and events are not fictional. Nevertheless, although the *Chronica* was an historically meticulous work, Nepos did not seem to be excessively concerned with historical accuracy in his *Lives*. While he alludes to conflicting sources and occasionally explains his choices (e.g., *Them.* 9, 10; *Paus.* 2; *Alc.* 11; *Han.* 13),⁴¹ he tends to exaggerate praise and blame to make his subjects more striking exemplars. Thus, despite stating at first that Alcibiades exceeded others in both virtues and vices, the account that follows extols the former and hardly mentions the latter. Likewise, Pausanias is made a complete villain, and nothing is said of his better actions reported by former historians.⁴² Thus, moralism takes precedence over historical accuracy.

These observations illustrate that the differences between Greek biography and historiography reside in their primary purpose ("who" more than "what"), in structure (starts, continues, and ends with the person rather than a war, a nation, or an event such as Catiline's conspiracy), in degree (character and personal detail are less consistently provided and

³⁹ Italics and parentheses added for emphasis.

⁴⁰ For more on Nepos' biographical approach, see McCarty 1974, 383–91 and Titchener 2003, 85–99.

⁴¹ Lord 1927, 499–500; Titchener 2003, 89.

⁴² McCarty 1974, 388–391.

developed in histories), and in representation (biography rearranges the order of the material to serve its own purposes better).

Aside from *Cato* and *Atticus*, the two surviving *vitae* from a lost series on historians, all of Nepos' other extant biographies have famous generals for subjects. Nevertheless, it is known that he also wrote numerous biographies on other types of subjects such as philosophers, orators, and grammarians.⁴³

The extant *Lives* contain almost no dialogues, speeches, or direct quotations, except in *Epaminondas*, which features several of his sayings since he was reputed not only as general but also for his political eloquence,⁴⁴ and *Atticus* (who was not a "man of action").⁴⁵ Aside from these two *Lives*, Nepos' biographies tend to be economical on detail, descriptive rather than scenic, and have no overall plot. This produces an impression of distance from the subjects and events despite the glowing commendations introducing the narratives. Although other biographies can be richer and more dramatic (especially in Plutarch) or vivid and entertaining (especially in Diogenes Laertius), this style of descriptive narration is well-represented across GRB in our period.

The fragments of two otherwise lost *Lives* of Nepos indicate a greater variety of materials than is represented in the extant collection since they include a letter excerpt (from Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi brothers)⁴⁶ and a eulogy of Cicero (which may have been part of the preface to *De Historicis Latinis*).⁴⁷

Nepos' collection also includes a short compendium of sketches on subjects who were simultaneously kings and generals (*De Regibus*). Unlike the biographies, these entries are chained together and frequently intertwined. Despite the fact that the subjects were well-

⁴³ Nepos wrote at least sixteen volumes numbering 160 to 400 biographies (Hägg 2012, 189). There is some debate as to whether Nepos' corpus included grammarians, cf., Kaster 1995, xxvi. If it did, he may have been a source for Suetonius' entries on the same type of subjects. The latter mentions Nepos as a source of information for the terms that were applied to grammarians (Suet. *De Rhet.* 4.1).

⁴⁴ Even *Cato* and *Atticus* do not focus much on the literary activity of these men (illustrated with quotations) but rather on their political role.

⁴⁵ As we will see in our discussion of the *topoi* of GRB, these two biographies are also the most developed in Nepos' corpus.

⁴⁶ Letters are frequently included in Suetonius' biographies.

⁴⁷ LCL 467, Fragments, 326-331.

known, the entries say very little.⁴⁸ Most often, there is little beside the subjects' nicknames and how they died. The introduction to *De Regibus* makes it clear that it is related to Nepos' biographical project but neither presents nor commends itself as biography (cf., *Reg.* 1-2).⁴⁹

2.1.2 *Size*

Nepos' biographies are very concise, ranging from about 360 words (*Aristides*) to 3,700 (*Atticus*) with the majority below one thousand words.⁵⁰ This size variability is quite typical in GRB in our period. For instance, in Suetonius *De Poetis*, *Lucan* is barely over two hundred words, compared to *Virgil*, which has slightly less than 1,500. In the *Caesares*, *Divus Titus* has about 1,500 words whereas *Divus Augustus* extends to more than 14,000. Thus, Burridge's assertion that *bioi* are generally of medium size is incorrect since so many of them are actually small.⁵¹ Rather, GRBs typically range from small to medium size, and there are no undisputed instances of GRB of longer size.⁵²

2.1.3 *Structure and Content*

Nepos' biographies follow a rather consistent outline. They open with a brief introduction of the subject. The father is usually named, with few, if any, additional known ancestors. This may be accompanied by a comment about the family's social or economic status. The place of origin is also frequently indicated. The subject's claims to fame are then

⁴⁸ Fifteen of them, including Hamilcar and Hannibal, are mentioned in a text totalling around seven hundred words.

⁴⁹ Pace Frickenschmidt, who argued that these and other brief accounts of some of a person's important facts were *kurz Biographie*, blueprints of fuller biographies (whether the latter were even written). Thus, he considers Acts 10.37-41 to represent this literary form (in the *formgeschichte* sense): "...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him... They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Frickenschmidt 1997, 192-197). Although this proposal may seem attractive, it is excessively speculative and confronts us again with the dangers of confusing biographical as a *quality of text* with biography as a *kind of work*.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mark is the shortest canonical gospel with around 11,300 words.

⁵¹ Cf., Burridge 2004, 135, 140, 148, 164, 172.

⁵² Two works of a large size are biographical: Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana*. The first and shortest of the two is 79,293 words and the second is quite longer. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, neither of these is actually a biography. To the size of these two works, we may contrast that of Plutarch's longest biography, *Alexander* (20,118 words).

summarised very economically, though usually in superlative terms. The commendation at the beginning of the narrative serves to highlight why the subject was worthy of inclusion in the series and can be balanced with observations about the subject's vices.⁵³ It has a programmatic function as it identifies the character traits to be highlighted. A particularly relevant element of the subject's youth or education may also be mentioned.

After the introduction, a longer but concise account is given of the subject's rise to fame, including some of the first feats signalling his qualities. A narration follows of select events and practices illustrating his virtues and vices and how they affected the state and citizens for good or ill. The account is loosely chronological since it starts with origins and ends with death, but no effort is made to provide a continuous narrative of noteworthy events with a unifying plot. Frequently, continued success incurs jealousy and ill-treatment from fellow citizens (most often exile or imprisonment) potentially cutting the hero's career short. The biography ends with a short death account, often (in the case of the generals) in battle or sickness.

The structure of *Epaminondas* (and to some extent *Atticus*) diverges from the norm in Nepos' corpus. Although it starts and ends in typical chronological order (origin and education/death), it is otherwise topically arranged as announced in the prologue (1.4).⁵⁴ Thematic arrangement will also be found in Suetonius' biographies and it is likely that Nepos himself followed the example of predecessors.

2.1.4 *Emphases and Purposes*

Nepos' biographies are moralistic in purpose, commending his subjects' virtues and warning against their vices. His interest in moralism was not confined to biography since he also wrote the *Exempla*, moralising historical anecdotes,⁵⁵ reputed to have comprised at least five books.⁵⁶

In addition to learning from his subjects' virtues and vices, Nepos also intended his

⁵³ *Pausanias*, for instance, starts by stating that he "was a great man, but untrustworthy in all the relations of life" (1.1) and *Alcibiades* that he "was never excelled either in faults or in virtues" (1.1).

⁵⁴ Stem 2012, 164.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-95.

⁵⁶ *Gel., Noct. att.* 6.18.1.

readers to compare their relative merits (*Han.* 13.4). This correlation between moralism and *synkrisis* is a significant aspect of Plutarch's biography as well. By inviting such comparisons, serial biography tends to lessen focus on the individual subject. The serial biographers of the period are not interested in "making disciples" of a particular person. Instead, Nepos would have his readers imitate the justice of Aristides just as much as the love of country of Epaminondas, and the generous friendliness of Atticus.

Moreover, Nepos was also using his subjects as examples to draw a portrait of ideal political leadership with an eye to the events and situation of his own day. Our author particularly emphasised a set of values that should govern rulers (and citizens), particularly *libertas* (*Thras.* 1.1-2; *Timol.* 1.1) and *modestia* (*Timol.* 1.3).⁵⁷ Nepos not only illustrates these values through his subjects' conduct (e.g., *Ag.* 4.1-3; *Epam.* 7.1) but also highlights them through judiciously placed *sententiae*: on the superiority of merit over *fortuna* (*Thras.* 1.1, 3; cf., *Timol.* 4.4), on the dangers of success (*Con.* 5.1; *Di.* 9.5; *Pel.* 3.1; *Timol.* 1.2), on the supreme value of *libertas* (*Milt.* 3.6; *Dion.* 5.3; 9.5); on the subordinate role of *pietas* (*Pel.* 2.3; *Milt.* 4.4; *Them.* 2.4). Occasionally, he even risks explicit comparisons with the situation in Rome during his lifetime (*Eum.* 8.3; *Thras.* 2.4; *Ag.* 4.1-3).

2.1.5 *The Role of Philosophy*

Nepos' interests in moralisation and in the *polis* reflect the influence of Greek philosophy,⁵⁸ although his disapproval of Alcibiades' pederasty shows that his ethics are more Roman (*Alc.* 2.2-3).⁵⁹ Nepos' *Vitae* were particularly influenced by Cicero's interest in political philosophy (adapted from the Greeks to a Roman context).⁶⁰

2.1.6 *Conclusion*

To sum up, Nepos' biographies are self-enclosed but collected works, written in prose, ranging from small to middle size. They set out to the readers the virtues and vices of

⁵⁷ Dionisotti, 1988, 39-46.

⁵⁸ See discussion below on the more explicit relationship between moralism, politics, and philosophy in Plutarch's works.

⁵⁹ Tuplin 2000, 139.

⁶⁰ Nicgorski 2016, 1.

men who have shaped history, for the purpose of imitation, and as the basis for reflection on the relationship between power, safety, and liberty. The subject is presented for evaluation through conventional categories: origins, youth and education, rise to fame, deeds, crises, and death. The style of narration is third-person description with little to no place for dramatization and plot.

His moralistic agenda takes precedence over historiography and historical accuracy. Even the subjects themselves are secondary to this primary purpose which applies cumulatively to the whole series and was intended to be furthered through *synkrisis*.

These biographies were composed as part of a larger literary culture in which there was exchange with other literati and generous use of sources. They were likely influenced by philosophy and certainly by traditional Roman values.

2.2 Nicolaus of Damascus' *Vita Caesaris*

Nicolaus of Damascus (c. 64 B.C.E. - ?) was a prolific scholar whose works include a universal history 80 to 144 books strong, an autobiography, a treatise on plants, commentaries on Aristotle, and tragedies and comedies, most of which are lost or very partially preserved. Nicolaus' interest in philosophy earned him the nickname ὁ περιπατητικός.⁶¹

Although the work traditionally (but not originally) titled *Vita Caesaris* is frequently referred to as a biography, there are important uncertainties concerning the validity of such classification. Only a partial and fragmented text remains in a tenth century Byzantine collection that groups ancient excerpts on the basis of shared themes rather than authors. Only four out of fifty-three thematic sections are extant, two of which have some material from the VC.⁶²

The fragmented material includes a prologue, a partial account of Octavian's lineage, and an account of his youth and education with particular emphasis on his character and relationship with Julius Caesar. This is followed by a sizable account of the conspiracy that led to Julius' assassination and its immediate aftermath. These events are not narrated from Octavian's standpoint and he is completely absent from this section. The last section deals

⁶¹ See the Suda entry in (BNJ 90 T 1); Athenaeus (BNJ 90 F 73, 77a, 77b, 94, 95).

⁶² Pausch 2011, 145.

with Octavian's return and embroilment in the succession war. The fragments end abruptly with escalation anticipating the battle of Actium (thus, before Octavian becomes Caesar).⁶³

Since the extant material is only available in a thematically arranged collection, it is possible that undetermined amounts of this material were condensed and rearranged in a different order from the original.⁶⁴ Moreover, since the prologue promises to describe Augustus' great achievements of war and peace in his vast dominion and the extant material does not even cover his rule, the largest part of the work is probably missing.⁶⁵

The prologue also promises to give an account of Octavian's birth and upbringing, his parents, and education before his achievements.⁶⁶ These are biographical *topoi* but as noted earlier, this does not necessarily mean that the work is in fact a biography. This outline is too general to indicate more specifically how the main part of the work was structured and what purposes it served.⁶⁷

Moreover, uncertainty over the title of the work suggests that manuscript collectors were uncertain of its genre. The excerptor called it a *Καίσαρος ἀγωγή* in the superscription of frg. 125, a *βίος Καίσαρος τοῦ νέου* (*Life of the Young Caesar*) in frg.129, and simply a *βίος Καίσαρος* at the end of frg.130. The Suda title offers a combination of terms: “τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος ἀγωγήν”⁶⁸ (a problematic phrase for which several emendations have been proposed).⁶⁹ The *ἀγωγή* may have been a genre that focused on the youth and education of a subject, but this cannot be ascertained because most ancient works with titles that seem to indicate such a focus have not survived.⁷⁰ The work's particular interest in Octavian's

⁶³ See BNJ 90 F 125-139.

⁶⁴ Pausch 2011, 18.

⁶⁵ Toher 1985, 32.

⁶⁶ BNJ 90 F 125.

⁶⁷ Pace Pausch 2011, 149. He argues later that this work is analogous to the *Cyropaedia*, yet the latter is not thematically but largely chronologically arranged. We will see later on in this chapter that even chronological biographies routinely start with the rubrics that the *proem* mentions.

⁶⁸ BNJ 90 T 1.

⁶⁹ Toher 1985, 28.

⁷⁰ Xenophon's *Κύρου παιδεία*; Onesicritus of Astypaleia's *πῶς Ἀλέξανδρος ἤχθη*; Marsyas of Pella's *Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀγωγή*; Lysimachus' *περὶ τῆς Ἀττάλου παιδείας*; possibly also Theophrastus' *περὶ παιδείας βασιλέως* (Toher 1985, 65-74; Pausch 2011, 150).

education (his alleged exceptional performance in school seems to have been the author's invention) probably accounts for its subsequent designation as ἀγωγή.⁷¹

Another difficulty is that the extant material stops quite short of the time of Augustus' death in C.E. 14 (the Battle of Actium took place in 31 B.C.E.). Since Nicolaus was his contemporary, it is not certain whether the full work would have included the emperor's death or was written during his lifetime. The description of Augustus' conquests in the prologue does not suffice to answer this question. This, in turn, raises questions about what the purpose of the work was. A laudatory work written during the emperor's reign would have had a different function from one written after his death. Moreover, despite claims to the contrary,⁷² one would be hard pressed to produce a clear case of a propagandist biography in the strict sense of the term before Nicolaus and within our period. Political opinion is present in Nepos' biographies, probably also in those of Suetonius, possibly in Plutarch's *Cato* and certainly in Tacitus' *Agricola*, but it would be excessive to refer to any of them as propaganda.⁷³ Of course Nicolaus may be the first to take biography in that direction, but to conclude this, one would need to be sure that his work really is a biography. The stated goal to tell of Augustus' achievements "that all may know the truth" (*frg.* 126) may indicate that the work was written in defence of Caesar's imperial administration.

To sum up, there are not many firm conclusions that can be drawn from the *VC* that help characterise GRB in our period. The emphasis on virtues and the value of early years in shaping character are certainly in line with biography, as is much of the subject matter (origins, youth, education, deeds) but none of this is unique to biography. The work is very laudatory and closer in that regard to the *Cyropaedia* and to encomia, and perhaps a notch higher than even Tacitus' *Agricola*. We cannot determine for certain whether it was a

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² E.g., BurrIDGE 2004, 71, 73, 76.

⁷³ BurrIDGE describes *Cato* as politically polemical (2004, 73-76). As evidence, he refers to the writings of Munatius Rufus and Thræsea Paetus (the latter, Plutarch claimed, reworked the biography written by the first who was Cato's close friend, cf., Plut. *Cato* 25.1; 37.1). Since they were both Cato's contemporaries, if much of what Plutarch wrote concerning the views of Cato about the ascendancy of Julius Caesar's power reflects the ethos of their writings, then indeed, *they* would have resonated with political overtones. Yet it does not follow that this extends to Plutarch's *Life*, written at least a century later. Examined on its own terms, it is difficult to find a greater political agenda in *Cato* than in the many other *Lives* in which liberty was endangered by political developments. Certainly, one would have to define what exactly the polemical aim of that *Life* was, especially when one compares it with the defense of Caesar Plutarch offers in the latter's *Life*.

biography, an “ἁγωγή,” a hybrid, or something else.

2.3 Plutarch’s Parallel Lives

Plutarch’s biographies constitute the largest collection of extant GRBs at our disposal. The number of comments he makes on his biographical method and purposes and their correlation with topics treated in the *Moralia* make this corpus particularly useful to understand the ethos of GRB in our period.

2.3.1 General Characteristics

Unlike Nepos’ biographies, almost all of the *Parallel Lives* are presented in pairs with the subjects compared to each other. Typically, a preface introduces both biographies with a preview of shared themes, providing a rationale for pairing them. Nineteen out of twenty-three pairs are followed by a formal *synkrisis*. In three cases, the stories of a subject and his successor are presented without interruption (the Gracchi brothers, Agis/Cleomenes, Galba/Otho).⁷⁴ Biography size ranges from around 7,000 to about 20,000 words.⁷⁵

After a preface, which may contain authorial comments on biographical purpose and approach, the narrative normally starts with some background on the subject’s family, education, and revealing childhood/youth anecdotes when available. The account then follows a loose chronological order starting with emergence and public recognition of the subject’s qualities, followed by an account of the defining events of his life in which successes are often followed by reversals and opposition. The biography ends with the subject’s (often tragic) death and its immediate aftermath.

2.3.2 Programmatic Statements

Plutarch’s biography frequently includes programmatic statements. While they are usually made in the context of a specific biography or biographical pair, they provide a consistent overview of his general conception of the genre.

First and like Nepos, Plutarch defines biography mostly by contrasting it in very

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the idiosyncrasies of *Galba/Otho*, see Georgiadou 2013, 257-60.

⁷⁵ Burridge 2004, 164.

similar ways with historiography. While it is important for biography to narrate key events in the subject's life, more attention can be given to "historically insignificant" character-revealing details and anecdotes (*Nic.* 1.1-2, 5; cf., *Tim.* 15.6; *Cat. Min.* 37.5; *Alex.* 1.1-3).

Second, Plutarch seeks to present his subjects realistically. Although desirous to present models of virtue, Plutarch recognised the impossibility of perfection and includes accounts of his subjects' shortcomings (*Cim.* 2.3-5). This contrasts with the exaggerations and typical one-sidedness of encomia.

Third, for Plutarch, the primary purpose of biography is moralistic. Readers can thrive for self-improvement by pondering examples of virtues and vices and their outcomes in the lives of great men (*Tim.* 1.1, 3; *Per.* 2.1-5; *Demetr.* 1.1-6).

Fourth, biography is the result of scholarly research. Plutarch travelled to have access to sources (limited in his small town), used different source types including interviews and oral tales, and had to overcome limitations such as his lack of mastery of Latin (*Dem.* 2.1-3).

Although the above would seem to provide a clear map to Plutarch's biographical craft, several scholars have questioned whether the programmatic statements reliably describe not only his own actual practice but more generally the differences between GR biography and historiography. In particular, Plutarch's stress on the importance of smaller details as the material of biography in contrast to history's focus on larger scale events seems to misalign with the high content of the latter in his biographies.⁷⁶ Pelling also observes that *Caesar* focuses mainly on great deeds and does not moralise as much as can be the case in other biographies. Pointing out that "a writer's programmatic statements can sometimes be a poor guide to his work," he concludes that "some Lives fit Plutarch's theory better than others."⁷⁷

Moreover, Duff documents the fact that in antiquity, specific works were often referred to with different generic labels and that the term *ιστορία* was used with different senses that do not necessarily imply a generic connotation. He concluded that it was a mistake to read Plutarch's contrast between his biographies and histories as reflecting his general conception of the difference between the two genres.⁷⁸ Rather, such statements should be read as rhetoric that aims to portray an author's works as standing out in a

⁷⁶ Duff 1999, 15.

⁷⁷ Pelling 2002, 106. Cf., Duff 1999, 15-21.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 19-21.

particular way in relation to others and commends them as worthwhile reading to potential readers.

Although these observations rightly point to the need for caution in the interpretation of programmatic statements, the conclusion that Plutarch's are unreliable is clearly overstated. First, some of the statements that seem contradictory are not mutually exclusive. Plutarch's remarks about the value of small details and anecdotes does not discount that of great deeds, nor does it announce that he will only, or even mainly, recount smaller or lesser-known details. It is most of all a disclaimer that (1) indicates that the biography may be found to be less comprehensive than a history as far as great deeds are concerned and (2) brings attention to the ethical value of materials that readers could otherwise think of lesser importance. This disclaimer was particularly justified for the biographies of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar since they were so famous and their careers so well-documented.⁷⁹ One must recall that the biographers' broad scholarship and evaluation of sources signal their anticipation to be read and critiqued by their peers.

Second, there is no need to interpret these programmatic statements as tyrannical rules rather than broad principles that may be adapted to the specificities of each biography. This is most demonstrably true of *Caesar*. To begin with, it is critical to observe that it is not so much a matter of methodological deviation but the specific constraints pertaining to *this* biography that account for its lesser moralising content. Normally, Plutarch introduces the moral themes of a pair of biographies in the prologue. However, for the *Alexander/Caesar* pair, he felt constrained to abridge because there was overabundance of material to cover (*Alex.* 1.1). The short prologue (less than a page altogether in a Loeb volume) is spent disclaiming and does not provide a preview of moral themes.

Moreover, the *synkrisis* that follow biography pairs are also one of the primary devices Plutarch uses to guide character evaluation. These do not merely restate the obvious but can render judgements that are not necessarily clear from the main narratives themselves (e.g., Plutarch's negative view of how Antony ended his life).⁸⁰ Since the pair *Alexander/Caesar* is one of the rare ones to lack a *synkrisis*, the reader is deprived of indications of how Plutarch would have wanted *Caesar* to be evaluated from a moralistic

⁷⁹ For a similar apology, see *Cato Minor* 37.5.

⁸⁰ Pelling 2002, 106, cf., *Comp. Demetr. Ant.* 6.2.

standpoint. It is possible that the *synkrisis* was skipped to leave more writing space for the biographies themselves.

Finally, a third significant device providing orientation to moral themes consists of the biographical information preceding the start of the subject's career: parentage, education, and childhood stories, which is also lacking from *Caesar*. The traits of key ancestors or relatives often prefigure the subject's career (e.g., Heracles for Theseus), education or lack thereof plays an important role in character development, and childhood stories reveal incipient character traits. This part of the biography was apparently lost.⁸¹ Our perception of moralisation in *Caesar* would probably be significantly altered if these were not missing.

However, despite these lacunae, the type of content one finds in *Caesar* is well suited to the exploration of his character. For instance, Plutarch mentions that Caesar hated Sulla on account of Marius his relative (1.1), introducing the importance of family considerations in Caesar's political stances. This theme resurfaces in the account of the marriage of Pompey with Caesar's daughter, Julia, which effectively ensured peace between the two men until she died (14.4; 23.4).

Caesar is portrayed as unusually ambitious when he applies for the priesthood while still a young man, aspiring to the office as a political stepping stone rather than out of piety (1.2). He is described as having a conquering confidence as he all but dictates terms to pirates who abducted him and is proven right by ensuing events (2.1-4). This trait anticipates his fateful decision to cross the Rubicon later on. He is eager to learn statesmanship in Rhodes (3.1-2) and tries early to endear himself to the populace (4.1-3). Moreover, it is difficult to think of more character revealing anecdotes than that of the younger Caesar stating that he would prefer to be first in a small village than second in Rome, or of his weeping after reading about Alexander, realising that at same age, the latter had already conquered so much (11.2-3). These are points that both Duff and Pelling recognised in other parts of their works but do not sufficiently bring to bear on their discussion of the place of moralisation in

⁸¹ See Note 1 in the Loeb edition of *Caesar* (1.1). As we consider all the material that Suetonius features in the years that precede Caesar's rise to fame as consul in Gaul (to which Plutarch's account moves rather quickly), especially Caesar's plots, bribes, and irregular attempts at getting to higher offices (e.g., *The Defied Julius*, 9-13), we can appreciate how missing material might have influenced our impression of Plutarch's version. Plutarch's Caesar still appears as clearly ambitious, but Suetonius' is outrightly rapacious. It seems curious that Plutarch would not have included at least some of these stories in his biography.

Caesar.⁸² Pelling sees ambition, determination, and ability as defining Caesar's life.⁸³ He even suggests that these traits were so consuming that it might explain why there was not room for much else (such as amorous stories) and why his biography is much more about large scale endeavours than little details! Duff, likewise, proposes that *Caesar* stands "as a model for the delusion and false promise of glory."⁸⁴

In light of this, it is unwarranted to conclude that *Caesar* derogates to Plutarch's declared biographical method. Aside from the idiosyncrasies that cripple our ability to evaluate its moralising purposes as such, what is there is eminently suited to the description and evaluation of the subject's character.

Lastly, Duff's assertion that the programmatic statements do not necessarily intend to make a genre distinction between biography and history does not stand up to close examination. While Plutarch can indeed use the word *ιστορία* in a broader sense (e.g., as "story" in *Cimon* 2.5; cf., *Comp. Aem. Tim.* 1.1; *Thes.* 1.2; *Dem.* 2.1),⁸⁵ he also clearly uses it to refer to a specific class of writings such as when he stated that "the accurate and circumstantial narration of these events belongs to formal history" (*πραγματικῆς ἱστορίας*) (*Galb.* 2.3), one of the statements distinguishing biography from historiography.

Duff's proposal is also undermined by the fact that this distinction between history and biographical writing is consistently made along the very same line by different authors. Aside from Nepos and Plutarch, it is also found in Xenophon's *Symposium* (1:1 cited approvingly by Plutarch in *Ages.* 29.2 with regard to his own biography) and Polybius (*Hist.* 10.21.5–8).⁸⁶ While Duff rejects the relevance of Polybius' statement by pointing out that it concerns an encomium rather than a biography, it is too facile a dismissal since Polybius still differentiates therein between a biographical rather than historiographic focus.

Clearly, the discussion above cannot engage the full breadth of the debate about

⁸² Cf., Pelling 2002, 257, 328.

⁸³ Ibid., 316.

⁸⁴ Duff 1999, 87.

⁸⁵ In *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, Plutarch uses "ιστορία" to describe the Lives of Aristoxenus, along with the histories of Herodotus and Xenophon, the Travels of Eudoxus, and the Foundations and Republics of Aristotle (Plut., *Suav. viv.* 10).

⁸⁶ C.f., Farrington 2011, 324–42.

generic consciousness and the meaning of possible generic labels in antiquity. For the purposes of the present study, it is sufficient to conclude that Plutarch did have a rather well-defined concept of biography in contrast to historiography, and that it was similar to that of Nepos. As Pelling eloquently put it: “the theory is clear and consistent. Biography will often concentrate on personal details and may abbreviate its historical narrative; its concern will be the portrayal of character, and its ultimate purpose will be protreptic and moral.”⁸⁷

2.3.3 *Philosophical Framework*

The writings of Plutarch provide insight into the pervasive influence of Greek philosophy in GRB. Plutarch studied philosophy in Athens under Ammonius the Peripatetic before he himself became a teacher (*Dem.* 2.2). He is the author of seventy-eight treatises focusing particularly on ethics and including disputations against the doctrines of the Stoics and Epicureans.

Only a very brief account of the philosophical underpinnings of Plutarch’s biography can be given here. From Platonism came the emphasis on imitating what is good and from Aristotle, the notion of virtue as pathway to happiness and definition of a life well-lived.⁸⁸ This conception of ethics was not solely for the benefit of the individual, however: the goal of society and government should be to achieve virtuous harmony (cf., Plato’s *Republic*). Correspondingly, the subjects of biography exemplify how individual virtue or vice can affect not only personal fame, wealth, power, or lead to demise, but also the fortunes of the *polis*. These effects can even extend beyond the subjects’ lifetimes as their traits are perpetrated through their descendants. This is the reason GRB has no interest in recounting the lives and fortunes of ordinary people. Its ethical agenda rests on the contemplation of paragons and not on relating to the mundane circumstances of the bulk of mankind.

Stoicism also emphasized that virtue alone cannot guarantee happiness because of the intrusions of gods, Fate, and Fortune.⁸⁹ This is reflected in the important role of prophecies, oracles, and omens in GRBs. Plutarch leaned toward the Aristotelian branch of Middle Platonism and rejected the Stoics’ commendation of denial and repression of the passions

⁸⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁸ Kenny 2004, 81.

⁸⁹ Cf., Seneca, *Lvcilio svo salvtcm*.

(*apatheia*) to be virtuous and achieve happiness.⁹⁰ For him, virtuous living was a mean (*mesotēs*) between deficiency and excess.⁹¹ A minimum of external goods (e.g., wealth, friends) and bodily goods (e.g., appearance, health) were needed, along with virtue, in order to achieve happiness.⁹² The *topoi* used to characterise Plutarch's subjects correspond to this conception of the good life.

While there is some debate about how closely Plutarch's characterisation of his subjects matches up with Peripatetic theory,⁹³ the latter provides all the basic assumptions that govern his biographies: "A man must live with his inherited nature (*phusis*), but he may habituate (*ethizein*) and train his moral character (*ēthos*); excellence (*aretē*) is to be found in a just and balanced reaction to stimulus and emotion."⁹⁴

Plutarch's *Moralia* bring to the fore the relationship between his approaches to biography and philosophy, a relationship that certainly pervades the whole of GRB in our period. Of course, not every biographer was an adept of philosophy to the same degree as Plutarch, but they were scholars who were neither ignorant of nor could escape the pervasive influence of philosophy on their conception of what a life worth recounting was, and how it should be evaluated. These philosophical underpinnings are a significant part of the assumptions (i.e., Idealized Cognitive Models) that govern and define the genre.

2.3.4 *Moralism*

Plutarch's philosophical interest was particularly focused on ethics. Topics discussed in *Moralia* include how to measure progress in virtue, whether virtue can be taught, "moral" (ἠθικὴς) virtue, and the relationship of vice to unhappiness.⁹⁵ Many other ethical topics are directly related to dominant themes in his biographies, such as the importance of child education, flatterers/friends, enemies, chance, superstition, the need to control anger, the love

⁹⁰ Cf., *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos*; Dillon 1977, 229; Duff 1999, 75.

⁹¹ *Virt. mor.* 66 C; Dillon 1977, 195; Russell 1973, 85.

⁹² Dillon 1977, 44.

⁹³ Russell 1973, 105-6; cf., Pelling 2012, 283-286; Duff 1999, 72-76; Opsomer 2016, 101-26.

⁹⁴ Russell 1973, 105.

⁹⁵ Nikolaidis 2008.

of wealth, envy, or the delays of divine vengeance. As in his biographies, Plutarch uses *synkrisis* in *Moralia* to explore ethical issues.

This interest in ethics is also central to the moralism of *Parallel Lives*. Thus, for Duff, it is of the greatest importance to insist on the moralistic purpose of *Lives*.⁹⁶ Pelling likewise, describes their “ultimate” purpose as “protreptic and moral.”⁹⁷ Russell concurs: the subjects may all be statesmen, yet the object is *not* to write continuous political history, but to exemplify virtue and vice. Attention to education and the selection of significant anecdotes are driven by this moralistic purpose.⁹⁸

For Plutarch, a person’s deeds are the concrete expressions of virtue and vice.⁹⁹ Understanding the subject’s character is ultimately less about the person and more about recognising right from wrong.¹⁰⁰ Plutarch is more interested, for instance, in having his readers ponder the dangers of letting passion cloud one’s judgement than in judging Antony *himself* for his fatal devotion to Cleopatra.

Moreover, the biographies are not just series of events and decisions to be evaluated: they describe how character works out from childhood to end of life, put to the test and shaped by prosperity, adversity, popularity, temptations, and the caprices of Fortune. Plutarch is also interested in the kind and trajectory of a subject’s life (*Ag. Cleom.* 2.1–6), and it is to broad similarities between life trajectories that Plutarch usually points as the reason for pairing subjects. Likewise, the *synkrisis*, while they evaluate specific actions, are often concerned with expressing that one subject showed himself “better” than the other (*Comp. Phil. Flam.* 1.1). Subjects are characterised as integrated characters who display not just one dominant trait but a set of traits that tend to go together, for instance, an Antony or a Cato.¹⁰¹ These person-types are far from simplistic caricatures; they serve to illustrate complex moral questions. The pair Phocion-Cato Minor explores whether compromise rather than inflexible

⁹⁶ Duff 1999, 298.

⁹⁷ Pelling 2002, 102.

⁹⁸ Russell 2014.

⁹⁹ Duff 1999, 13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Pelling 2002, 287.

virtue can be best in certain circumstances.¹⁰² In the life of Alcibiades, the relationship and tension between traits translating into success benefiting the state on the one hand and into not-so-praiseworthy personal vices on the other hand poses the problem of whether it is preferable to accept or curtail both.¹⁰³

2.3.5 Conclusion

The importance of Plutarch's corpus for understanding the conceptual background that operates through the modes of characterisation and topoi of GRB cannot be overstated. In addition to providing a sizable sampling of the genre, his programmatic statements and discussion of related concepts in *Moralia* make explicit what is often considerably less so in the work of other biographers of the period.

2.4 Tacitus' *Agricola*

Agricola, written around 97-98 C.E., is the only biographical work by Tacitus (C.E. 56 -?).¹⁰⁴ The subject, Gnaeus Julius Agricola (40-93 C.E.), was Tacitus' late father-in-law, a successful Roman general, most notably as consul and governor of Britannia.

Tacitus was a scholar and friend of Pliny the Younger. His writings show the influence of Sallust, Livy, and Cicero.¹⁰⁵ Like Nepos and Nicolaus, Tacitus wrote histories: *Historiae* (105-106 C.E.) and *Annales* (114-115 C.E.). He also authored *Germanica* in 98 C.E., an ethnographic monograph on the German tribes. Regrettably, the last books of *Historiae* are lost, depriving us of the opportunity to compare its treatment of Domitian's reign with the same in *Agricola*. The introduction of *Historiae*, however, stresses the same themes as *Agricola*: loss of freedom of expression under the Principate, rampant flattery and denunciations, and the virtuous conduct of a few despite this oppressive climate (*Hist.* 1.1-3). Tacitus was already planning to write *Historiae* when he wrote *Agricola* (*Agr.* 3.3). As will

¹⁰² Duff 1999, 130.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 205 ff.

¹⁰⁴ See Woodman 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Sallust's *The Jugurthine War* and *The Catiline Conspiracy* are historical monographs centred on a person; they are not biographies. For an enlightening discussion of historical monographs in antiquity, see Palmer 1992, 373-88.

be seen shortly, these literary interests explain the unusual combination of generic modes in this work quite well.

Despite the fact that it tells the story of Agricola, this work has several important characteristics atypical of biography. First, the preface is mostly a lengthy discussion of the political climate in Rome under Domitian's rule rather than an introduction of Agricola. While it describes the context of the story, the political question is so present in the foreground that it competes with and even obscures its biographical focus.¹⁰⁶

Second, what little is said about Agricola in the preface (the very last sentence) agrees with the epilogue in describing the work as a tribute out of filial piety (3.3) presented in a very personal tone to his wife and daughter of Agricola, as well as to their children as a model to ponder and imitate (45.3-46.3). The style of preface and epilogue reflects both the influence of Cicero¹⁰⁷ and of the style of *Evagoras*.¹⁰⁸ Thus, although the reference to recounting the deeds and the habits/character (lat. *mores*) of great men (1.1) seems to align with biography, the tribute function and the superlative praise lavished on the subject (8.1-3; 9.2-5; 18.5-6; 22.4; 29.1) better correspond to encomium.¹⁰⁹

Third, the main narrative begins with material that would be at home in both biography and biographical encomium: a short ancestry and an economical but important description of Agricola's youth highlighting incipient traits. An account of his ascendance from promising soldier to governor of Britain follows.¹¹⁰ However, at this point, the story of Agricola is paused by a seven-chapter long excursus on the land and peoples of Britain and its history with Rome. Although excursuses are regularly found in Plutarch's biographies, this

¹⁰⁶ A comparison may be drawn with the Apologies of Socrates that are not really biographical in primary intention either.

¹⁰⁷ Birley 2010, 49.

¹⁰⁸ Compare the call to imitation in *Evag.* 76-77 and *Agr.* 46.1-3, the idea of immortality of the memory of the subject in *Evag.* 71 and *Agr.* 46.4, and that of preserving the memory of great men in *Evag.* 5-6 and *Agr.* 1.1.

¹⁰⁹ There is some resemblance to another Roman biographical tribute: *Atticus* (Nepos), whose subject is also praised for knowing how to navigate difficult times virtuously and as a model citizen. *Atticus* however focuses primarily on biographical representation.

¹¹⁰ See Sailor's helpful outline (Sailor 2012, 25-26).

one is exceedingly longer and, like the preface, diverts from biographical focus.¹¹¹

Fourth, the account of Agricola's career that follows is presented in annalistic format, a style that is also unrepresented in other extant biographies. While this corresponds to the rhythm of Agricola's campaigns with their summer activity and winter breaks, it does not explain why of all the biographies of generals, only this one uses it.

Fifth, the political agenda of the work is so pronounced that it competes with a true biographical focus. In addition to the description of the political climate in the prologue, the main account takes special pains to stress that the successful general consistently strove to keep a low profile, avoided honour and recognition, and was above reproach.¹¹² The shadow of Domitian is ever threatening even though he is not at the forefront of the narrative. It is within that perspective that the detailed speech of the barbarian chieftain Glaucus (30-32), which is unanimously held to be Tacitus' invention, is to be interpreted as a questioning of the justice of Roman imperialism and an implicit commentary on the servility to which the Senate had been reduced in Rome.¹¹³

Finally, even the author's concluding thoughts after the death of Agricola pertain more to Domitian's tyranny than to the deceased general (44.5; 45.2). As has been aptly put, *Agricola* is both a work of praise (of Agricola) and blame (of Domitian) and *about* praise and blame (the political context of Rome).¹¹⁴

In view of the evidence above, it is best to consider *Agricola* as a hybrid that combines within a biographical framework¹¹⁵ the elements of an apology, a funeral encomium, annalistic history, and a political manifesto.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ The same question is often raised by Nicolaus' long excursus on the conspiracy and murder of Julius Caesar in the *Vita Caesaris*.

¹¹² In *Agr.* 9.3-4, Tacitus may be combining the virtues of both Cato and Caesar in Agricola: severity (*seuerus*), compassion (*misericors*), approachability (*facilitas*), incorruptibility (*integritas*), self-control (*abstinentia*) and of course, *modestia* (51). Thus, Agricola can be a successful general like Caesar yet a pacific, disinterested, and humble statesman like Cato (Birley 2010, 50-51).

¹¹³ Lavan 2011, 297-298.

¹¹⁴ Sailor 2012, 26.

¹¹⁵ This bears some resemblance to Satyrus' *Euripides*, which also uses a biographical framework to explore contemporary issues.

¹¹⁶ Stadter has proposed that "Lives of those recently departed" might be a distinct subcategory of biography. Cf., Stadter 2007, 530. Unfortunately, beside *Agricola*, all the examples he suggests as possible instances of this subcategory are works that are lost, and his proposal therefore remains mostly speculative.

2.5 Suetonian Biography

2.5.1 Introduction

Suetonius' *De Viris Illustribus* (*DVI*) is estimated to belong to the last decade of Trajan's rule (98-117 C.E.) and *De Vita Caesarum* in the first quarter of the second century. These are therefore too late to have influenced Mark. However, they are close enough in time to be considered likely representatives of GRB in our period. As such, Suetonius' biographies are critical because of their number and present special interest because they include several subspecies of biography.

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus was born in 70 C.E. during Vespasian's reign. He occupied important posts in imperial administration under Trajan and Hadrian, serving as literary adviser, librarian, and correspondence secretary. His experience at the palace provided him with first-hand exposure to state politics¹¹⁷ and privileged access to imperial archives. Like Tacitus, Suetonius was a close friend of Pliny the Younger and was well connected to literary circles.¹¹⁸ As a scholar, he authored multiple works in several registers: catalogues on Roman spectacles, famous courtesans, types of clothes, lost works on grammatical problems and literary sigla, a commentary on Cicero's *Republic*, and more.

2.5.2 *De Viris Illustribus*

DVI, his first series of biographies, originally included a larger selection of subject types (all men of letters: grammarians, rhetoricians, poets, historians, and philosophers). Only a small part of the collection survives: grammarians and rhetoricians, some poets and two historians.

Most of these are short biographical entries rather than full biographies.¹¹⁹ Many of them are three or four paragraphs at most, sometimes shorter, and only a few are longer. The biographical material is very succinct and variegated. Some of the more frequent material types are the subject's social status, the names of important friends and connections, some of

¹¹⁷ Bradley 1989, 8.

¹¹⁸ See Kaster 1995, xxii.

¹¹⁹ Viljamaa refers to them as biographical "sketches" or "notices" (Viljamaa 1991, 3826, 46).

his works, quotations about/from him, rumoured affairs, summaries of teaching activity, and the names of some disciples or teachers.¹²⁰ See for example the following entry, quoted in full:

Scribonius Aphrodisius, slave and pupil of Orbilius, afterwards bought and set free by Scribonia, daughter of Libo, who had formerly been the wife of Augustus, taught at the same time as Verrius. He wrote a critique of Verrius' "Orthography," at the same time attacking the author's scholarship and character (*Gramm.* 19).¹²¹

Note that neither the subject's birth nor death are even mentioned.

De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus represents a different type of biography than the moralistic *Lives* of Nepos and Plutarch, focusing on presenting notable representatives of a profession and their contributions to it.¹²² Both series (grammarians and rhetoricians) include a preface providing a short history of the ascendance of these disciplines in Rome from obscurity to first-stage influence even on the emperors. It is also in this context that the significance of the omens preceding Virgil's birth becomes clear: The gods themselves have endorsed the importance of letters for Rome and bestowed exquisite skill on him as a gift to mankind (*Verg.* 3-5). All of this suggests that an important aim for Suetonius as he wrote the *DVI* was to contribute to the promotion and advancement of the social status of literary professions in Rome by providing a history of its pioneers, most famous practitioners, and describing their achievements.

In most cases, there is very little material describing the sort of person the subject was.¹²³ In spite of the personal details that are scattered through the *Lives* and the collection,

¹²⁰ Viljamaa's list consists of name, professional activities, an anecdote or quotation, success, fame, old age, and death (*ibid.*, 3846-7). He observes that Orbilius' entry is particularly complete and, in that sense, more like a mini-biography (3847). The *Life* includes the subject's name, place of origin, a bit about his parents, early occupations, education (with a reference to his boyhood), teaching activity and travel, his poverty, the brief description of one his works, one character trait (sour-tempered), mention of a memorial statue and that he left a son who taught grammar. Aside from descriptions, the short text includes one quotation on the subject, one of his sayings, and one anecdote. As we will see, this is the exception rather than the norm in this series.

¹²¹ The style is remarkably similar to Laertius' description of the content of one of Callimachus' *pinakes*: "Eudoxus of Cnidos, the son of Aeschines, was an astronomer, a geometer, a physician and a legislator. He learned geometry from Archytas and medicine from Philistion the Sicilian, as Callimachus tells us in his *Tables*" (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 8.86).

¹²² Individuals who are considered notable in serial profession-focused biographies were not necessarily famous or even well-known outside and sometimes even inside of their disciplines.

¹²³ Geiger 1985, 24, also brings attention to the lack of moral evaluation in these entries.

achievements and other career notables are clearly predominant in keeping with the primary focus on the profession.

Most but not all of the poets' biographies are longer than those of grammarians or rhetoricians.¹²⁴ Two of them are notably longer than the rest: The *Vita Vergili* and *Vita Terenti*.¹²⁵ Only these are long enough to feature more of the kind of materials one expects to find in full biographies: origins, claims to fame, accounts of death, even physiognomy.

2.5.3 *De Vita Caesarum*

Although the biographies of the Caesars can be classified as biographies of men of action, they differ from those found in Nepos and Plutarch by their distinctive structure, purpose, and content because, like *DVI*, they are driven by their focus on one profession and its representatives.

The *Lives* are organised in a 'sandwich' structure.¹²⁶ Like chronological biographies, they start with an account of the subject's ancestry, birth, and years preceding accession to power, and end with his demise and death.¹²⁷ The central and most substantial part of the biography, however, describes the emperor's conduct and achievements in separate topical sections (e.g., wars, building projects, provisions for games and gladiatorial shows, personal piety, sexual conduct, literary activity).¹²⁸ Suetonius himself describes his approach: "Having given as it were a summary of his life, I shall now take up its various phases one by one, not in chronological order, but by categories, to make the account clearer and more intelligible" (*Aug.* 9.1).¹²⁹

¹²⁴ The *Vita Tibulli* has only 74 words.

¹²⁵ They have about 1500 and 900 words respectively.

¹²⁶ The discussion of the thematic structure and content that follows is particularly indebted to Hurley 2014, 21-37.

¹²⁷ There can be a certain degree of variation, however, that reflects the particulars of an emperor's life. The accounts of the death of Nero and Domitian precede topical sections. There are, understandably, considerably less topical sections for the short-lasting emperors Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Another example of variation is that of Titus, who, in reverse to most emperors, started evil and improved when he came to power, resulting in an atypically arranged biography (cf., Hurley 2014, 29-32).

¹²⁸ cf., Bradley 1989, 14; Hurley 2014, 22; Lewis 1991, 3641.

¹²⁹ Latin text and English translation are from the Loeb Edition (LCL 31, 1997-98 edition). Other examples include *Aug.* 61.1, *Cal.* 22.1, and *Nero* 19.3 (Bradley 1989, 14).

Suetonius provides orientation in the main body of the biography through transitional sentences analogous to Plutarch's programmatic statements. For instance, *Julius* 44.4 and *Augustus* 61.1 announce a transition from official public activities to rubrics describing the subject's personal life.¹³⁰ Leading sentences can have a programmatic function as well. For example, the statement that Vespasian patiently endured challenging behaviours from friends, lawyers, and philosophers is followed by stories illustrating challenges from each group in the same order (*Vesp.* 13.1, cf., *Claud.* 13.1).¹³¹ Thematic sections are usually ordered in logical sequence, for instance from public to personal life (*Jul.* 44.4; *Aug.* 61.1). Chronological progression is usually respected in presenting the content of each section (e.g., achievements from first to last). These devices underscore the author's intent to provide a systematic scheme to facilitate the evaluation of each Caesar.

The facts that *Augustus* is particularly well-structured and so laudatory in its description of the emperor's reign compared to any of the other biographies give indications of the series' purpose. Suetonius was probably influenced by the *Res Gestae* and Pliny the Younger's *Panegyricus Traiani*.¹³² The first, with its listing of Augustus' achievements and honours, provided an influential model for later emperors to emulate. Pliny, of course, was Suetonius' patron, and his panegyric listing of imperial virtues provided another ready-made model to evaluate the performance of other Caesars.¹³³ Correspondingly, the topical sections in *Caesars' Lives* contribute to the evaluation of each emperor in terms of achievements, character, conduct, and even physical attributes such as health and appearance. Unlike moralistic biographies, the interest of these professional biographies in virtues and vices is mostly to serve in evaluating whether one was a good or bad emperor.¹³⁴

The same purpose applies to death accounts. The assassination of Julius is not merely

¹³⁰ Hurley 2014, 22, 27.

¹³¹ Hurley 2014, 22.

¹³² We should recall that Nicolaus of Damascus' *Vita Caesaris* also depicts Augustus as an exemplary emperor.

¹³³ Bradley 1989, 18-19. An invitation to comparison is implicit in serial biography regardless of whether the author draws attention to it. In *Caesares*, comparison is implied and sometimes explicit (e.g., *Aug.* 50.1; *Cl.* 14.1; *Gal.* 12.3; *Tit.* 8.1; *Dom.* 23.2).

¹³⁴ For a fuller discussion of the role of virtues and vices in the evaluation of imperial performance, see Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 142-174.

a good story: the sentiment that he had become a tyrant fuelling the assassination plot is to be contrasted with the appreciation and regret that followed his death, illustrating the love-hate relationship of the Roman people toward the incipient role of “Caesar.” The account of Nero’s death depicts how his madness played out to the very end. His story resonates with those of Tiberius and Caligula and their descent toward monstrosity, perhaps with an implicit critique of the danger of self-proclaimed deification before death.

As in Nepos and Tacitus’ *Agricola*, the theme of the relationship between supreme power and liberty is crucial.¹³⁵ Whether the Principate had become necessary or had simply usurped the Republic was a question that pressed heavily on Roman consciousness. Still, Suetonius mostly avoids engaging the topic directly, although he does not shy away from passing judgement on individual emperors (e.g., *Cal.* 22.1). To be sure, the evaluation of Caesars makes political commentary unavoidable, but if this was Suetonius’ purpose, he managed to hide it skilfully under the guise of professional biography and, unlike Tacitus, kept to the genre’s expected biographical focus.

As in Plutarch, there is interest in the subjects’ ancestry. Character can be influenced but is not dictated by parentage. Thus, Caligula sharply contrasts with the excellence of his father Germanicus. On Nero, Suetonius writes: “It seems to me worthwhile to give an account of several members of this family, to show more clearly that though Nero degenerated from the good qualities of his ancestors, he yet reproduced the vices of each of them, as if transmitted to him by natural inheritance” (*Nero* 1.2). Other similar statements could indicate that Suetonius may have seen character as fixed (cf., *Tib.* 57.1). However, his description of the evolution of Domitian reveals a more complex view of character development: “In his administration of the government he for some time showed himself inconsistent, with about an equal number of virtues and vices, but finally he turned the virtues also into vices; for so far as one may guess, it was contrary to his natural disposition that he was made rapacious through need and cruel through fear” (*Dom.* 3.2). Titus follows the opposite trajectory going from a dissolute character before his accession, to virtuous conduct afterward (*Tit.* 8.1).

Another noteworthy aspect of *Caesares* consists in the particular attention Suetonius pays to physiognomy as an important element of the portrait of an emperor, providing at least

¹³⁵ Bradley 1989, 20.

a partial explanation for their performance. A telling passage is found at the beginning of the *Titus*: “At that time, so they say, a physiognomist was brought in by Narcissus, the freedman of Claudius, to examine Britannicus and declared most positively that he would never become emperor” (2.1). A study of physiognomy in the Roman world leads to the conclusion that the traits provided for Augustus convey greatness of character, whereas those of Caligula correspond to the mean, thievish, and deceitful type.¹³⁶ Thus, this *topos* does not merely serve curiosity either, but belongs to the criteria designed to allow readers to judge what kind of emperor each one was, and, in the process, compare them with and refine their concept of the ideal emperor.

Finally, although a Caesar may be considered a “man of action” subject-type and a statesman, the importance Suetonius lends to their literary activity corresponds to their power over the cultural life in Rome and the resulting expectation that the emperor should please the populace by catering to and contributing to it.

In conclusion, the differences between moralistic biographies and those that focus on a profession are not an indication that GR biographers innovated as they pleased. After all, the titles of lost biographies (including those of Nepos) indicate that biography had from the start a penchant for categorising subjects according to their domain of activity and Nepos’ *Epaminondas* is structured thematically as well. The difference is that in moralistic biography, the relationship between virtue, vice, and achievement takes precedence over interest in a particular profession. These two different primary focal points (ethics or a profession) represent the two major subcategories of GRB in our period. Thus, to speak of GRB as giving an account of a famous’ person character through their words and deeds may be true at a very general level but falls quite short of describing what distinguishes the genre from biographical writings that belong to different literary and cultural horizons.

2.6 Diogenes Laertius’ Biographies

2.6.1 Introduction

Almost nothing is known about Diogenes Laertius (c. 200 C.E.). Beside the *LEP*, his

¹³⁶ Evans 1950, 280. Since there is no clear theory of character development in Suetonius’ writings, it is difficult to evaluate to what extent physiognomy was considered the final word on who a Caesar would become.

only other known authorial activity is the composition of at least two books of epigrams (cf., *Vit. Phil.* 1.39).¹³⁷

What has survived of his biographies spans over ten books and cover eighty-two sages and philosophers from Thales (c. 624 – c. 546 B.C.E.) to Chrysippus (c. 282–206 B.C.E.) beside the many others who are either listed or described in passing.¹³⁸ The collection is organised on the basis of the two geographical points of origin for the development of Greek philosophy: Ionia (e.g., the Pre-Socratics) and Italy (e.g., Pythagoras). The geographical successions are then divided according to schools. The Ionian schools include the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato and the Academy, Aristotle and the Lyceum, Cynics, and Stoics. The Italian schools include the Pythagoreans, Eleatics, Atomists, and Epicureans. Laertius considers the Sceptics as a separate movement from the rest (cf., *Vit. Phil.* 1.16).¹³⁹

2.6.2 *The Lives of Philosophers as Professional Biography*

Diogenes' biographies naturally resemble most Suetonius', especially the *DVI*, since both wrote biographies primarily focusing on a profession and men (and one woman) of letters. Diogenes' biographies are also structured thematically. There are several areas of resemblance in content type as well. The subjects' works — in other words, a significant aspect of their professional achievements and contributions — are listed and sometimes described, and innovations are underlined. We find the familiar anecdotal jibes from critics and opponents, and accounts of the subjects' relationships with professional peers. The “entertainment” material tends to be of the same kind, consisting mostly of love interests and sexuality, strange facts, and witty sayings. Dissimilarities between these two authors, due to differences between subject types, are apparent in their longer biographies, but the similarity between the shorter biographies is striking. For instance, both Diogenes' *Phaedo* (2.105) and Suetonius' *M. Pompidius Andronicus* (*Gramm.* 8) start with basic subject (name and geographical origin), recount adverse circumstances and related criticism they had to

¹³⁷ Forty-nine of these are quoted in the *Lives*. See Long 1925.

¹³⁸ The original work was more extensive and contained entries up to Cornutus (20-65 C.E.). See Mejer 1994, 827.

¹³⁹ See Long 1972, xix-xx. He discusses in greater detail the arrangement of the books and some of its inconsistencies. For a visual representation of the successions, see Sollenberger 1992, 3796.

overcome and describe their works. The longer *Phaedo* has slightly more material, notably a list of successors. Neither of them includes a death account, or a description of character or physical appearance.

Another area of similarity is the wide variability in size for individual biographies within their respective collection, since both include short biographical entries as well as full biographies. Diogenes' *Crito* (2.12) is just one hundred words, while his *Epicurus* reaches around 14,000 words. Again, this sort of disparity is typical – and sensible – for series focusing on a profession, since it is important to mention every notable, almost regardless of availability of source material or space. By contrast, there would no point to including this sort of “biography” in the moralistic collections of Nepos and Plutarch.

2.6.3 *Structure and Content*

Although it has been stated that “there is no typical Laertian Life,”¹⁴⁰ his full biographies in fact do follow a general model, *adapted to the sources for and specificities of each subject*. They normally begin with the subject's name and a bit of background, followed by an account of his/her beginnings (education, teachers). This is frequently followed by anecdotes and sayings illustrating lifestyle, character, habits, and relationships with peers and authorities, as well as noteworthy events, travels, and curious or amusing facts. A death account concludes, often accompanied by one of Diogenes' epigrams.¹⁴¹

This is followed by a (in the school founders' biographies, much longer) section including a list of the subject's works and disciples, an (often substantial) exposition of doctrines, and the reproduction of some personal documents (mostly letters and wills). At or near the end comes a list of homonyms.¹⁴² As in the *DVI*, the content of short biographical entries features less material types and varies more from one entry to the next.

Within this general scheme, there is a certain degree of variability connected to the peculiarities of specific subjects. For instance, the *Life of Xenophon* contains more

¹⁴⁰ Hägg 2012, 306.

¹⁴¹ Although Diogenes stands out in our period for his use of epigrams on the subject's death, one can also be found in the introduction of Suetonius' *Vita Tibulli*.

¹⁴² For discussions and comparison of the contents of Diogenes' biographies, see Long, “Introduction,” xxii; Sollenberger 1992, 3803; Delatte 1922, 54-63.

chronological narrative than is normally the case elsewhere.¹⁴³ This reflects the kind of sources Diogenes had at his disposal. Although Xenophon's Socratic dialogues are more likely to reflect his views than those of Socrates, Diogenes uses it as source on the master's rather than disciple's philosophy. The *Anabasis* was of course a good source of biographical information, but focuses on Xenophon the military officer, not the philosopher. As a result, the part of Diogenes' biography that speaks of Xenophon's philosophical career is very thin and much of what is narrated follows the chronological story of the man of action.

Another example is found in the *Life of Pyrrho*. Since he was a sceptic, Diogenes was presented with the special problem of how to give an account of the philosophy of someone who denied any dogma. The result has been called an "anti-doxography," in which Pyrrhonism is described mostly in terms of how it undermined and rejected the dogmas of other schools.¹⁴⁴

2.6.4 Biography, Successions, and Doxography

Three distinct genres play an important role in shaping Diogenes' Lives: biography, successions, and doxographies. First, it is widely recognised that his work was significantly influenced by διαδοχαί.¹⁴⁵ Unlike the broader organisational criteria normally used in other serial biographies (nationality, profession, or chronological order), the succession scheme does not merely govern a sequence of stand-alone biographies but requires each biography to be read in the context of these successions. Thus Laertius normally describes at great length the doctrines of the founders of schools, those of other influential contributors much less, and those of other successors hardly if at all.¹⁴⁶ Unless otherwise stated, readers depend on the founder's biography for a description of the philosophy to which successors subscribed.¹⁴⁷ The connections between subjects within a succession are frequently mentioned (e.g., 7.167) and short biographical summaries of successors can even be inserted within the biography of

¹⁴³ Hägg 2012, 313.

¹⁴⁴ See Barnes 1992, 4245.

¹⁴⁵ See Mejer 2007.

¹⁴⁶ Mejer 1994, 827.

¹⁴⁷ A few remarks about doctrinal statements particularly attributed to a successor may be inserted in the corresponding biography (e.g., Ariston, Herillus, and Dionysius, 7.160-167).

their more eminent predecessors (cf., 9.115-116; 10.22-26). Diogenes seems to have been particularly influenced by Sotion of Alexandria, whose lost work *διαδοχαὶ τῶν φιλοσόφων* may have been the first instance of the genre.¹⁴⁸

Second, the collection includes a significant proportion of doxographical material. The first section of the “Life” is what one would expect from a biography: it starts with the subject’s name, background and training, followed by anecdotes, sayings and noteworthy events, and ends with an account of death and supplementary information (a list of works, homonyms, and some personal documents).¹⁴⁹ This would be where one would expect a biography to conclude (cf., Suetonius’ *DVI*). The doxographies that follow are not only demarcated by their placement after the biographical account, but are often so much longer that it becomes difficult to consider them mere subparts or appendices.¹⁵⁰ For instance, the doxography is four times longer than the biography in *Pyrrho* and five times larger in *Zeno* (of Citium).¹⁵¹ Moreover, the doxography of *Epicurus* (10.29-154) is not only remarkably long as well,¹⁵² but mostly consists of excerpts from philosophical treatises with no obvious biographical import.

Assessing what this evidence reveals concerning the genre of the work is difficult, because there is not as clear a demarcation between personal life and professional activity for philosophers (as there can be in biographies of other subject types). Diogenes’ remark that Pyrrho, “led a life consistent with this doctrine” (9.62) indicates that there is intention, at least to a certain degree, that the two be compared. To what extent this can explain the doxographical material is a question that divides scholars. For Runia, Diogenes “combines

¹⁴⁸ See also Philodemus’ partially preserved *σύνταξις τῶν φιλοσόφων*; Hägg 2012, 306.

¹⁴⁹ This supplementary material is occasionally placed after the doxography.

¹⁵⁰ A notable exception to this scheme is *Socrates* (2.18-47). Although Diogenes evidently considered Socrates eminent, he did not consider him a founder. For Diogenes, the Socratics begin with Plato, from whom “the ten schools” begin (2.47). The first founder is Aristippus (the Cyrenaic school, see 2.85; cf., 3.47). The pattern is not as well followed in the Cynics. There is a bit of doxography for Antisthenes (6.18-19) and for Diogenes of Sinope (6.70-73). For Goulet-Cazé, it is “not a real doxography” (1992, 3897). Aristippus was considered the founder *stricto sensu*, but Diogenes proved more influential. Since Cynicism focused only on ethics, our author might have found it more difficult to produce a doxography. On the other hand, their lifestyle emphases were fertile ground for illustrative anecdotes and sayings such as abound — more than in any other *Life* — in Diogenes of Sinope’s biography and the tradition attached to him.

¹⁵¹ See Barnes 1992, 4242.

¹⁵² In the Loeb volume, the *bios* section is 31 pages long, followed by 119 pages of doxography!

biographical and doxographical material because like most ancient philosophical historians he was convinced that there was an inner relationship between the life (βίος) and the doctrine (λόγος) of every philosopher.”¹⁵³ For Mejer, the whole of the material in *Lives* must be judged biographical in purpose because the collection reflects more interest in the personalities and lives of the philosophers than in philosophical problems and arguments.¹⁵⁴ However, concerning *Life of Pyrrho*, Barnes observes that “although it is frequently stated that biographical interest dominates in Diogenes and that the philosophical views serve to illuminate character, this is certainly not true in this life.”¹⁵⁵ Finally, Goulet-Cazé describes Diogenes’ collection as a “popular history of philosophy in which the character of individuals, their apt sayings, their behaviour in princes’ courts, in the marketplace, at a tavern’s table, at the bathhouse, at the *palestra*, in school or on a boat caught in a storm, are taken into account as much as their doctrines.”¹⁵⁶

All agree that the *Lives include* biography. However, the biographical interest cannot be reduced to what illustrates a philosopher’s doctrines. For instance, we learn about Zeno of Citium that he loved green figs and sunbathing, had a wry neck and thick legs, and was lean, fairly tall, swarthy, flabby, and delicate (7.1). Later on, we learn that he was austere but knew how to relax on occasions and was of utmost endurance and the greatest frugality (particularly in food and drink),¹⁵⁷ patient, most temperate, and dignified (7.26-28). The *Life of Plato* also contains a number of biographical details including his head-turning appearance, his restraint ever since he was a youth, his love for olives, walks, and solitude, etc. (3.25-40).¹⁵⁸ The author himself refers several times to his presentation of a sage or philosopher as a “Life” (βίος) (e.g., 1.106; 2.126; 4.24). Even if the term is probably to be understood in a broader than narrower generic sense, it demonstrates at least a degree of biographical conception of the work.

¹⁵³ See Runia 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Mejer 1992, 3561.

¹⁵⁵ Barnes 1992, 4242.

¹⁵⁶ Goulet-Cazé 1999, 10-11.

¹⁵⁷ Of course, dress style and diet were also important to philosophy and so were not merely relevant and interesting from a biographical standpoint.

¹⁵⁸ Cf., Brisson 1992, 3666-84.

However, Diogenes distinguishes the parts of his work relating a philosopher's life from material that is more pertinent to his school and dogmas. For example, after a rather lengthy account concluded by a list of Aristippus' works, Diogenes writes: "Having written his life, let me now proceed to pass in review the philosophers of the Cyrenaic school which sprang from him" (2.85). Such transitional statements occur regularly in the collection in the longer Lives that include a doxography. They are also rather consistent in placing anecdotes and *chreiai* in the part that is referred to as the *bios* while the doxography and often the list of works, personal documents, and other supplementary information remain outside of it (e.g., 5.11; 6.103; 9.43; 10.16).

Moreover, the fact that both the "*bios*" and doxography sections could very well stand alone shows that these are two types of materials normally associated with different genres that have been appended to, but not blended with, each other.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the evidence of the titles that the ancients have ascribed to the collection manuscripts. Although the work could be cited using the shorthand "*Lives of Philosophers*," manuscript titles were both longer and perhaps more indicative of the difficulty cataloguers may have felt in classifying the work's genre. A representative title is found in the P manuscript of Paris: "Λαερτίου Διογένους βίοι καὶ γνώμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκμησάντων καὶ τῶν ἐκάστη αἵρέσει ἄρεσκόντων ἐν ἐπιτόμῳ συναγωγή" ("*Laertius Diogenes' Lives and Opinions of those who were Distinguished in Philosophy and Succinct Collection of the Doctrines Acceptable to Each School*").¹⁵⁹ The other main titles are all variations attempting to reflect the multifaceted generic identity of the work: biography, succession, and doxography.¹⁶⁰

To sum up, the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* contain biographies, but are also substantially influenced by the intention to present a history of philosophy by tracing its successions and the doctrines of its main schools. It is therefore inaccurate to refer to the genre of the whole as biography. Rather, it is a διαδοχή that includes on the one hand philosophers' biographies, and on the other leading figures' doxographies. Therefore, the doxographic and succession elements should not be considered part of the characteristics of biography in our period. The parts of these *Lives* that should be considered in studies on

¹⁵⁹ Long 1972, xviii-xix.

¹⁶⁰ See Goulet-Cazé 1999, 17-18.

biography are the “*bios*” sections, as well as the personal documents. Although the latter can sometimes follow the doxographies, they are more often found after the death accounts, which is where such documents are usually found in the biographies of other subject types.

2.6.5 *The Lives’ “Bios” Sections*

The basic structure of the “*bios*” sections of the longer *Lives* is similar to what is usually observable in GRB. The account starts with origins and background and ends with death. The middle section contains variegated materials with loose thematic connections.

The most distinguishing feature of philosophers’ biographies, which can be seen not only in Laertius’ *Lives*, but also in the Hellenistic fragments, and in Athenaeus and Lucian, is the extensive use of anecdotes and sayings to characterise the subject. These are presented with minimal, if any, setting. At what point in the *Life* these episodes took place is usually left unspecified and apparently deemed irrelevant or impossible to determine and there is no unifying plot. The collections of sayings and anecdotes thus constituted are (sometimes very) loosely connected thematically, touching on, and providing some illustration of the teacher’s views, lifestyle, and relationships. This is well below the level of systematic and logical organisation of Suetonius’ thematic arrangement in the *Caesares*.

Episodes use stock situations providing a stereotyped setting for sayings. The content is frequently presented in the form of a reply to a question or criticism, using the formulaic words “ἐρωτηθείς” (having been asked) or “ὀνειδίζόμενος” (being criticised). The characterisation of the interlocutors tend to be conventional as well, drawing from three categories: an anonymous or undifferentiated person (e.g., “a certain man”), an anonymous but characterised person (e.g., “a man who was blind”), or (usually named) known contemporaries.¹⁶¹ These conventions are inherited from source materials, especially collections of *apophthegmata*, *gnomai*, and *chreiai*.¹⁶² This kind of material was a fertile source of biographical information not only for biographies in which anecdotes and sayings naturally play an important role (literary professions, philosophers, orators), but also for other

¹⁶¹ Goulet-Cazé 1992, 3983-97. Her detailed study produces many examples of the conventional forms I have described.

¹⁶² For a detailed and careful study of the history and circulation of such collections in antiquity, see Kindstrand 1986, 217–43.

subject types. Plutarch compiled several such collections¹⁶³ and used these materials in his biographies.¹⁶⁴

Although Diogenes' death accounts stand out from other biographies in our period in that they are almost always bizarre, they occupy little space and do not have a significant function. They merely seem to be fitting conclusions to lives that in many ways appeared eccentric to observers. The epigrams function as satirical epitaphs.

Finally, Diogenes presents his subjects and their opinions and doctrines most dispassionately. Even when the subject is represented as laudable, his tone is not militant. This may be the case for Hellenistic biographers of philosophers as well, as far as we can tell from the limited evidence. Although these biographers may betray greater admiration for one philosopher (e.g., Pythagoras for Aristoxenus; Epicurus for Diogenes), they retained a broader interest in their writings, which differs from the militant endorsement and polemical tone that came to characterise later biographies of philosophers such as those of Porphyry and Iamblichus.

2.7 Conclusions

The above investigation of the assumptions, general features, purposes, and emphases of the authors in our period provides an essential bird's-eye perspective on the ethos of the genre. Without a good sense of what each author does and how that compares to what the others do, it is impossible to understand the assumptions that govern the genre and what its *gestalt* looks like. These are the threads that bind and give meaning to individual features, even when these display variability.

Key findings are that it is essential to distinguish between two different approaches to biography in our period: biographies that focus primarily on *famous* persons, often but not solely for moralistic purposes, and biographies that focus primarily on a *profession* and give a presentation of its *notable representatives*. This distinction defines the primary purposes that drive GRB and is fundamental to understand the decisions biographers made with regard to

¹⁶³ I.e., *Apophtegmata Laconica*, *Lacaenarum Apophtegmata*, *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, *Rōmaiōn Apophtegmata*, and *Regum et Imperatorum Apophtegmata*.

¹⁶⁴ A manual count of the number of times such sayings are cross-referenced in the Loeb edition produced no less than 251 occurrences. Certain sayings are even featured in more than one *Life* such as Archidamus' dictum "War does not feed on fixed rations," which is found in *Crass.* 544/B, *Cleom.* 817/E, and *Dem.* 853/E, and attributed to different persons.

structure and content.

Although often referenced indiscriminately as biographies, it was found that caution must be exercised in generalising what can be observed from *Vita Caesaris*, *Agricola*, and the elements of Diogenes' *Lives* that are related to successions or doxographies rather than truly biographical. Failure to recognise this will inevitably warp one's perception of the genre and lead to incorrect conclusions regarding how conventions operate within it and how little, or much, authors deviate from them.

It also becomes clear that a distinction must be maintained between the evidence provided by short biographical entries and by full biographies. Biographical entries do not provide a rounded account of the subject. Since they are by nature garbled, disjointed, and somewhat chaotic, these short entries can only provide a partial representation of the conventions of GRB which are evident in full biographies. At the same time, these biographical entries also stretch our conception of the genre. Since they are included as biographies in series, they function as a sort of *least common denominator* of GRB that confirm its primary purposes. Thus, there are concise moralistic biographies, but none that amount to mere biographical entries, simply because they could not serve this purpose. However, it is justifiable to have a short entry in a series that purports to document all the notables of a profession, and it is precisely where these are found, quite commonly.

Finally, it was evidenced that the long-standing and deep-seated relationship between GRB and the philosophical and cultural underpinnings of Greece and Rome does not only speak of the origins of the genre. Whether it is philosophy, ethics, politics, or culture, it is part of the ethos of GRB not only to reflect, but also to perpetrate the values, tastes, and aspirations of the GR world.

3. The Topoi of Graeco-Roman Biography

3.1 Preliminary Remarks

In order to characterise GRB in our period, it is also essential to delineate its topoi and their associated functions. Two important methodological considerations should be emphasised here. First, there are recurrent elements of story that can be found in several or more biographies but have no particular generic significance (e.g., peril at sea). The purpose of our investigation is to identify topoi that are associated with specific, demonstrably

conventional biographical functions.¹⁶⁵ Second, it is helpful, even necessary, to use Chandler's Schema Theory model to make a basic distinction between compulsory, default, and optional topoi. As will be seen presently, there are indeed conventional topoi that are not all equally indispensable or represented across biographies yet are nonetheless important. What contributes to the recognisable gestalt of the genre is the presence and combination of a number of these topoi.

As Frickenschmidt has shown, biographies divide logically into three main parts.¹⁶⁶ The first part is an introduction that may include preliminary remarks, describe the background of the subject and the years preceding the subject's public career. The second part consists of the main body that describes the subject's character and career or claims to fame. The third and last part is a conclusion with the subject's death and related or concluding remarks.

Although parts one and three are frequent enough and, when present, give a sense of completeness, they are not compulsory in GRB. An author may either lack background source material (e.g., some of Suetonius' grammarians and Diogenes' lesser philosophers) or opt to focus mostly on character and adult life events (e.g., Nepos). The absence of a death mention is unusual in full biographies, but it does occur.¹⁶⁷ A biography will be recognised as such, whether it has or lacks a background or death account, but there is no biography without any sort of material from the second part, that is, the subject's career or claim(s) to fame. This second part, although its content can vary considerably, is a *compulsory* element of GRB. Examples of biographies that, aside from the subject's basic identification, consist exclusively of material from the second part include Suetonius' *Cornelius Epicadus* and *Staberius Eros* and Diogenes' *Glaucon* and *Cebes*. The first and third parts are frequent and

¹⁶⁵ See discussion of the concept of a genre's repertoire in Fowler 2002, 55.

¹⁶⁶ I have reservations, however, about his proposal that this tripartite structure is Aristotelian in origin.

¹⁶⁷ Nepos' *Cato* is a peculiar example because it refers to a fuller biography and describes itself as a mere summary. The reader is provided with the information that Cato's lifespan from youth on was eighty years (24.2.4) and the account speaks of his old age, but it never actually states that he died, what from, or how he approached his end. Death is also assumed rather than stated in Nepos' *Timotheus*. The account indicates that he retired to Chalcis (shortly after active military involvement) and the very next sentence states that after his death (presumably while retired in Chalcis), the people were remorseful for having sentenced him a traitor (14.3.5-4.1).

expected¹⁶⁸ enough to be considered *default* elements of the genre.

Within the introductory, main, and concluding sections, a number of components occur very frequently and are logically associated with certain subject types, but as will be seen shortly, most of them operate as *optional* (but still conventional) tools of the trade. Put differently, what makes a topos conventional is not the degree to which it is expected to occur, but whether it is a familiar topos and fulfils specific functions to which it is normally associated when it does occur.

3.2 Introductory Topoi

The first section in Nepos' full biographies always contains the subject's name and citizenship.¹⁶⁹ The father's name and introductory remarks are frequently included. Other elements are found more sporadically: famous ancestors, added information about parents, anecdotes from youth that reveal incipient traits, or something significant about his education. There is almost always an introductory section, except in the case of *Conon*, which only mentions his name and citizenship and *Hamilcar*, which adds his father's name as well. Thus, basic identification is compulsory, but all other elements of the introductory section are optional.

Plutarch's *Lives* are longer and his introductions more furnished than Nepos', but the topoi are similar.¹⁷⁰ Aside from name and some family information, all other topoi occur regularly but variably. An introductory section to a pair may be provided (e.g., *Thes.* 1), but not systematically (cf., *Publ.* 1.1). The father is almost always named, with rare exceptions (e.g., *Publ.* 1:1; *Cam.* 2.1). The mother is frequently named. The geographical origin is implied from ancestry or identification of the tribe or *deme* of origin. Famous ancestors are important in Plutarch. In one case, he even makes a point of stating that a subject had none

¹⁶⁸ Expectation and frequency are interconnected. What is commonly associated with biography can be reasonably assumed to be expected by readers so that familiarity with the norm will make its absence noticed and perhaps regretted. Conversely, if an element keeps on recurring, it is reasonable to assume that it is because authors consider it expected of the genre.

¹⁶⁹ With the exceptions of Cato's and Atticus' citizenship, which are (understandably, from the vantage point of a Roman writing for Romans) assumed rather than stated. Background information such as family affiliation and rank or order is provided, however.

¹⁷⁰ The length of his introductory section varies considerably (e.g., 6 of 29 chapters for Romulus, 1 of 43 for Lucullus).

(*Them.* 1:1). However, it is exceptional to find an actual genealogy such as that of Lyscurgus (1.4). Only *Theseus* and *Romulus* include origin legends. The other optional elements are: anecdotes or details on parents (e.g., *Luc.* 1.1), character-revealing anecdotes from youth, love interests, debate about the date of the subject's lifetime (e.g., Lyscurgus and Numa). Moreover, and as is frequently the case throughout his biographies, the introductory section may also contain excurses somewhat connected to the subject.

Clearly, Plutarch is committed to providing background information on his subjects and draws from a limited pool of topoi.¹⁷¹ Often it is not difficult to understand why some elements are present/absent. The longer and legendary introduction for Theseus and Romulus can be explained not only by their antiquity, but also their close relationship to the founding myths of Athens and Rome.¹⁷² Correspondingly, neither of them can be ascribed a tribe or clan. Neither is it surprising that *Alexander* has the most furnished introductory section, considering the abundance of sources on his life.¹⁷³ The omission of Lucullus' family name may be due to the facts that his father was an embezzler and his mother was of ill-repute (*Luc.* 1.1). Background information on Otho and Galba is also scarce but as noted before, this pair uses a different format and might have been part of a longer continuous narrative that included at least Nero (see *Galb.* 2.1) and the other two short-tenured emperors of C.E. 68-69. There is therefore a degree of variability within an otherwise consistent scheme. This must not be confused for creative license however: this variability is conditioned by the subject and source specificities and remains within the bounds of the conventional pool of topoi.

Plutarch's introductory sections anticipate and prepare readers for the main narrative. For instance, boyhood love interests are often connected to later relational issues (e.g., Aristides and Themistocles; Alcibiades and Socrates) and early character traits are important to describe life trajectory. Even the subject's appearance is frequently mentioned in close

¹⁷¹ Only Titus Flamininus has no introductory section (for no obvious reason) and the *Caesar*'s is lost.

¹⁷² Generally, biographers try to appear credible and thus either avoid legends or use disclaimers. This does not apply to phenomena more open to interpretation such as oracles, omens, and portents.

¹⁷³ Alexander the Great is often regarded as a pivotal figure for the development of Greek biography, because with him historiography became heavily focused on one person (Momigliano 1993, 63). The tremendous biographical interest he generated resulted not only in biographies but also in a lively tradition of fanciful romances (Hägg 2012, 99 and 1191, 115).

association with character.¹⁷⁴

Nicolaus' *Vita Caesaris* includes a background section similar in content: introductory remarks, name, father, rank, and youth with early traits (frgs. 126-7). Tacitus' *Agricola* starts with a prologue, name, birthplace, illustrious ancestry, father's name, rank, and notables, mother's name and merits, and a brief account of youth and education (*Agr.* 4).

Suetonius' introductory sections to *Caesares* systematically use the same topoi with few exceptions. This, of course, does not apply to *Julius Caesar*, whose introduction — like Plutarch's — has been lost.¹⁷⁵ Presumably, this *Life* would have included a *proem* since there is one in *Galba* about the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and again in *Vespasian* concerning the Flavians. Otherwise, the following introductory topoi always appear in the *Caesares*: the subject's name, his father's and mother's, a family history including the father's, birthplace and precise date of birth, a bit about his youth, spouse, and the young subject's activities (military service, offices, etc.). The *Lives* of Titus and Domitian jump directly to an account of their birth without a family background because each succeeded his father, and ancestry and parentage had therefore already been provided. Thus, the few optional topoi are the subject's early education,¹⁷⁶ and omens or portents about the subject's future.¹⁷⁷

Several biographies place emphasis on incipient character traits in their accounts of the subject's youth (e.g., *Oth.* 2.1 and most emphatically, *Tit.* 3.1-3), but others say very little about this stage of life (Julius, Caligula, Vespasian). Family background is particularly detailed, often describing several noteworthy ancestors (paternal and maternal) and sometimes covering two or three generations as well as siblings. Class, ranks, and other

¹⁷⁴ For a discussion on how Plutarch (and Suetonius) connected physiognomy with character, see Georgiadou 1992, 4616-23.

¹⁷⁵ See Rives 2002, xxxvii.

¹⁷⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 20, suggests that the explanation lies in the fact that education had greater importance for Greeks than for Romans. This seems to be corroborated by Plutarch's interest in education, as well as the notable role it plays in the *Vita Caesaris* of Nicolaus "the Peripatetic."

¹⁷⁷ Although omens, portents, oracles, and prophecies otherwise occur quite commonly in the main account, they are less frequently featured in relation to the origin, birth, and childhood of the subjects than one might suppose. A legend (which does not seem to be taken seriously by Suetonius) is recounted about Nero's ancestors (Nero 1.1-2). Otherwise, early supernatural signs are only recounted for three *Caesares* and not the ones one might think: Nero (6.1-2); Galba (4.2-3), and Vitellius (3.2). Omens before Augustus' birth are not included in the opening section of the *Life* but are recounted in relation to the religious aspects of his life (*Aug.* 92).

achievements are routinely detailed and numbered with an emphasis on pedigree and inherited traits. Where applicable, the origin of the subject's cognomen(s) is provided. *Titus* uncharacteristically opens by a laudatory *proem* of the kind frequently found in Nepos but only here in Suetonius.¹⁷⁸

Thus, it is apparent that even in the introductory section, Suetonius follows set rubrics for the most part,¹⁷⁹ although his originality lies more in his regularity and details than the kind of topoi (which are quite similar to what is found in *Vita Caesaris* and *Agricola*). The similarity with these two other authors' introductory sections is not surprising, since all three seek to establish the subject's illustrious pedigree *vis-à-vis* Romans. It is also quite similar to introductory sections in Nepos and Plutarch even though, understandably, the similarity is less pronounced, since they were more interested in establishing credentials that could be compared with those of Greek subjects.

The necessary correlation between size, amount of material and number of topoi represented therein is most evident in Suetonius' *De Poetis*. Thus, the seventy-five word *Vita Tibulli* merely starts with a biographical epigram (on the subject's death!) and the subject's name. Practically all the other biographies of poets in this collection, even if longer, tend to be minimal in their introductory sections. The two exceptions are *Vita Persi* and the most rounded biography of the collection, *Vita Vergili*. Significantly, the latter features the more usual array of topoi: name, pedigree, details on father and mother, birthdate and place, omens at birth, and material on his youth (1-6). As Plutarch, Suetonius describes appearance and love interests in the introduction and as in the *Caesares*, physiognomy is associated with a description of health (7-10). This is followed by a bit on disposition (11-12), wealth and estate (13), family (14) and education (15), which all form a prelude to the main body. So here again, one finds that although various constraints can bear on how many and which topoi occur, they constitute a conventional pool that is very similar to that used by other biographers.

Like those of Nepos, the full biographies of Diogenes Laertius typically have little for a background section. The subject's and his father's name and a geographical connection

¹⁷⁸ This is probably intended to offset the unavoidably negative representation of the last Flavian (Domitian), who probably still has surviving supporters.

¹⁷⁹ Cf., Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 12.

(origin of family, birthplace, citizenship) are default topoi. After these, the father's profession and the mother's name appear most frequently. More rarely, other family information may be given such as names of siblings, wife and children, and ancestry. Plato's biography is the only one featuring a legend connected to the subject's birth (1.1-2). It is the series' most furnished opening section and includes a precise birthdate and age of death, and an explanation of the cognomen Plato. It is not always clear whether the references to the subject's education (Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras) are part of the background or should be considered the start of the subject's career in the main section of the biography.

To sum up, the stock of topoi in the introductory sections of all of the biographies surveyed is largely the same. It is the kind of material one may expect as part of the identification of the subject, some family and background information, a bit of youth history especially in connection to education and early expression of character traits. Only subject identification is strictly required (compulsory), but parentage and origin are default elements. All other topoi, common as they may be across the whole spectrum of biographies, are optional. Overall, however, a background of some sort (whatever topoi it includes) tends to be given by default.

In terms of function, the introductory section of the biographies serves first of all to identify and situate the subject (parents' name, birthplace, birthdate, citizenship). Then it can provide a pedigree (with special emphasis on occupations, reputation, and means). A large part of supplementary material in the introductory section is designed to familiarise the reader with the subject before proceeding to his career: significant relationships (e.g., siblings, wife and children, love interests) and revealing early years stories. This being said, some of the material peripheral to career (e.g., appearance, health, or love interests) can be found either in the opening or closing sections of the biographies.

3.3 Concluding Topoi

It is rare for a biography of a man of action to simply end with mention that he died without any additional concluding material. The death account itself may include only a short description or succinct narrative of death circumstances, especially if uneventful (illness, old age).¹⁸⁰ However, most men of action died violent deaths, and these are usually recounted

¹⁸⁰ There are (rare) exceptions, such as Plutarch's protracted medical log of Alexander's terminal

with more detail. Death accounts with particularly dramatic circumstances are narrated at length and have intrinsic overtones of tragedy: Plutarch's *Caesar* (62-66), *Antony* (including a dramatic death account for Cleopatra, *Ant.* 75.1-86.3), and *Cato Minor* (68-70), and Suetonius' *Julius* (80-82) and *Nero* (40-49).

The promise of certain death brings character and virtue to the ultimate test, even that of secondary characters such as Cratesicleia's and Panteus' wife unflinching courage and virtue as they and their children were led to execution (described by Plutarch as virtue's triumph over Fortune, *Cleom.* 38-39). Likewise, the slow-moving end of *Cato Minor* emphasises his refusal to abandon principles when all is lost and his virtuous conduct to the end.

Beside at least a death mention, Nepos can include the date, place, subject's age, an account of burial (including lack thereof, repatriation of bones, funeral or post-mortem honours) and concluding comments on his life and character. These topoi are frequent but variably distributed.

As expected, Plutarch's concluding sections contain more material. Beside the death mention or account, the concluding topoi include date, place and age of death. An account of the burial (funeral, honours, or absence thereof) is rarely missing and closing comments are more frequent than in Nepos. Occasionally, but not often, some legendary material related to the subject's death is included (omens, dreams, visions, or a legend like Romulus' disappearance and ascension). Plutarch frequently describes the fate of the subject's family (immediate and/or descendants) and of conspirators or murderers with whom justice catches up (e.g., *Dion* 58.2; *Pomp.* 80.5). Indeed, Plutarch, as philosopher, was interested in the subject (cf., *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*).¹⁸¹ Considering the moralistic purpose of the *Parallel Lives*, such epilogues probably served as deterrent from evil and comfort that justice would be carried out for the just, thus providing an incentive to pursue and be committed to virtue even at high personal cost.

Suetonius' *Caesares* always include a death account (a very short one for Tiberius,

illness.

¹⁸¹ Although the subject's death is the result of a conspiracy or assassination in several of Nepos' *bioi* (*Miltiades*, *Alcibiades*, *Dion*, *Datames*, *Eumenes*, *Phocion*, *Hannibal*), he did not provide information on the subsequent fate of conspirators/ murderers. This can be explained from the economy of Nepos' conclusions, but most probably, it is simply of greater interest to Plutarch. The only other such account in the biographies of our period is found in the aftermath of Julius' assassination in Suetonius (*Jul.* 89).

Tib. 73).¹⁸² The date of death is always given, often with age at death. The place of death is clear from context. Funeral, burial (or other disposal of the body), and honours are always mentioned except in *Vespasian*. Since most of the emperors were either tyrants or died violently, Suetonius often describes the reactions (joy, anger, grief, or outrage) to news of death from the population, the senate, or the armies. Other elements related to the emperor's death are sometimes mentioned (e.g., that Vespasian's dream about the duration of his sons' reigns proved correct, *Vesp.* 25).¹⁸³

Suetonius gives details about the dispositions laid out in the wills of the first three Caesars, but not afterwards. This seems to correspond to the decline in the dignity of the role of emperor, so that its holders no longer even bothered thinking of the welfare of the State after their deaths. What was only occasional in Plutarch is systematic in Suetonius' *Caesares*: there is always an account of supernatural signs signalling the imminent death of a Caesar. Lastly, several other specific rubrics sometimes appear in the concluding section: appearance, health, and literary/artistic habits.¹⁸⁴ This is most interesting, because this material appears in the main section rubrics for other Caesars. This may indicate that despite his logical thematic approach, Suetonius was still aware of and influenced by the conventional practice of placing this kind of supplementary material in either the introductory or concluding sections. The greater relevance of these material types for evaluating Caesars no doubt accounts for these variations.

The concluding topoi of the biographies of men of letters overlap considerably with those of men of action but also reflect both the difference of subject type and their greater focus on profession (as opposed to character). All six *vitae* in Suetonius' *De Poetis* mention the subject's death. The familiar topoi of date/place of or age at death, and burial are variably distributed. The rather common *topos* of the subject's will is adapted to the profession under consideration and often mentions unfinished works and what happened to them after his death. Functionally, this is analogous to the role of philosophers' wills in Diogenes. A bit is said about the legacy of Terence and Virgil, including their detractors. Only the violent death

¹⁸² For further study of the dynamics at play in the *Caesares*' concluding sections, see also Power, 2014, 58–77.

¹⁸³ Cf., Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 12–13, who lists concluding topoi.

¹⁸⁴ Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Domitian.

of Lucan is narrated.

The full biographies of Diogenes usually include at least a mention of death with few exceptions (e.g., Aristippus, Pyrrho). Although most philosophers did not have violent deaths, these are narrated because they made for strange and entertaining tales that correspond to the eccentricity associated with the profession. An epigram on the philosopher's life and/or death follows.¹⁸⁵ The date or age at death is usually indicated. Sometimes the birthdate and other important dates in the philosopher's life are provided at this point (again supplementary information in the periphery). In some cases, burial or honours are mentioned (e.g., Solon, Plato), sometimes captured in tomb inscriptions or epitaphs. The will of the subject may be detailed, showing their kind provisions for family and friends, but also bequeathing intellectual property and/or school leadership responsibilities (e.g., *Epic.* 10.16-22). The legacy of philosophers is expressed by listing successors (which may include family members like Pythagoras, 8.42-43) and works. Letters are also featured here as part of the subject's writings that survived him. Particularly well-known sayings can be mentioned, as well as part of the subject's legacy (e.g., Thales' "Know thyself," 1.40).

Socrates' death account stands out from the rest, reflecting its importance for the history of Greek philosophy and the famous accounts given by his disciples. It is, for instance, the only one of the founders' full biographies with a prophecy attached to it (2.45) and a Plutarch-like account of an aftermath including the Athenians' remorse and execution or exile of his accusers (2.43).

Occasionally, supplemental biographical material that could not be fitted elsewhere may be found in concluding sections (e.g., Zeno's *debuts* in 7.32). Similarly, the variably detailed list of homonyms often included belongs more to succession than biographical genus.

Looking back at each of the authors above, it is readily observable that the concluding topoi of biography are adapted to its primary focal point and subject type. There is, otherwise, a great deal of standardisation. These topoi fall within five categories: (1) *death and burial*: death account, date/age of death, place, funeral, honours, burial/disposal of the body, tomb inscriptions, epigrams, supernatural signs; (2) *consequences for or fate of the people most*

¹⁸⁵ The practice does not originate with him, however. We find an epigram on Tibullus' death in his *Life* by Suetonius. While its location differs (it opens the *vita*), the style of epigram is strikingly similar.

affected by the subject's death: family members and descendants, conspirators, populace; (3) *subject's bequest*: will, estate, heirs, legacy including detractors, unfinished works, special attributions, letters, works, successors; (4) *supplementary biographical information*: appearance, birthdate and other important dates, health, literary interests, and miscellanea; (5) *the author's concluding perspectives on the subject and the subject's life events*. Although the topoi within each category and the categories themselves are variously represented across the Lives (even those from the same author), it is apparent that they constitute a coherent and conventional stock.

The most obvious functions of the concluding topoi are to bring the story to a close with the subject's death and bring closure by tying up important loose ends such as fate of relatives or conspirators. In most cases, the death itself does not play a significant biographical role. When it does, it has two main functions. First, it completes the picture of the life trajectory so as to elicit a reaction from the reader. The end may be just and bring satisfaction: a virtuous subject's death that is glorious, peaceful, or followed by funeral honours, or a villain's miserable and shameful death, acclaimed as good news by the people. Or the reverse occurs, leading readers to ponder the role of Fortune, Fate, and Justice and in the case of the virtuous, the cost of virtue and its triumph over death.

Second, it can emphatically complete the trajectory of the life: *Julius'* assassination and funeral honours illustrate that his effective leadership depended on his commandeering control, perceived as tyrannical by others; Cato's end illustrated his uncompromising principles; Mark Antony displayed his foolish passion to the end. In the case of philosophers, Socrates' death illustrates that the philosopher must bear patiently with the ignorance of the many for their own good and at his own cost.

The concluding section is also an opportunity to round the biography by inserting supplemental material, often demonstrating how the subject's claims to fame extended beyond his lifetime (reactions to death, descendants, legacy, writings, etc.). Finally, the author's concluding perspectives aim to leave the readers with last impressions to help them evaluate the subject and the subject's life, and to compare both to that of other famous people or notable representatives of a profession.

3.4 Topoi of the Main Section

The middle or career section is where one often finds the most variation in content between biographers and sometimes even biographies from the same author. Although

authors could present their materials in different ways, many of these differences correspond to different subject types, career and life circumstances, and cultural/historical contexts. Additionally, the primary focal point of the biography, whether it is to evaluate the life and career of famous persons or to present the notable representatives of a specific profession, will also affect emphases and how topoi are deployed. Nevertheless, examples from each of the main biographers in our period will demonstrate that despite this variability, it is in fact adaptations of the same conventional topoi and associated functions that are featured across the genre.

3.4.1 *Suetonius*

The main sections of Suetonius' *Caesares* are thematic and sometimes overlap and cross-reference each other. The rubrics allow assessment of the emperor's public life, private life, and personal characteristics. Public life rubrics are: honours and magistracies, jurisdiction, legislations, campaigns, tours, administration of city and provinces, treatment of the senate, knights, people, games organisation, and building activities. Private life and personal details rubrics are: physical appearance, health, blemishes, lifestyle, diet, drinking and sleeping habits, sexual mores, personal entertainment, housing and furniture, dress, exercise and relaxation, education and literary abilities, religion and superstitions, household and friends, and character traits.¹⁸⁶

Much of this content is specific to the role of Caesar in Rome and what was considered relevant to the evaluation of the relative merits of each emperor. The enactments, policies, public relations, enterprises, and aspects of personal life and personal characteristics that impacted performance or reputation are also routinely featured in the biographies of kings, generals, and other political leaders.¹⁸⁷

A poet's claims to fame and career will obviously differ from a Caesar's. The main

¹⁸⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1980, 13, 18.

¹⁸⁷ One may take as example of the way variable material serves similar functions the role of horse races in Greek versus Roman biographies. In Rome, races were part of the cultural life of the city, but in Greece, they were associated with athletic prowess during pan-Hellenistic or city league games. Therefore, it was important for a Roman ruler to *fund* games and races, but for a Greek ruler to *participate in and win* personal trophies in them (e.g., Alcibiades). In both cases, they serve to enhance the ruler's popularity and thus contribute to their claims to fame.

section of *De Vergili Vita* contains a description of his works accompanied by related anecdotes and includes a few samples of his poetry. The other materials in the main section are Virgil's interactions with Augustus and Octavia, comments about his voice and the reception of his works (including a citation from the elegiac Sextus Propertius), an anecdote on inspiration, and his travels when he was older. This does not say much about the events of his life. This is to be expected, however, as a poet's claims to fame largely relate with works written over spans of years without much of interest (for a profession-focused biography) happening in-between. Still, the materials are strategically chosen to depict important career characteristics while providing vivid snapshots of demeanour and dispositions. This short biography gives a meaningful and subject-type adapted account of a poet's career, with a bit about his private life and personal traits mixed in.

3.4.2 *Nepos*

Nepos' biographies provide a superb illustration of the fact that the highly conventional character of the genre did not preclude latitude and adaptability in the way and extent that its topoi may be deployed.

For instance, *Aristides* is his shortest biography and has almost no introduction nor conclusion. The concise main section focuses on the strict minimum for Nepos' purposes: featuring key events of the subject's life while illustrating his virtues (1.2; 2.2, 3). Nothing is said about appearance, health, hobbies, personal habits, etc. Although his daughters are mentioned, it is not so much to give an account of his family as to illustrate that he kept himself so free from material gain that after his death, they had to be supported by the State (3.1-3). The *Lives of Cimon and Miltiades* are similar. Key events and illustrations of the subjects' character are the only compulsory topoi of the career section of a moralistic GRB. All other topoi, however frequent, are optional rather than default.

The additional topoi one finds in *Alcibiades* (appearance and love affairs) are not in the main section but in the introduction (1.2; 2.1-3). What is significant about this is that they are conventional topoi and their location in the periphery is conventional as well. The career, however, is of the same kind as the other biographies described above: key events presented as illustrations of character traits. There are no anecdotes, no famous sayings, and no thematic excursuses. *Cato* is broadly similar except that the peripheral topoi are found in the conclusion, which as seen earlier, is a conventional option as well.

Epaminondas features considerably more conventional topoi. Again, many are in the

periphery: family (2.1), education (2.1-3), physical training (2.4-5), friendships (3.1-3), use of wealth (3.4-6), and marital status (10.1-3). The main section, arranged thematically, is bit more variegated since it adds some anecdotes and sayings to the narration of illustrative events (5.1-6; 6.1-4; 10.1-3), an appropriate development since Epaminondas' eloquence was one of his claims to fame.

Thus, it is clear Nepos felt free to choose which topoi to include, if any, aside from the strict minimum and when he did, he placed them in conventional locations. He used chronological or thematic arrangements, both conventional options.

3.4.3 *Plutarch*

Plutarch's *Cicero* offers another example yet of conventional topoi deployment in GRB. His method consists of weaving various content categories within a continuous narrative following a loose chronological order.¹⁸⁸

Cicero's main section follows career development with phases of rising or declining influence and fame, and describes talents, personal qualities, and flaws. Early on, he is studious and eager to improve his declamation (4.3-5), and of cautious temperament (3.2; 5.2). As *quaestor*, Cicero reflects traits that will recur in the best parts of his career: a mild, careful, and generous leadership style (6.1). He is a man of principles who is not afraid to take on powerful figures in legal cases (7.3-4). However, he also shows at an early stage what would become a liability later: his love for adulation (6.2-5 cf., 24.1). This fits the sort of material one would expect in a moralistic biography.

Within this loose chronological structure, Plutarch deploys biographical topoi when an event affords the opportunity to do so. Thus, in a story illustrating Cicero's caution in politically precarious times, poor health is used as a pretext to leave for Greece. Thereupon, our author describes his subject's health as well as another of his physical attribute of professional significance: his voice (3.5). It takes not much more than another summary statement on Cicero's talent and fame to justify a discussion of his delivery style (5.3). One early legal case provides the first of several opportunities to feature a catena of his sayings (7.5-6), again skilfully introduced by insertion of the detail that Cicero claimed that the case

¹⁸⁸ Pelling has demonstrated that Plutarch does not hesitate to compress, relocate, or conflate events to serve his purposes. See Pelling 1980, 127-8; cf., Duff 1999, 312-4. While this is certainly true, there remains an undeniable overall chronological progression in Plutarch's Lives.

required no speech. The fine assessed as penalty in the case smoothly leads to the observation that Cicero was not motivated by financial profit, characterising both his character and career. It immediately dovetails into a discussion of his personal wealth and estate and continues on to personal habits (8.2-4).

At one point, Terentia, Cicero's wife, is featured in the events and soon after her character is described, not only providing elements that would prove important later on (her sway over her husband and their disastrous divorce), but at the same time showing a little more of the private man (18.3-4; 20.1-2; 29.3; 41.1-2). It is certainly not coincidental that we meet Cicero's brother and one of his closest friends at the same time as his wife. At some point, Plutarch even seizes the opportunity afforded by a description of Cicero's deluded misuse of his cleverness of speech (24.1) to feature a three-chapter long catena of his sayings, surely, far more than was needed to make the point (25-27)! Thus, instead of thematic treatment in the periphery of the biography (e.g., the subject's health) or thematic sections, the topoi are integrated into the narrative flow.

Other topoi that appear in the biography include personal habits (36.3), leisure and friendships (36.5-6), scholarly production (40.1-41.1), and domestic troubles (41.2-41.1).

It is not difficult to recognise much of what Suetonius does in the *Caesares* or Nepos in the *Epaminondas* in Plutarch's *Cicero*. The subjects and life stories are quite different, as are primary purposes and methods of presentation. Yet in spite of these differences, the audience finds itself each time in familiar territory because it encounters the same set of topoi used to characterise the career, the life, and the person.

3.4.4 *Diogenes Laertius*

Diogenes' biographies of philosophers provide another example yet demonstrating how conventional topoi could be deployed despite special compositional challenges.

After origins and training, the main sections in Diogenes' full biographies recount important career developments such as changing teachers or founding a school and describe claims to fame (known disciples, works, opinions, famous sayings), lifestyle, character, habits, relationships with peers and authorities, as well as noteworthy events, travels, and curious or amusing facts. In other words, it conveys the same type of information as biographies of other subject types: claims to fame, character, depiction of the public and

private person, and personal details.¹⁸⁹

From what can be judged of Diogenes' sources, however, many of the events and sayings pertaining to philosophers were transmitted in collections of eclectic stories or sayings which were not ordered within a biographical framework or narrative. Collections of funny, clever, and gossipy anecdotes or sayings had inherent entertainment appeal for readers and most vividly represented the subjects' idiom, wit, and character. This contrasts with comparatively dull summaries in shorter biographies such as *Phaedo* (2.105). However, preserving the style, wit, and vividness of anecdotes and sayings presented its own set of difficulties because of their thematic multivalence.

In addition to the thematic wealth intrinsic to anecdotal material and *apophthegmata*, Diogenes faced far greater difficulty than Suetonius in his only partially successful attempt to describe the private and public *Caesares* in distinct thematic sections. The love affairs of philosophers were not just gossip material as they often are in other subject types' *Lives*. Love, marriage, temptation, lust, pleasure and so on were all discussed as philosophical topics. Correspondingly, while love interests would usually appear in the periphery sections of other types of biographies, this topic occurs much more readily in the main section of the philosopher's *Lives*. We should not be surprised, then, in light of these compositional challenges, to find that while the *topoi* in Diogenes' *Lives* are similar or functionally equivalent to those in other biographies, they are scattered through his main section to a much greater degree. The subject's habits, character, views, wisdom, and wit are disseminated through the main section, often with some degree of repetition and no apparent order.¹⁹⁰ It is tempting to think that apart from the material that was easiest to place (origin, training, appearance, disciples, works, death, homonyms, personal documents), the biographer might have found it easier to just collect biographically rich material from his sources without too

¹⁸⁹ Sollenberger provides a useful table of "categories." The table, however, does not mention personal habits although they are clearly portrayed. "Anecdotes" and "apophthegms" are also listed alongside topical categories such as "disciples" or "appearance," although these material types often contain information that could fit in one or more thematic categories (1992, 3803).

¹⁹⁰ Hahm describes the section of Zeno's life that formally speaking is essentially a series of *chreiai* and *apophthegmata* as "the least organized" section for which it is difficult to identify a unifying subject matter. Internal organization is sporadic and minimal, and no clear topical subdivisions are discernible (1992, 4113). Sollenberger analyses Book V similarly, pointing out that most of the information on the Peripatetics is conveyed through anecdotes of which many episodes have already been featured with a different emphasis. He makes similar observations about the versatility and distribution of apophthegms (1992, 3833, 3839).

much of an attempt to sort it out and arrange it thematically.¹⁹¹

What we see in Diogenes then, is the most disorganised appropriation of the conventions of the genre, yet one that was eminently suited to his subjects' types and source materials. As noted earlier, however, the opening and concluding topoi are located where expected.

4. Conclusion

Greco-Roman biography is not just a narrative form that can be described by a list of characteristics such as the ones BurrIDGE proposed. Nor is it an encyclopaedic compendium of recurrent themes as might appear from Frickenschmidt's comprehensive catalogue. Such characterisations fail to capture the essence of the genre, which determines and informs its content and presentation.

Greco-Roman biography begins with the aspiration to live well and leave behind a legacy with lasting significance. This results in fascination with two classes of people: those who famously marked history and contributed to shaping it, and those who made important professional contributions to the political, intellectual, and cultural development of society. This produced the two main kinds of GRBs. First, those that explore the lives of famous people and their careers to determine the impact of virtue, vice, and other factors such as external circumstances, the actions of others, and the more mysterious roles of divine interference and of Fortune, Fate, and Justice (Nepos, Plutarch). Second, those that describe the notable representatives of significant professions and how they contributed to them (Suetonius, Laertius). These are interests that overlap with but differ in primary purpose from closely related genres such as encomium and historiography.

The exploration and characterisation of these famous or notable subjects both reflect and take their meaning from deep-seated assumptions. It is the framework of Greek philosophy that defines (1) what virtues and vices are, (2) how character is shaped, (3) what one should aspire to, (4) the synergistic relationship between individual performance and the collective good, (5) and important beliefs such as the role of Fate.

This philosophical framework translates into and is supplemented by specific socio-

¹⁹¹ Hahm argues that Diogenes' compositional procedure reflected his dependence on sources and consisted primarily of excerpting with only "a minimalist procedure of moving around a few items" with "a view to developing some structure and coherence among them" (1992, 4124-5).

cultural values that give further definition to what precisely defines a life well-lived and a significant legacy. This includes the establishment of a proud family pedigree, strong friendships, wealth, health, achievements, talent, and culture. It drives the conception of entertainment from gladiatorial games in a Caesar's biography to wit and gossip in the lives of men of letters. These define what the *topoi* of the genre are, why they are appropriate, conventional, and what their functions are.

Finally, GRB is the product of a specific literary subculture which determines its research methods, its use and kinds of sources, and interactions with GR genres such as encomium, history, collections of sayings, anecdotes, successions, philosophical treatises, or poetry. Where applicable, these materials reflect their own conventions that define why they were valued and how they operate.

The life stories from different historical periods, cultural horizons, and literary traditions naturally tend to have much in common. Life starts at birth and ends at death. Relationships, character, gain, health, and achievements impact every life story to a certain degree. It is therefore to be expected that a number of broad resemblances and at times, even striking similarities, can be found as one compares these stories. What this chapter has demonstrated, however, is that GRB is not just a narrative shape that contains certain type of events and content. It reflects a thoroughly Greco-Roman approach to life and career storytelling characterised by distinctive purposes and modes of representation.

CHAPTER 3: BIOGRAPHY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This chapter will argue that, despite claims to the contrary, there is a well-established Jewish biographical tradition in the OT. An analysis of its primary purposes, emphases, conventions, and subtypes will demonstrate that despite some broad similarities, the differences between Jewish biographical representation and GRB are deep and extensive. A clear understanding of the distinctive traits of each biographical tradition is essential to assess the literary background of Mark's biography of Jesus.

1. The Case for OT Biography

The pervasive influence of the OT on the gospels is both evident and well-documented.¹ Yet while the question of the relationship of the genre of the gospels to GRB has received considerable attention, there has not been any substantial and systematic investigation of the same question in relation to Jewish biographical antecedents within and outside of the OT.

This is largely due to the fact that OT scholars have either denied that it is appropriate to describe the genre of any OT text as biography or shown little interest in investigating the characteristics of texts that may qualify as such. Thus, Coats argues that the stories of the patriarchs are better described as family sagas than as biographies because “the concern is not simply to describe the hero as he really was or as he really acted... but rather to interpret the hero according to stereotyped, but imaginative, categories.”² In his view, biography is “a kind of history writing that documents events of a particular life throughout its duration” with a structure “controlled by the record of events in the chronology of life.”³ Westermann reaches a similar verdict and reasons that biography concerns individuals that are important for a nation and that the patriarchs and their families were not when the traditions on which

¹ See Beale and Carson, 2007; Hays 2017.

² Coats 1983, 6.

³ Ibid., 317.

their stories are based arose.⁴ Long declares even more emphatically: “The OT offers no examples of genuine biography, although scholars from time to time have incorrectly used the word.”⁵

Although Jewish biography differs considerably from and should not be expected to conform to the standards of GRB, it is useful, for the sake of argument, to evaluate these objections in light of undisputed examples of biography in the GR tradition. These comparisons make it immediately clear that these objections cannot hold if one is to be consistent in what one allows to be considered biography.

Thus, any connoisseur of GRB should immediately find the assertion that biography seeks to describe a subject as he “really was or acted” and not according to stereotyped and imaginative categories untenable. As the previous chapter has amply illustrated, GR biography is highly stereotypical and includes embellishments, legends, and other “imaginative categories.” Moreover, most of Nepos’ biographies do not describe “life throughout its duration” and his *Epaminondas* as well as Suetonius’ *Caesares* are certainly not “controlled by the record of events in the chronology of life.” If these grounds do not disqualify GRBs from being biography, they should not be used to claim that Jewish life and career stories are not biographies either.

As for Westermann’s objection, it confuses the question of the genre of the patriarchal stories at earlier stages of development with that of their final form as they appear in the OT. After all, GR biographers also used source materials that were not originally biography.

There are in fact potent reasons to consider a number of OT life and career stories as instances of biography. It is important, however, to recognise that some characteristics of potentially qualifying texts do not conform to what may be expected of biographies. First, most of these narratives (e.g., the life/career stories of Abraham or David) are not self-enclosed biographies but are sections of large historical narratives whose purposes clearly extend beyond biography. Sections that focus on specific individuals can be found in Greek histories as well but do not qualify as bona fide biographies.

Second, many of these are extended narratives that seem to merely organise much non-biographical content within a biographical and narrative framework, and whose purpose, again, clearly transcends a biographical one (e.g., the Law in Exodus-Deuteronomy). Third,

⁴ Westermann 1995, 28.

⁵ Long, 1984, 8.

the content of some narratives which portray the career of significant individuals seems to be too minimal to be considered biographies (e.g., shorter judges and kings). Fourth, many of these stories provide little by way of personal details on the individual.

Again, a few comparisons from undisputed examples of GRB demonstrate that these characteristics are not as incompatible with genuine biography as may be assumed. First, GRBs are not always self-enclosed either; they may be part of a continuous narrative. Small scale examples of this are found in Plutarch's *Agis/Cleomenes*, *Tiberius/Gaius Gracchus*, and *Galba/Otho* which all are continuous narratives. In fact, the last pair originally belonged to an even longer continuous narrative which included Nero's biography and probably at least that of Vitellius. The biographies of these emperors recount their consecutive reigns, a story virtually indistinguishable from a history of Rome for that period. Likewise, Suetonius' *Caesares* and *Grammarians and Rhetoricians* (with its historical introduction), and Diogenes' successions of philosophers each constitute a history.

Second, GRB can include significant non-biographical sections of materials as well. For example, on a smaller scale, one recalls the frequent cultural and historical excursions in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. On a larger scale, Diogenes' biographies of philosophers not only constitute a succession as a whole but also contain extensive doxographies that do not make any biographical reference at all.

Third, as previously established, some GR biographical entries will often include as little as the shorter stories of some judges and kings. In either case, what matters is not how comprehensive the content is, but its kind, purpose, and larger literary context.

Lastly, the high selectivity of ancient biography was the direct product of its primary purpose(s). Correspondingly, GR moralistic biography had sustained interest in character, and personal details and habits were considered important to evaluate emperors in Suetonius' *Caesares*. However, professional biography generally contained considerably less (if anything) about character, and this sort of material was not regarded as indispensable to "biography." Hence how much character description and personal details are provided is not a determinative factor either.

These questions will be explored in greater detail in this chapter, but these observations underscore the need to examine more closely the biographical merits of OT stories without prejudice.

The most important question to consider is whether there is a demonstrable biographical purpose in a given narrative, whether GR or from the OT and if so, how it may be defined and what types of content and conventions are used to serve this purpose. From

this perspective, it becomes immediately clear that many of these OT narratives do indeed have the characteristics of biographies. Although OT stories such as those of Abraham, Moses, or David are embedded in larger historical narratives, each have a clear beginning and end. While they frequently overlap with the lives of predecessors and successors, each starts with the subject's birth, origins (e.g., genealogies) or career beginning, and ends with the subject's death and burial, which are unmistakably biographical rubrics.

The main narrative loosely follows the chronology of the subject's life and is mostly presented from the perspective of the subject's experiences. Despite occasional excursions and sometimes substantial interruptions of the narrative, *focus on the subject* is what unifies the whole story. Those subjects are not merely presented as actors in larger historical events in which they appear and from which they disappear when they have done their part. The main "event" *is* the subject's life.

Moreover, it should be beyond question that many of these stories do in fact provide a representative (if selective) account of the person's career and character based on stereotyped categories that reflect the primary purposes of the genre (more on this shortly). These are, again and undeniably, the characteristics of biography.

2. Inclusions and Exclusions

The distinction between stories with considerable focus on an individual in GR histories and bona fide biographies illustrates the need to distinguish between biographical and biography. In keeping with the need to remain consistent in the evaluation of the biographical nature of OT texts as compared to that of GR texts, the OT narratives that should be considered biographies are those that start with the beginning of life/career, end with death, and aim to provide a representative account of the subject's claims to fame in-between. OT stories matching these criteria are those of the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, the judges, the kings, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, and from the Greek Bible, the career of Judas Maccabeus in 1 Maccabees. The biographical merits of each of these will be explored in further detail under "Subject Types."

However, narratives containing biographical material but that have a smaller scope than a subject's lifetime/career or claim to fame should not be considered biographies. Frequently, key elements of biography will be lacking such as a birth or beginning of career and/or death account. In other cases, centre stage is shared with more than one character or with the story itself. This applies to Ruth, Job, Esther, Nehemiah and Ezra, any of the major

and minor prophets (including Jonah), Tobit, Judith and Susanna.

3. The Ethos of OT Biography

Unlike GRB, Old Testament biography (OTB) is obviously not the product of philosophy and has no palpable interest in the celebration of culture. Instead, it was written to sustain, defend, and propagate the faith of Israel. This is the primary purpose that defined interest in the individual and determined the sort of materials to include or exclude from life or career stories. All the subjects of ancient Jewish biographies, in the OT and beyond, are those considered to have had an important role in or impact on the sacred history of the nation, whether positive or negative. Thus, despite its sustained interest in the life and career stories of individuals, ancient Jewish biography is always theocentric. God is ever present and much more frequently and actively involved than the gods of GRB.

This theocentric perspective moderates the celebration of Israel's heroes. Human achievement must always be ultimately attributed to the divine will and blessings; failure to acknowledge this results in divine judgement (e.g., 1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr. 26:16; 32:25; cf., Dan. 4:28–32). As a result, an individual's significance is not measured in terms of personal achievements, talents, and a broad array of virtues, but more narrowly in terms of faith and obedience to God which issue into the ethics of piety, hence a minimal interest in recording personal anecdotes or memorable sayings.

The close relationship between biography and sacred history is also the main reason they are embedded in histories rather than written as independent books, and also why they can include extensive materials of lasting significance for the faith of Israel (e.g., the Law, tribal boundaries in Joshua, the description of the Temple in the story of Solomon). The intrinsic significance of these materials transcends biographical interest, but they were still considered products of individual lives and careers and as such, indispensable elements of their stories.

4. The Characteristics of OT Biography

Although Jewish biography (JB) evolved during the Second Temple period, the foundational role and influence of OTB on the genre is underscored by the fact that aside from First Maccabees, all later JBs are rewrites of OT stories. This influence is not just at content level but also in the general approach to biography and the genre's conventions. It is thus essential to delineate the characteristics of OTB as the baseline that defines much of JB

and against which subsequent developments can be evaluated. This analysis will start with the characteristics that pertain to specific subject types, then move on to structures and topoi, and finally style.

4.1 Subject Types

The subject types of OTB all correspond to roles with significant impact on the nation's sacred history: patriarchs, founders, judges, kings, and prophets. Prophets excepted, these roles correspond to distinct stages of development of the theocratic nation. As in GRB, the content of biographies is considerably adapted to subject type and specificities. In this section, the distinctive outlook and general biographical characteristics associated with each subject type will be analysed. The shared conventions that define the genre across subject types will be delineated in subsequent sections.

4.1.1 *Patriarchs*

The first biographies in the OT are those of the patriarchs (Gen 12-50). They were regarded as significant individuals whose stories should be told because of their role as progenitors of the nation, precursors of Israel's faith, and early sojourners in the Promised Land. Their stories recount how they received and appropriated the divine promises of descendants and land through the direction, protection, and provision of God. The materials are the direct product of these focal points: genealogies, divine promises and revelations, family struggles and threats (rivalries, barrenness, abductions, estrangements), journeys and settlements, relationships to neighbouring or related peoples, divine protection and blessing, and the faith stances of the protagonists. As in Plutarch's biographies, one will find occasional excursus material directly related to the events in the subject's story, especially aetiologies.

The role of progenitor gives considerably more importance to family affairs than is usual in OTB. However, functionally speaking and pace Westermann, these are not anecdotes of strife within ancestral clans that recount significant relational developments such as can be found in family sagas.⁶ The primary function of the accounts of Jacob's struggles with Esau and the rivalry between Leah and Rachel, for instance, is to explain and vindicate the divine origin and arrangement of the chosen line of descendants. Only family affairs that pertain to

⁶ 1995, 51.

this purpose, directly linked to the significance of the patriarch as progenitor, are included.

Since the patriarchs were fathers and sons, their biographies overlap with episodes that have significance for both. For instance, the birth of Isaac serves both as a major event in Abraham's biography and as the birth narrative for Isaac's biography. This overlap means that these biographies are not fully extricated one from the other. However, genealogies are used as structural markers to indicate transition from primary focus on one subject to the next (Gen 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2).

The biographies are mostly structured chronologically. They start with the subject's origins and/or birth and end with death and burial. Although the events narrated are sporadic and the style is episodic, plots and subplots drive events and define the career/life. Through these, the subjects are effectively characterised: Abraham the paragon of faith, Isaac the passive family leader, Jacob the wrestler, Joseph the faithful sufferer.

A more detailed analysis of Abraham's story will now be provided to illustrate the characteristics described above. The limits of the biography are clearly demarcated by the subject's genealogy (Gen. 11:10-31) and those of his sons (25:12, 19), which immediately follow the account of his death and burial. The biography starts by delineating the subject's essential family connections: his father, wife, brother's family (which would have an important role later), and nephew Lot. There is no childhood or youth account, something that later Rewritten Bible accounts would seek to remedy (e.g., Jub. 11:14-24).

As is frequently the case in OTB, the life/career section of the biography starts with divine appointment (12:1-9). This instils a theocentric focus to the story from the beginning. The call narrative has also a programmatic function in relation to what is to follow: the command to journey to Canaan will translate into stories of the subject's wanderings to, in, and back to the "land that I will show you" (v. 1). The promise of a great nation will produce the stories of Sarah's rescue from Pharaoh/Abimelech, the fathering of Ishmael, the much-protracted birth of Isaac, the test of faith when the subject is asked to sacrifice him, and even the naming of nations born from his second wife after Sarah's death. The promise of greatness, blessing to others, and cursing of enemies all find expression in divine intervention against Pharaoh, Abimelech, the acquisition of much wealth, success against a coalition of kings, and Melchizedek's blessing.

The story progresses through the narration of significant episodes interspersed over long periods of time. The main plot focuses on Sarah's barrenness, reiterated promises that the subject will have a son, and the struggle of faith as years pass on. It is resolved by the birth of Isaac. Several complications arise. The subject first takes matters into his own hands

and begets a son from Sarah's maidservant. Sarah's status as legitimate child-bearer is momentarily threatened, as is Isaac's as only legitimate heir subsequently. Then the subject is asked to offer his son in sacrifice, a complication also resolved by divine intervention.

There are multiple related subplots (e.g., relationships between Abraham/Lot, Sarah/Hagar, Ishmael/Isaac). Although the story leaves the subject twice to recount what happens to Lot (14:1-16; 19:1-38), these events are relevant to the concerns of the biography, and Abraham remains the unifying and main character of the story. Another clear indicator of this is the fact that the biography includes 763 grammatical referents to Abraham (nouns, verbs, and pronouns), more than twice over those to God (304) and even more than that of the next most featured character, Sarah (197).

Over the course of the biography a rich portrait of the subject's faith and righteousness is provided. In spite of moments of doubt and questionable decisions, Abraham is as presented humble, fair in his dealings, hospitable (13:1-13; 14:24; 18:2-8; 21:22-34; 23:3-20), militarily capable, respected by his neighbours (14:1-15), and disdainful of tainted wealth (14:22-23) and intermarriage with the disreputable Canaanites (24:1-9). He is, above all, a man of remarkable faith (15:6) and obedient to divine commandments despite considerable challenges (12:4; 17:23; 21:12-14; 22:1-19). He cares for justice and for others and intercedes with God on their behalf (18:23-33). These all are qualities that ancient Israelites would associate with piety and devotion and are thus eminently suitable to describe the subject's significance. Thus, through rich scenes, a compelling (if selective) portrait of the patriarch is weaved and a representative story of his life/career as patriarch is provided, in other words, a biography.

4.1.2 *Founding National Leaders*

Although Moses was a lawgiver and mediator, and Joshua a general, their biographies share characteristics corresponding to their common role as founding national leaders. They are presented in the biblical tradition as the towering figures who led Israel through the events that founded the nation: The Exodus and the Conquest. Their special roles are underscored by the fact that despite analogies, they cannot easily be classified in one of the subsequent national leadership roles (judge, king, prophet). They are also closely related, since Joshua was Moses' disciple, successor, and is presented as a new (although lesser) Moses.

The biographies of the founding national leaders share several important characteristics. First, they record important documents bound up with the events that defined

the nation and with the subjects of the biography (Law and division of the Promised Land). Second, both subjects function as mediators between God and nation. This produces three specific kinds of materials: frequent and extensive reports of divine instructions (including most of the Law and instructions about land division), many episodes that describe the people's responses and the subjects' reactions to them, and battle descriptions.

The momentous importance of these events is underscored by the place of miracle stories and the presentation of the subjects as bigger than life. Both are obedient, steady and committed, and apart Moses' initial timidity, there is no sensible change in their character. Finally, in contrast to the patriarchs but in keeping with their own roles and most other OTBs, there is very little or no material that pertains to family or personal life.

Some characteristics would seem to undermine the claim that Exodus-Deuteronomy is a biography. First, much of it is not narrative but legal or other descriptive materials (tabernacle construction, census). Second, many scholars would consider Deuteronomy (with its first-person narration style and reiteration of the Law) as separate from Exodus-Numbers.

Concerning the first point, one must recall that Diogenes Laertius' biographies include very lengthy doxographies. I have argued in the previous chapter that these doxographies depart from the canons of biography, but at the same time were very logically associated with the account of the careers of philosophers whose doctrines they represent. In Jewish consciousness, the Law and Moses are inseparable. Correspondingly, the Law was not passed down as a separate document but was only preserved in Israel's Scriptures within the biographical framework of Exodus-Deuteronomy. It is the Law "of Moses" (Jos 8:31).

Concerning Deuteronomy, whether it and other materials now found in Exodus-Numbers, were composed separately, at different times, and authored or edited by different persons, should not obscure the fact that these materials have been integrated together with an obvious intention to *present* them as a unified and continuous story. The clearest indications of this are of course the facts that Deuteronomy is presented as starting when and where Numbers ends and supplies a conclusion to the story of Moses that would otherwise be missing from Exodus-Numbers.

Moreover, special care has been taken to both introduce and conclude the story with strong biographical emphasis. Thus, the story begins in Exodus with a birth narrative that includes details on the parents (a genealogy is provided shortly thereafter), extraordinary circumstances, a comment on the appearance of the child, the story of his adoption, early adulthood stories (2:1-25), and an extended call narrative (3:1-4:17). Then Deuteronomy offers the closing farewell speech (33:1-29) and death and burial account (34:6). This

epilogue, which concludes the whole of Exodus-Deuteronomy, does not focus on the Exodus as an event or on the lasting significance of the Law, but on the man, Moses, described in quasi-encomiastic terms (34:7, 10-12). Between these, different record types are inserted within a narrative framework in which Moses is the main and unifying character.

The focus on the roles of Moses as mediator of the Law and leader of the Exodus leave little space for personal characterisation. This is not unexpected, since interest in the individual in OTB is largely limited to their contributions to sacred history. Some biographical details are provided: the name of Moses' wife and his two children (including the biographical significance of "Gershom"),⁷ the name of and some details on his father-in-law, stories that feature the subject's kin (Aaron and Miriam), his initial timidity, his humility and liability to leadership challenges, his indefatigable intercession for his compatriots, and his propensity to lose his temper. Thus, the story of Moses is indeed a representative account of his life and career based on the particular interests of OTB.⁸

4.1.3 Judges

The judges stand apart from other subject types. In most cases, little is known of their origins, credentials, character, or of the detail of their careers. Some of them are known for being the instruments of remarkable, divinely-empowered victories, yet most could only ambiguously be referred to as "heroes" given their vices or ambivalent character.

Like the stories of the patriarchs, the judges' biographies constitute a series embedded in a larger historical narrative. Judges 3:7-16:31 gives an account of fourteen different judges in the order of their lifetimes. The length and detail of these varies considerably from the eighteen words for Shamgar to slightly above 1,400 for Samson.

The scarcity of information and brevity of the stories of the shorter judges may cast doubt on whether they should be considered biographies. Of Shamgar we only learn the name, his father's, a very concise description of a military feat and the summary statement "he too delivered Israel" (Judg 3:31). Of Elon we learn his tribe, that he judged for ten years, then died and the place where he was buried (12:11-12). This is actually completely analogous to some of the short biographical entries from Suetonius and Diogenes. The full

⁷ See Exodus 2:22.

⁸ Space constraints prohibit inclusion of an analysis of Joshua's biography. The analysis of Moses, however, illustrates the issues that pertain to this subject type and the biographical nature of their stories.

text of one of these illustrates the point: “Cebes was a citizen of Thebes. Three dialogues of his are extant: The Tablet. The Seventh Day. Phrynichus” (D. L., *Vit. Phil.* 2.125).

As discussed in the previous chapter, such examples stretch our own modern sense of what constitutes biography. In GRB, we saw that the fact that these entries feature in series in which there are fuller instances of biography indicates that they were considered biographies. Therefore, since the shorter stories of the judges also belong within a series featuring longer ones, judgement on their genre must be related to whether the latter do qualify as biographies.⁹

The two longest Judges stories are those of Gideon and Samson (Judg 6-8; 13-16). Gideon’s begins with a prologue providing an immediate context and call narrative in which the subject responds with hesitation and asks for confirmatory signs (Judg 6:1-24, 36-40; cf., Exod 1:1-22; 3:1-4:17). It ends with the subject’s death and burial and a short epilogue (Judg 8:32-35). The main part recounts the subject’s destruction of a local shrine of Baal which earns him the cognomen Jerubbaal (6:25-32), his rout of the Midianites (6:33-35; 7:1-25), and subsequent tensions with the Ephraimites (7-8:22). After this, the Israelites make an unsuccessful bid to crown him king and he builds a shrine which soon becomes a centre of idolatrous worship for the nation and himself (8:23-27). He is then described as the *de facto* judge for forty years, with a very briefly summarised private life (8:28-29). The main part concludes by indicating that Gideon married many wives and had seventy sons.

This certainly qualifies as a biography and compares with some of Suetonius’ biographies of poets. Beside the biographical framework, it effectively provides a representative account of the subject’s career and claims to fame. He is at first characterised as unassuming, ready to exercise faith and obey God, opposing idolatry and bravely leading Israel in battle, but later becomes corrupted by the allure of power and reverses his course.

The story of Samson likewise provides a representative account of his career and character. It features one of the finest specimens of birth narratives in the Jewish Scriptures, includes a call narrative, and ends with a death account.

By analogy to the biographies of philosophers then, it is best to conclude that Judges is a biographical series that includes both biographical entries and actual biographies. The

⁹ This approach, which is based on the concrete evidence of the aforementioned examples, stands in opposition to the tendency in OT scholarship to disregard the normative value of series and make different pronouncement on the genre of each piece therein. Thus, the stories of the patriarchs are considered sagas but that of Joseph a romance. Likewise, short and longer judges and kings are usually ascribed different genre categories.

primary claims to fame of the judges was to act as YHWH's instruments of (military) salvation, although some also influenced the faith of the nation (mostly negatively). They were in this sense notable actors in the sacred history.

4.1.4 Kings

Many of the observations above are also applicable to the biographies of kings. The stories of the latter are recounted serially with a spectrum ranging from minimal biographical entries to full biographies. The OT contains two collections which partially overlap. Chronicles tells the stories of Judean kings with a particular emphasis on the glories of the reigns of David and Solomon and their foundational role in relation to the Temple cult. Samuel-Kings is a more complex collection that attempts to provide a chronological story of the kings of the united monarchy, followed by those of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, as well as the stories of three influential national prophets.

The penchant in OTB to present biographies within the continuity of sacred story takes interlocking to a higher level of complexity in Kings. First, since the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David were so intertwined, there is a high degree of interlocking where again, episodes can contribute to more than one subject's biography.¹⁰ For instance, many of the episodes of Saul's dealings with David simultaneously serve to characterise both of their characters and careers.

Second, the series alternates between Northern and Southern kings based on their years of accession with overlaps when they interact. Finally, there is also significant interlocking between the stories of Elijah, Elisha, and contemporary Northern kings.

Although this gives the whole the quality of a history, there are indications that once again, this history is largely written through biography. With rare exceptions, the story of each subject is properly introduced, provides a representative account of the career with some characterisation, and concludes with death and burial account. Thus, despite the fact that David's story progressively takes precedence over that of Samuel and Saul, a representative account of their careers and character is still given which includes episodes entirely devoted to this purpose. This contrasts with the treatment of characters such as Joab, Absalom, Bathsheba, or Nathan, who have important roles but are never the central person of the story and whose stories are not biographically introduced and/or concluded.

¹⁰ This contrasts with Plutarch's stronger demarcation between the interrelated biographies of influential contemporaries such as Pompey, Cicero, Julius Caesar, and Cato Minor.

The biographical content of both collections is highly standardised, especially the introductory and concluding parts. Introductory matters provide the subject's name and year or age of accession. The father is named, sometimes the mother. When needed, the location of the seat of power is specified. Reign duration is mentioned at either beginning or end. Concluding matters include a death and burial notice (when uneventful) or detailed account. The collection only features two birth narratives (Samuel and Solomon). Although relatively rare, there are also several call/commissioning narratives (Samuel, Saul, David, Jeroboam I, Elisha, Jehu).

As in the case throughout OTB, performance is evaluated very narrowly as the story of the individual's relationship with God and its consequences for the nation. As a result, the included topoi often provide a very selective representation of person and career. Kings are primarily assessed as doing right or evil in the eyes of YHWH and often compared in this regard to paragons (e.g., Jeroboam I; David). Narrated events of the subject's reign are mainly interpreted as signs of divine approval or displeasure (war outcomes, illnesses, deaths, conspiracies, etc.), through direct revelations, prophets, or authorial commentary. Only historically exceptional achievements are mentioned (important building projects, significant conquests, golden age conditions). Moreover, although wives and children may be listed, family members are only featured when they play an essential role in the events of the biography.

The story of Jeroboam I most strikingly illustrates this mode of representation. His biography recounts his accession as the Northern kingdom's first king and pivotal role in introducing calf worship and turning the kingdom away from Yahwism and Jerusalem Temple worship. This incurs divine displeasure and a prediction that his house will be short-lived. Thereupon, the story concludes with the statement that "the rest" of his acts, *how he warred* and *how he reigned* are to be found in the royal annals (1 Kgs 14:19). None of the wars or anything else of significance are recounted from his twenty-two years long reign! Yet, however selective, this still provides a representative account of the subject's career and character *in relation to the narrow focus of OTB*.

Although it is not possible to offer a full analysis here, several comments on the extensive biography of David in Samuel-Kings are in order. Mayes has argued that evaluation of the biographical merits of the story should first of all be based on a deconstruction of its posited composition story. In his view, the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9-20, 1 Kgs 1-2) cannot be properly considered biography, because it is more focused on the dynasty than on David as individual, meshes with stories that pertain to the house of Saul, and serves obvious

ideological purposes.¹¹

These objections are not tenable. First, the fact that David's story interlocks with the story of Saul and his house does not disqualify it as biography, since interlocking is a common feature of OTB. Second and as pointed out earlier, one must distinguish between the forms and genre of source materials and their final form within the context of the larger work in which they have been placed. Regardless of its stages of composition, the biblical text of Samuel-Kings presents the story of David as an integrated whole that starts with his accession, ends with his death, and gives a representative account of his career and character in-between.¹² These are the features of a biography.

Finally, ideological purposes are far from incompatible with ancient biography. The role of David's biography in Samuel-Kings draws comparisons in this regard to the character and function of Suetonius' *Augustus* in the *Caesares*. Both are held out as paragons on the basis of assumed values and political opinions with implications for subsequent office holders. In point of fact, Augustus' biography is no less ideological than David's!

To conclude, it is worth commenting on the importance of family matters in David's biography. It is not a coincidence that it is only here and in the biographies of the patriarchs that family intrigues are so significant and extensively recounted. In both cases, they are biographies of a significant ancestor whose lineage and succession must be properly established and shown to reflect divine election. The succession is considered an essential element of the subject's legacy. There is otherwise no intrinsic interest in the domestic affairs of royal houses in OTB as they are largely considered irrelevant to what defines the biographical significance of kings.

4.1.5 National Prophets

Samuel-Kings includes the biographies of three prophets whose careers were deemed to have significantly marked national history. The interlocking of their stories with those of contemporary kings reflects the larger work's idealised conception of the monarchy which best operates in harmony with the counsel and direction of prophets. The decision to integrate

¹¹ Mayes 2006, 1–12

¹² The fact that the earliest Hebrew manuscripts separate Samuel from Kings says little on this question, since the whole story would have been too long to preserve in one scroll. The Lucianic text, however, which is considered the best witness of the Old Greek text, extends 2 Kingdoms to 1 Kings 2:12 so as to include the conclusion to David's story.

their stories within the already complicated framework of overlapping monarchical biographies accounts for their fragmented character.

Nevertheless, one finds here again clear indications of biographical purpose. The biography of Samuel begins with an elaborate birth narrative (1 Sam 1:1-20) adorned with a stereotyped and elaborate hymn (2:1-10). This is followed by an extended call narrative in the context of the demise of Eli's house (2:11-4:1). The main story features several full episodes in which the subject acts as national leader before the rise of Saul and David and the subsequent change of focus to his interactions with them. After the rupture of his relationship with Saul, Samuel retires from national involvement with an early farewell speech (12:1-5) and only briefly appears during David's flight (19:18). The biographical framework is completed by the notice of his death and burial (1 Sam 25:1).¹³ This is a representative account of the subject's career demonstrating his impact on Israel's sacred history.

Space constraints only allow a few comments here on the characteristics of Elijah and Elisha's biographies. The first subject's story uncharacteristically begins without proper introduction or call narrative (1 Kgs 17:1) but otherwise extends to the end of his career and miraculous ascension (2 Kgs 2:1-12). It features full scenes of the subject's activity including dramatic stand-offs with Ahab and Jezebel and an extended Horeb narrative (1 Kgs 18:1-19:18). Elisha's biography includes a call narrative (1 Kgs 19:16, 19-21), presents multiple episodes representative of his career and ends with his death (2 Kgs 13:14-20). The biographical thrust of the three national prophets' stories is underscored by the fact that although other prophets regularly appear in Samuel-Kings, no attempt is made to give an account of their beginnings, end, or even an overview of their careers. As we will see in the chapter 8, Samuel's birth narrative, Elisha's call narrative, and the miracles of Elijah and Elisha considerably influenced the Synoptic biographies of Jesus.

4.2 Structures and Topoi

OTB generally presents events in chronological order with two notable exceptions. First, while the narrative mostly progresses chronologically, many of the laws and sections in the legal materials comprised in Moses' biography are arranged thematically (e.g., the sacrificial and impurity systems in Leviticus 1-7 and 11-16 respectively). These arrangements

¹³ His post-mortem appearance (1 Sam 28:9-19) is best considered part of Saul's biography.

include the use of structural devices such as chiasms or inversions.¹⁴ Second, Elijah and Elisha's biographies include collections of miracle stories loosely connected together (e.g., 2 Kings 4:1-8:6).¹⁵ Only vague chronological markers are used (e.g., וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם) to introduce each scene (2 Kgs 4:8, 11, 18).

4.2.1 Prologues

Since many OTBs are embedded in a continuous history, most do not have prologues. When they do, the prologue serves to describe the context in which the story takes place (Exod 1:1-22; Judg 1:1-3:5; 6:1-10). OTB features no prefaces in which the author addresses readers directly and introduces the biography.

4.2.2 Ancestry

Beside the subject's name and except where it is superfluous, ancestry is the first element of the biography and is presented through one or more conventional forms. Extended or shorter genealogies are provided generally for characters of momentous significance for the larger history (e.g., Gen 11:10-26; Exod 6:14-27). In contrast to GRB, the primary role of ancestry is not to describe the subject's pedigree or illustrious ancestors but to supplement the name as identification and locate him/her within the tribal structure of the nation.

Most commonly, only the closest kin are named (usually the father) (e.g., Judg 6:11; 1 Kgs 15:2). The unusual social status or foreign nationality of a parent may be very economically mentioned (e.g., 1 Sam 9:1; Kgs 11:26; 14:31). However, select information on the parents can be provided if relevant to the story: Saul's father owned donkeys and servants, and his reputation may have contributed to the misplaced people's admiration for their new king; Gideon's father owned a shrine and was influent enough to stay the mob from killing his son; a queen from a "detestable" neighbouring nation may partly explain her son's future apostasy. The stories of Ruth (which is not a biography) and Hannah portray God's blessing on the descendants of the righteous but do not establish a causal relationship between the character of parent and child.

¹⁴ See Milgrom 1990, xxii–xxxi. While scholars frequently disagree on where and to which extent such devices are found, their repeated use in the Torah is generally recognized.

¹⁵ Hobbs 1998, 44-46; Gray 1977, 465-467.

4.2.3 *Birth Narratives*

Birth narratives are rare but significant when featured. A birth narrative worth telling incorporates extraordinary elements announcing the subject's special destiny. It may include a miraculous reversal of the mother's heretofore barrenness (e.g., Gen 25:21), divine revelations about the child's future (e.g., Gen 25:23), or divine protection (e.g., Exod 2:1-10). In Jacob's birth narrative, the tussle in Rebekah's womb presages the twins' future struggle and Jacob's hold on his brother's heel his future behaviour toward him. Moses' "good" appearance signals that the child is exceptional.

Thus, OTB birth narratives have a broadly similar function as those in GRB: extraordinary circumstances or unusual features of the child are early signs that the subject is special. There are, however, significant differences. Birth narratives in OTB are often accompanied by revelation of what the child will do (e.g., Gen 17:9; Judg 13:5) while in GRB signs and oracles can only be interpreted retrospectively. The miraculous is restrained in OTB (ability to conceive, divine revelations) whereas GRB includes all sorts of bizarre phenomena (e.g., Plut. *Alex.* 2.2-4 cf. Suet. *Virg.* 3-5). OTB birth miracles often shape the story (parents are told what to do or a child is saved), whereas those of GRB usually do not. Finally, OTB presents birth narratives as fact, whereas GRB reports them as tales and lets readers judge of their credibility. These differences reflect the two biographical traditions' dissimilar assumptions concerning the role of miracles and divine revelation in history.

4.2.4 *Childhood and Youth*

It is rare for OTB to include any story relating to the subject's youth or childhood (but more frequent in intertestamental rewritten Bible biographies). This reflects the narrow interest of OTB in the subject's contributions to the sacred history of Israel. There is little interest in correlating adult character with incipient traits revealed in youth. What stories are included are directly relevant to the biographical agenda: Samuel's experiences as a boy serve as his call narrative (1 Sa 2:21-3:18), Isaac's relationship with Ishmael and the Mount Moriah episode are inextricable from his role as heir of the promises. The allusion to the young David's confrontations with lion and bear could be interpreted as early demonstration of his valour. However, it is not the function it has where it occurs in the biography: it mainly serves to give "reasonable grounds" for David's faith as he prepares to face Goliath (1 Sam 17:33-37).

4.2.5 *Divine Calling*

This is a standard and one of the most distinctive elements of OTB. The heroes of Israel's sacred history can only be so when they have been empowered by God. Consequently, their careers are initiated by some form of divine call. The standard features of call narratives are direct divine revelations (Gen 12:1-4; Ex 3:1-4:23) or anointing by a prophet (Num 27:18-23; 1 Sam 16:12-13 cf. 1 Kgs 19:16) or priest (1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 9:6; 11:12). Call narratives are usually not provided when the subject accesses office through a succession that has already been divinely legitimated (1 Kgs 11:36; 2 Kgs 10:30).

For most judges, the sign of divine calling is a charismatic event in which "the Spirit of YHWH came upon him" (e.g., Judg 3:10, cf. 1 Sam 10:6; 16:13). Elijah's call is not narrated but implied in his portrayal as recipient and messenger of the divine word (1 Kgs 17:1) and his empowerment to perform miracles.

This category establishes a strong contrast with GRB because it is the divine choice and empowerment rather than early achievements, ambition, personal talent, and public recognition that propel the subjects into office. This correlates with the lack of interest in OTB in the subject's development as a youth, educational background, and personal talents.

4.2.6 *Prophecies*

Prophecies are regularly featured and may well be the material type that carries the most weight in OTB. First, they have a programmatic function. The promise of a son to Abram in Genesis 15:4 creates the anticipation that the narrative will sooner or later recount how it was fulfilled. Predictions fulfilled within the bounds of the narrative are essential components of the plot.

Second, they provide essential links connecting individual biographies within the larger framework of Israel's sacred history. Thus, the prophesied Exodus (Gen 15:13-16) in Abraham's biography anticipates the events narrated in Joseph's and Moses' biographies. These longer-term prophecies allow each story to interpret the other. In Abraham's biography, the Exodus prophecy tells readers to expect the fulfilment of several promises in a more distant future. In Moses' biography, readers are referenced back to Abraham's story as the background and interpretative framework of events to follow (Exod 2:24).

Third, prophecies have significant theological and apologetic functions in OTB. Theologically, they (1) represent the biblical narrators' intent to promote the faithfulness of God and dependability of "the word of YHWH" (Gen 15:1), (2) reinforce the national identity of Israel as the people of God whose story he foresees, oversees, and plans, (Deut

30:1-10), and (3) promote the belief that sooner or later, righteousness/covenant faithfulness or wickedness/apostasy will be revisited.

Apologetically, they represent the narrators' intent to explain the darker chapters of Israel's history: Joseph suffered as part of God's *good* plan to save the nation (Gen 45:4-8); the Israelites' plight in Egypt served to reveal God's power and assert his appropriation of Israel to the nations (Exod. 14:4), and adverse events are frequently presented as acts of judgement casting blame on individual/collective sins (e.g., 2 Sam 12:9-12; 1 Kgs 12:15; 2 Chr 36:15-21).

4.2.7 Prayers and Hymns

Prayers and hymns are important features of OTB. Longer instances often have an ideological function analogous to that of speeches in GRB, being presented as an elegant and eloquent conduit that puts forward important emphases in the narrative. As such, even when they are presented as self-expression, their content tends to be stereotyped. Thus, Hannah's prayer (1 Sam 2:1-10), while broadly fit as a response to how "the barren has borne seven," has strong Davidic overtones and anticipates that "he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed" (vv. 5, 10). Solomon's dedication prayer (1 Kgs 8:22-53) is certainly adequate for the occasion but also serves as a review of Deuteronomistic theology and anticipation of the exile situation (c.f., John 17).

Prayers and hymns also link biographies with cultic traditions. The last words of David (2 Sam 23:1-7) have an ideological function as they portray divine support for the subject's house (v. 5), and its location immediately following the reproduction of Psalm 18 in 2 Samuel 22 effectively connects the Davidic psalms with charismatic prophecy. In keeping with its strong Temple ideology, 1 Chronicles 16:7-36 establishes a direct link between David's prayer/psalm and Israel's cultic traditions, featuring the institutional proclamation "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever" (v. 34 cf. 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3).

Prayers are regularly featured as illustrations of the devotion of the subjects who turn to God in times of crises. Thus, intercession is an important aspect of the characterisation of Moses (e.g., Exod 8:12; Num 11:2; Deut 3:23); it is featured in a number of other biographies (e.g., Josh 10:12-13; 1 Sam 1:10-11). Intercession and prayer for help contribute to presenting God as active agent in Israel's sacred history. In the context of narrative, it is often followed by events granting the request (2 Kgs 19:14-34) or by instructions or revelations (e.g., 1 Sam 8:6-9). Thus, the function of these prayers is akin to that of prophecy (cf., Gen

15:1-21).

4.2.8 Farewell Speeches

Farewell speeches are infrequent but meaningful when they occur. They are delivered from father to son(s) or from a national leader at retirement or close to death and commonly feature one or several of the following:

(1) A prophetic blessing which speaks authoritatively to/of the future of descendants or those left behind (e.g., Gen 9:25-27; 24:60; Deut 33:1-29; Josh 6:26) and which may express approval/disapproval (e.g., Gen 49:3-12, 22-26);

(2) A career review with a solemn call to testify before God or other parties concerning wrongs committed or absence thereof (e.g., Deut 30:19; 32:1; 1 Sam 12:2-5; Josh 23:1-4, 9-10, 14);

(3) Exhortations/encouragements to those who remain to keep serving God, often accompanied by promises and/or warnings (e.g., Deut 31:3-7, 45-47; Josh 23:5-8, 11-16; 24:14, 19-20; 2 Kgs 2:1-4);

(4) Parting instructions to be carried out after the subject's death (e.g., Gen 50:24; 2 Kgs 2:5-9) or special dispositions (Gen 48:22);

(5) Retrospective prayer/praise (Gen 49:18; Deut 33:11; 2 Chr 29:10-19).

Unlike GRB, there is no emphasis on grief at the prospect of separation or intimate last moments spent with friends and close relatives as in the case in Plutarch's *Cicero*. OT farewell speeches are only addressed to those who must carry the torch after the subject departs. For instance, the blessing of Jacob on his sons focuses on their role as representatives of the tribes of Israel. Thus, and as is the case throughout OTB, the emphasis remains theocentric rather than on personal relationships.

4.2.9 Death and Burial

Death and burial accounts or notices serve specific functions in OTB. First, they can reinforce the belief that God often blesses his servants with long life and a peaceful death (e.g., Gen 25:8; Judg 8:32; 1 Chr 29:28). Alternatively, the horrible circumstances of a wicked man's death may illustrate divine punishment (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:29-38; 2 Kgs 9:30-37; 11:13-16).

Second, they may make a final contribution to the characterisation of the subject's character and career. Samson's death account is significant as his greatest victory and final illustration of the valour that accompanied his folly (Judg 16:23-31). Saul's death, likewise,

may also be intended to depict once more his courage in battle (1 Sam 31:3–6 cf., 11:11; 2 Sam 1:23). However, his suicide to avoid dying at the hand of the uncircumcised completes the depiction of his ambivalence and questionable decisions (e.g., 1 Sam 13:8–9; 14:34, 43–45). Contrarily to GRB, the emphasis in these accounts does not reside on depicting a set of values that should characterise how one faces death. The noble or glorious death is not a topic of interest in OTB.

Two exceptional and related end of life accounts draw particular attention to the special status of the subjects in Israel's sacred history. Moses follows divine instructions and ascends Mount Nebo where he dies alone. Although his burial is mentioned, mystery shrouds its precise location and *modus operandi* (Deut 34:6–7). The subject's death and burial contribute to his characterisation as unrivalled in greatness and closeness to God (Deut 34:10–12). Elijah's end of life account is extraordinary as well: he does not die but is taken up to heaven in chariots of fire (2 Kgs 2:11). The subject's ascension is intended to portray him as a/the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15) who, like him, performed great miracles, met God at Horeb, miraculously divided the waters, and disappeared in Moab across the Jordan.

4.2.10 Epilogues

Epilogues are rare in OTB. The story of Moses is concluded by a declaration of his unequalled greatness (Deut 34:10–12). Joshua's concludes with the remark that Israel remained faithful to the covenant during his lifetime and that of the elders who outlived him, adds a death and burial notice for the high priest Eleazar, and mentions that the bones of Joseph were buried at Shechem (Josh 24:31–33). The Chronicler wraps up the entire history of the kings by explaining why the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and by introducing the next historical phase inaugurated by the decree of Cyrus (2 Chr 36:15–23 cf. Luke 24:49–53).

The main function of these epilogues is to underline that the end of the story marks a turning point for the nation. Thus, the function of these epilogues is not strictly biographical but is an important device to inscribe biographies within a larger historical framework.

4.3 Style

4.3.1 General Characteristics

OTB follows the conventions of Hebrew Narrative (HN). There are two subspecies of HN. The dialogic style is most common and represented in the Primary History and prefers

scenic depiction to summary descriptions. This produces rich episodes that allow for multiple points of view and possible interpretations (e.g., Gen 34:31) although devices deployed over the whole narrative usually leave little doubt on the narrator's stances.

The monologic style is most represented in the Secondary History and tends to smooth difficulties, presenting a more obvious ideological agenda especially in the form of speeches or stereotyped dialogues.¹⁶ This style also predominates in rewritten Bible biographies.

The narrative of OTBs is episodic. The time elapsed between episodes is often left unspecified. Instead of managed transitions, episodes are often introduced through plain parataxis. It is possible, however, to find more tightly knit narrative sequences (e.g., the biography of Joseph).

HN is fond of repetition, which often occurs when a character reports a dialogue or describes a sequence of events already scenically portrayed earlier in the story (e.g., Gen 24:10-48). Although there is substantial and sometimes exact repetition, there is often a degree of variation when material is repeated. Such variations may be merely stylistic, intended to supply additional information, or used to reveal a character's perspective (e.g., 1 Sam 20:6, 28-29).

Repetition occurs also at the level of curiously similar incidents, which could represent different traditions of the same story (doublets). Thus, an episode very similar to Sarai's abduction in Egypt takes place in Gerar later in the story (Gen 20:1-18). Then, Isaac and Rebekah go through a comparable experience likewise involving a king called Abimelech in Gerar (26:6-11; see also 1 Sam 23:19-24:14; 26:1-25). When this sort of repetition occurs, biblical writers are content to feature the stories in different contexts without giving any indication that they may related. This is especially true of possibly conflicting aetiologies (e.g., Gen 21:31; 26:33). In other cases, similar incidents may be intended to serve as "type scenes"¹⁷ that establish patterns inviting readers or hearers to link different stories together (e.g., Gen 29:5-10, 28/Exod 2:15-17, 21).

Another and related type of repetition, common in OTB, is inner biblical allusion,

¹⁶ Fewell and Gunn 1992, 1024.

¹⁷ Alter 2011, 51-56.

either subtle or explicit.¹⁸ One of its most obvious examples is the reproduction of material from the end of one book to the beginning of the next (e.g., Judges 2:6-10; Joshua 24:29–33 cf. Acts 1:1-5).

Allusion to prophecies or other biblical stories is another characteristic of OTB. Similar themes can be used to recall a past experience similar to the present: Gideon's timidity when called by God recalls the Burning Bush Incident, creating the expectation that God will deliver his people. The fact that Hannah was first barren but enabled to bear a son recalls the experiences of Sarah and Rebekah and creates the expectation that the child will have a special destiny. Elijah's Horeb experience recalls that of Moses.

However, it is rare to find references to other literary sources outside of the Bible. When a source is specified, the information provided is minimal: the title of the work and exceptionally the author's name (e.g., 2 Chr 9:29). This use of sources contrasts considerably with the practice of referencing, comparing, and evaluating multiple and well-identified sources in GRB.

4.3.2 *Narration*

By contrast to GR biographers, the narrator in OTB does not ever refer to self or address the readers in prefatory introductions or first-person authorial comments.¹⁹

Episodes are narrated scenically. This has been compared to watching a recording of live action and dialogue and stands in contrast to descriptions and summaries through third-person narration.²⁰ After a short setting, the typical scene proceeds with dialogue and action in which characters often arrive or leave. Scenes can have an internal plot.²¹ For instance, Abram goes to Egypt, asks Sarai to say he is her brother for fear of being killed on her account, and she is taken to Pharaoh's harem. The complication is solved and the action rests as Pharaoh discovers that she is married, releases her untouched, and husband and wife leave safe and enriched with considerable compensation (Gen 12:10–20). In other cases, scenes can

¹⁸ See Lyle 1992, 47–58.

¹⁹ Nehemiah and Qohelet are autobiographical but not biographies. Moses narrates in Deuteronomy but is not the biography's implied narrator (see Deut 1:1-5).

²⁰ Berlin 1994, 46.

²¹ Bar-Efrat 2004, 111-131.

also end with an unresolved situation, contributing to a subplot which will resume later in the biography (e.g., Esau's hatred for Jacob, Gen 27:41; c.f., 33:1-17).

To facilitate the "live effect" factor, narrator intrusion is kept minimal. Settings and summaries mostly provide concise essential information to bridge units of speech.²² Evaluative comment is usually brief (e.g., "Thus Esau despised his birthright," in Gen 25:34). When a longer explicative text is occasionally provided, it comes at the end of a section or in the form of an epilogue (see section 4.2.10). These are most frequent as interpretation of the reigns of judges and kings (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:7-20).

There is overwhelming preference for direct over indirect speech²³ and even the thoughts of characters can be rendered in the form of first-person direct speech rather than described (e.g., Gen 27:41).

In OTB the divine viewpoint is always authoritative, and it is difficult to find any clear instance where the narrator disagrees with it. Along with featured prophets and oracles, the narrator plays an essential role in communicating God's reactions and decisions. The biblical narrators know what God thinks and feels (e.g., Gen 18:17-21) as well as other characters (e.g., 1 Sam 27:1), and thus appear to be both reliable and omniscient. As a result, narration is always assertive and, in contrast to GRB, never deliberative (e.g., 1 Sam 18:12-15).

Narration is economical in details, mostly keeping to what is strictly necessary to make the story intelligible. When extra information is provided, it is most often because it will play a role later in the story (e.g., Gen 13:13/19:1-29). This economy means that, unlike GRB, there is almost no interest in the trivial, curious, or merely anecdotal. However, there is strong interest in aetiologies and the symbolic meaning of names (e.g., Gen 16:14; 17:5, 15; 32:28; Exod 15:23; Judg 1:17; 1 Sam 1:20) although such mentions are very brief compared to the excursions that can be found in GRB.

4.3.3 Characterisation

In keeping with the narrow interests of OTB, subjects are mainly characterised in relation to piety (e.g., righteous, wicked). Other traits are mentioned when they are relevant to the plot (e.g., Gen 25:28; 1 Sam 25:2-3). Internal states are mentioned fairly regularly,

²² Alter 1981, 65.

²³ Ibid., 66.

although there are relatively few (notably anger, fear, love, and grief). They are not detailed or analysed.

Like so many other story elements, physical description is only given insofar as it is relevant to the plot (e.g., Gen 12:14; 25:25; 27:11; 29:17; 39:6). The most detailed physical description in OTB is that of David, who was “ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome” (1 Sam 16:12). This fuller description corresponds to the unusual level of characterisation of David because of his role as ideal king in Samuel-King (c.f., v. 18). The comment made on Moses’ appearance as a baby is exceptional as well and kept minimal (Exod 2:1).

Although OTB is parsimonious in naming its subjects’ traits, characterisation is provided indirectly through speech, actions, thoughts, and moods. One of the best examples is that of king Saul, who is timid at first (1 Sam 9:21-22; 10:22) but soon shows strong authority and valour as military leader (11:6-11; 28:20-25). He then becomes imbued with his own importance (15:12, 30), jealous of potential competition (18:7), and paranoid and dangerously impulsive (18:10-11; 19:9-10; 20:30-33; 22:6-23). He is partial to his tribe and family (22:7; 20:31), unstable (24:16-22; 26:21-25), unable to keep faith under pressure (13:8-15) and does not take responsibility for his poor decisions (14:24, 43-46). These traits emerge from his biography and serve to establish a contrast in favour of David, to underscore that Saul was ultimately unfit to be king and that his character reflected the superficial motives that led to his acceptance as Israel’s first monarch (1 Sam 8:1-22). In contrast to GRB, there is no indication of intrinsic interest in portraying character traits and development in OTB.

Thus, the character of major subjects is often portrayed statically with no or little change from beginning to end of careers (e.g., Joshua, Elijah, most kings). There are, however, several subjects whose stories involve considerable character development. The clearest example of this is reflected in the name change from Jacob to Israel which occurs in a time of crisis after years of struggle (Gen 32:28). In addition to these, there are important reversals in the stories of the kings (from good to bad or vice-versa, e.g., 2 Chr 14:2/16:10; 33:10-16). However, these are only mentioned when they are significant to explain relevant events.

Finally, OTB does not normally conceal its subjects’ negative traits or deeds. However, the Chronicler’s stories of David and Solomon, which reflects knowledge of Samuel-Kings, does not include any of their dishonourable actions although it otherwise ascribes more negative traits to Judean kings described as good in the Primary History. The

combination of these two changes contributes to the purpose of presenting David and Solomon's reigns as the Golden Age of the monarchy and the glorious foundation of the Temple establishment. Otherwise, Abraham doubts, fears, and lies; Moses' temper disqualifies him from entering the Promised Land; and David is an adulterer and murderer.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there was a strong biographical tradition in ancient Israel represented in many OT narratives. The sacred status of this tradition as Scripture ensured its lasting influence on subsequent JB's and would most definitely have been within the purview of the evangelists.

The Jewish character of OTB translates first of all in distinctive modes of characterisation, story-telling techniques, and vocabulary. Its primary purpose is to give a representative account of the life or career of individuals with an important role in or impact on Israel's sacred history. Its theocentric focus determines the criteria of evaluation and the relevance of materials as appropriate for different subject classes. There is little or no interest in the celebration of personal achievement and virtue, or culture. Personal significance and character are defined stereotypically in relation to God and the faith of Israel.

Thus, OTB is radically different from GRB. Even when they share similar content type (e.g., birth narratives or miracles), associated emphases and functions clearly belong in a different register. The fact that the two biographical traditions differ so much provides clear demarcations that may be used to evaluate whether and how the genre of Mark is related to either.

CHAPTER 4: SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH BIOGRAPHY

Second Temple Jewish literature demonstrates sustained interest in the life and career stories of individuals who significantly impacted the nation's sacred history. These biographical works take OTB as their point of departure and can be divided into two groups: intra-Jewish and proselytising biographies.

1. Intra-Jewish Biographies

1.1 Introducing the Biographies

Several works composed in this period – all originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic – use biography to reimagine, supplement, and reinterpret sacred history. While, as will be seen shortly, their purposes clearly extend beyond biographical interest, the fact that these works mainly or substantially used biography as literary medium makes them critical representatives of the expressions and developments of the genre in the period. The biographical intent of these works is most clearly manifested in a focus on providing representative accounts of the careers of significant individuals and in the inclusion of biographical information and content to characterise the subjects.

1.1.1 *First Maccabees*

The whole of *First Maccabees* constitutes a history of the Maccabean War, yet it is told through the career stories of the individuals that provided decisive leadership in it. There are several indications of the biographical nature of these stories.

First, each career is recounted consecutively: Mattathias (2:1-70), Judas (3:1-9:22), Jonathan (9:23-13:30), and Simon (13:31-16:17) with a brief introduction of John, who represents the next generation (16:18-24). While this structure matches the order in which each subject assumed overall leadership, biographical focus is underscored by the author's clear choice to focus on one subject at a time even though they all played important roles throughout the war.

Second, biographical material is included that would not have been needed, had the

intent been solely or mainly to recount the war. For instance, the story of Mattathias includes a poetic lament whose main function is to characterise the subject (2:7-13). Although his career story is briefly told, it follows the conventions of OTB, concluding with a farewell speech in which the subject charges his sons and speaks about their future roles (2:49-69). His story is properly concluded with a death and burial notice (2:70).

Third, the work's description of the story of Judas as "the acts of Judas, and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and his greatness" (9:22) clearly centres on the person. The story includes a poetic panegyric extolling the subject's bravery and renown (3:3-9) and provides several evaluative comments on the whole of his career and contribution (v. 7a; see also 5:63; 6:44; 14:25-49).

Finally, all reconstructions of the Hebrew titles by which the work was known identify it as the story of the Maccabees (e.g., "Book of the House of the Hasmoneans" or "Book of the House of the Princes of God / Israel").¹

1.1.2 *The Genesis Apocryphon*

The extant portions of the *Genesis Apocryphon* rewrite Noah and Abraham's biblical stories. This includes an original and extended birth narrative for Noah, in which his father Lamech features prominently (much like Hannah in the opening of Samuel's OTB). Several biographical details and episodes are added to the already biographical content of the biblical stories, including Noah's unusual appearance (4:20-5:27 cf. 1 En. 106-107), his mother's name, mention of his marriage, his wife's name, and the number of their children (6.7-8). Abraham's story is supplemented with a brief description of his early years and features an extended narration of Sarah's abduction focusing on the patriarch's distress (20.10-16).

1.1.3 *Jubilees*

A few examples from Abraham's story in *Jubilees* illustrate the biographical thrust of its many additions to the biblical account. The subject's mother's name (11:9) and an account of his youth are added, providing extended characterisation (11:14-24). Substantial additions recount the subject's interactions with his grandson Jacob in detail, with two series of blessings, followed by a full farewell speech, and mourning scenes before and after his death (19.14-23.7).

¹ Bartlett 1998, 18.

1.1.4 *Pseudo-Philo's Moses*

Similar observations apply to Pseudo-Philo's rewrite of OTBs. His story of Moses, for instance, is supplemented with an extended birth narrative focusing on the character of Amram his father (9:2-6), and with an episode in which Miriam receives a charismatic vision in which a heavenly messenger announces Moses' birth and destiny (9:10-12).

1.1.5 *Lives of the Prophets*

Finally, the *Lives of the Prophets* use a biographical framework that includes origins, and an account or notice of death and burial. Highlights from the subjects' careers are provided in the form of miracle stories. Although the content is brief and highly selective, the series clearly aims at supplying biographical information on the biblical prophets. These accounts are closer to short biographical entries such as are found in Judges or in Suetonius and Diogenes' biographies.

1.2 The Paradigmatic Influence of OTB

The works described above all include new content and innovations in emphases and style, while all drawing significantly from OTB. This, of course, has much to do with the eminent status of these earlier stories as sacred Scriptures. Yet beyond the content of these stories, their format, style, and most importantly, their assumptions about what makes an individual significant and what is worth telling of his/her life and career (i.e., what makes for a biography) remained paramount.

Significant areas of OTB influence are easily overlooked. First, unlike GRBs, almost all of these works continued the OT tradition of recounting history through biography and did not separate the two genres. Thus, while biographical interest is manifest, one simply does not find single biographies within intra-Jewish literature, nor is there any attempt to write full histories focused primarily on events rather than on individual lives and careers.

Second, aside from *First Maccabees* and the *Lives of the Prophets*, there is obvious dependence on and often substantial reproduction of the content of the original biographies.

Third, although the main focus of biography was altered in proselytising biographies, it was not in intra-Jewish instances of the genre, in which focus remains on the significance of the individual in relation to God and the nation's sacred history. The main criteria used to evaluate character and career are still the same: covenant faithfulness, obedience, faith, and righteousness.

Fourth, the influence OTBs is manifest in stylistic imitation. For instance, *First*

Maccabees was particularly influenced by the OTBs of judges and kings. Evidence of this includes: (1) the imitation of stock phrases such as “the rest of the acts of ... are written in the annals...” (1 Macc 16:23–24; 9:22 c.f., 1 Kgs 11:41 *et passim*); (2) the phrase “ἡσύχασεν ἡ γῆ” (the land had rest) (1 Macc 1:3; 7:50; 9:57; 11:38, 52; 14:4; c.f., Judg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28 LXX);² (3) the description of the Maccabees as “the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel” (1 Macc. 5:62; c.f., 6:41), echoing that of the judges (c.f., Judg 2:16, 18 *et passim*); (4) the direct allusion in 9:21 – “how the mighty have fallen” – to 2 Samuel 1:19-27; and (5) the association of prayer and singing with battle preparations (4:10, 24, 30-33 c.f., 2 Chr 20:5-21).

In Pseudo-Philo, material originally found in other OTBs is duplicated and transposed to new contexts (e.g., 12.7/Exod 32.7/Deut 17.14/1 Sam 8.5; 12.3/Gen 11:6; 12.4/Exod 32:7).³ In other words, part of the author’s “originality” is still mainly reproducing the biographical materials of old. The influence of OTB is also manifest in the depiction of thought as direct speech (e.g., *L.A.B.* 11:1 and the direct allusion to Gen 6:3).

Although the OT “background” of these works has long been recognised, these characteristics have not been sufficiently recognised as features of *Jewish biographical writing* in the Second Temple period. The strong influence of OTB on subsequent intra-Jewish biographical writing is important because its approach, style, and emphases are very different from those of GRB.

1.3 New Perspectives and Developments

Nevertheless, these new biographies did not merely reproduce OTB. They are characterised by several types of innovations that are represented in most, if not all of them. First, at the most fundamental level, these biographies represent a new outlook on sacred history. *First Maccabees* is no longer primarily looking at history as the story that led up to the Exile with hopes of return and restoration. The focus of the main story has now switched to Judaism struggling against forcible Hellenization, and covenant faithfulness is now largely defined as a form of heroic nationalism incarnated by the Maccabean family (1 Macc. 5:61-63).

Second, the ideals of the long and blessed life of the righteous and of the obedient

² See Goldstein 2007, 9.

³ Jacobson 1996, 484.

nation's prosperity and rise above enemies in OTB were shaken by the brutal conquests, frequent occupations, and internal intrigues of the period. The old stories of Enoch's mysterious disappearance, Methuselah's extraordinarily long life, and the curious reference to divine displeasure and worldwide wickedness in connection with the Nephilim in Noah's days (Gen 5:22-6:8) became the building blocks for reimagining what had gone wrong with creation. Enoch thus becomes the mediator of heavenly revelations about the role of demonic forces in world affairs, particularly against God's people, disclosing that whatever befalls on earth, there will come a day of resurrection and judgement. Thus, the new biographical materials in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and *Jubilees* become the conduits of this updated outlook on sacred history (e.g., 1Qap Gen 6:11-24; 19:14-20).

The bleak national situation prevailing during the Second Temple period became motivation to look back on epic biblical heroes' victories of faith as the glorious past worth celebrating and strong foundation of a continued assurance of Israel's election. There is reactional pride in the attempt to infuse these stories with greater glories yet. Heroes of faith are given extraordinary birth and youth stories. The prophets are credited with legends and miracles. Such idealisations also require explanation or denial of less glorious episodes: original biographies are smoothed and sanitised, ideological speeches and new "ancient" prophecies pertaining to the present abound. Assurance is now given that Jacob did not fraudulently secure Abraham's blessing but received it directly from his grandfather (*Jub.* 22:10-30); it was not Moses' temper that made him dare shatter the Ten Commandments tablets or that led to his exclusion from entering the Promised Land: they were only broken after the divine handwriting had vanished from them, and the Lawgiver was kept from going in and living on to see the Israelites' idolatries (*L.A.B.* 12:5; 19:7). These innovations and emphases were therefore eminently in tune with broader literary and theological currents in Second Temple Judaism.

There are, however, some indications of GR influence. The style of *First Maccabees* approximates Greek historiography with greater interest in detailed battle descriptions than is typical of OTB and probably reflects influence from Seleucid sources.⁴ Moreover, speeches and panegyrics may also reflect the influence of Greek encomia, and Judas' stated reason for not retreating during his last battle so as to "leave no reason to question our honour" (9:11) reflects GR rather OTB ideals. Finally, the fact that the biographical entries of the *Lives of the*

⁴ Ibid., 33.

Prophets are self-enclosed, as well as their lexicographic style, may betray the influence of GR professional biographies. However, this GR influence is still peripheral: the approach, themes, and emphases remain mostly Jewish.

1.4 Conclusions

The intra-Jewish biographies of the Second Temple period represent an important axis of development of the genre. They witness to a continued interest in recounting the stories of the heroes of Israel's past. The original stories are updated with contemporary themes, emphases, and genres. Biographical interest is manifest in the attempt to supply new life/career episodes albeit with obvious theological agendas. The easiest holes to fill in relation to OTB were the most often lacking or underdeveloped birth or youth stories. This demonstrates that JB could expand and update its original register and even borrow ideas from GR quarters yet remain solidly anchored in Jewish literary traditions.

2. Proselytising Biographies

The Second Temple period witnesses the writing of biographies recasting the biblical stories for the benefit of non-Jews, all composed in Greek. These works magnify the merits of the biblical heroes and translate their character descriptions and accomplishments in terms more familiar to and appreciated by GR audiences. Tales are often featured purporting to show that the leading figures of Israel's past were the inventors of much that came to be celebrated in other cultures, and as such exceed the achievements of their own heroes.

2.1 Artapanus, Eupolemus, and Pseudo-Eupolemus

Only third-hand and probably summarised excerpts survive from the biographical works of Artapanus, Eupolemus, and Pseudo-Eupolemus. The nature and scarcity of the evidence does not permit determination of structure, style, or full content of these works. However, some observations on content are possible, providing helpful insight about the development of JB in this period.

Extant excerpts from the work of Artapanus (3rd-2nd c. BCE) include parts of the stories of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. The titles by which the work was known (*Judaica*, *Peri Ioudaiōn*) suggest that more subjects were included and that the whole was probably cast

in the form of a continuous history.⁵

What little has survived confirms the tendency in the period to add supplementary tales, embellishing and dramatic details, and remove or explain difficulties from the biblical stories. A revealing contrast can be drawn between similar material in *Jubilees* and Artapanus. In *Jubilees*, Abraham is credited with inventions for the benefit of the Chaldeans to explain to a Jewish audience that he was chosen by God because of already previously established wisdom and character. Objectionable episodes and elements are also smoothed to explain to Jews that the heroes of the faith had not acted improperly. By contrast, Artapanus' version is clearly aimed at non-Jews. Instead of the more distant and culturally less relevant Chaldeans, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses are made to be teachers of the Egyptians. The inventions and innovations credited to these figures include a significant cross-section of scientific, agricultural, architectural, religious, cultural, and – most importantly in relation to a GR audience – philosophical contributions (Artap. 1; 2:3). The narrative assumes extensive sharing of knowledge and culture between Greece and Egypt after Alexander's conquests. Thus, Moses taught Orpheus and was known as Hermes in Egypt (3:4, 6, 10). The Jewish hero is no longer just exceptionally gifted and a benefactor toward non-Jews – he has become the originator of much of their knowledge and culture.

This desire to extol biblical heroes to non-Jews shapes their characterisation. For instance, the Moses one meets in the *Peri Ioudaiōn* is a brilliant general with numerous military feats to his credit, combining the physical features of a GR heroic warrior (tall, ruddy) with that of a sage (grey with long hair and “venerable,” 3.37).

The proselytising agenda drives the removal of disreputable episodes to produce a quasi-encomiastic version of the biblical heroes. Thus, Joseph goes to Egypt of his own free will (2:1) and no mention is made of his work as slave in Potiphar's house, or about the accusation of adultery and considerable time in prison (2:2). Rather, upon arrival to Egypt, he so impressed the Egyptians that he soon rose to fame.

The outlook is similar in the fragments of Eupolemus and Pseudo-Eupolemus (before firstst c. BCE). Eupolemus presents Moses as the first sage who taught the Jews the alphabet, from whom the Greeks derived their own via the Phoenicians (frg. 1). Since the Temple in Jerusalem was considered a wonder even by non-Jews, there is special focus on its construction and on the reign of Solomon (frg. 2). Several letters between Solomon and

⁵ J. Collins 1985, 889.

Pharaoh probably intend to claim a long history of friendly relations between Jews, Greeks, and Egyptians.

Moreover, the author uses locations and people names familiar to Greeks (e.g., Commagene, Idumeans) as well as Greek vocalisations (including the use of *hierosolyma* for Jerusalem like Josephus), draws on Hellenistic epistolary conventions,⁶ and dates events in relation to the reigns of Roman consuls and Greek kings (frg. 4).

In Pseudo-Eupolemus, Abraham distinguished himself among the Chaldeans, perhaps indicating the influence of *Jubilees*. However, he did so in more domains: nobility, wisdom, astrology and the “Chaldean craft” (which may refer to arithmetic).⁷ The patriarch taught the Phoenicians astronomy “and everything else as well” (Ps-Eup. 3-4) and “much” to the Egyptians, including astrology and “the other sciences” (8).

Again, efforts are made to remove less impressive elements from the biblical episodes. For instance, the account of Abraham and Melchizedek’s meeting only states that the king-priest presented the patriarch with “gifts” (6). Instead of the simple bread and wine of the biblical account (Gen 14:18), the quality and quantity of these honorific gifts is left to the readers’ imagination. Nothing is said of Abraham’s tithe payment.

Thus, Artapanus, Eupolemus, and Pseudo-Eupolemus represent an earlier stage of attempts among Jewish biographers to commend OTBs to non-Jews. These biographies are very similar to intra-Jewish biographies and use the same devices, but what was added to impress Jews has been replaced by material more adapted to non-Jews. This proselytising agenda exacerbates embellishments: the goal is not merely to extol biblical heroes but to extol them *over* the heroes of other cultures. However, there is no clear indication of attempts to emulate GRB until the first-century biographies of Philo and Josephus.

2.2 Philo of Alexandria (1st c. CE)

Only three of Philo’s biographical works have survived: *De Abrahamo*, *De Iosepho*, and *De Vita Moysis*. His works on Isaac and Jacob, now lost, were part of a common project. The following analysis will focus on the *Vita Moysis* (VM), the longest and best illustration of Philo’s biographical craft.

It might have seemed self-evident to Burridge that this work is a GRB since he

⁶ Bartlett 1985, 66-67.

⁷ Ibid., 879, footnote g.

included it in his pool of works representative of the genre without justification for its inclusion.⁸ This view was subsequently upheld by McGing.⁹ As supporting evidence, the latter appealed to Priessnig's now almost century-old claim that the work conforms to a Suetonian format.¹⁰ These assertions have largely been unchallenged.¹¹ It will become clear, however, that it is inaccurate to refer to the work as GRB, at least not without important qualifications.

Undoubtedly, the *VM* has features that emulate GRB. First, Philo refers to it as a *bios* (1:1; 2:292). Second, it opens with a standard GRB preface in which the author directly addresses readers, presents the work, extols its value, and introduces the subject (1.1-5a). The stated purpose emphasizes virtue, praiseworthiness, and perpetrating the memory of a great man for future generations (1:3). This is followed by an introductory section presenting elements of the biblical story in terms that conform to GRB expectations. The subject's pedigree is asserted by stating that his "father and mother were among the most excellent persons of their time" (1:7) and by tracing his ancestry back to the founder of the nation, Abraham. The child's appearance is depicted as beautiful and noble (1:9).

Philo then provides an extensive extra-biblical account of Moses' education and qualities from childhood to youth. The child is precocious in development, good looking, excessively gifted, applied to learning, and thoroughly trained in arithmetic, geometry, poetry, music, astrology, and, most importantly, in philosophy (1:21-24)! He also shows extraordinary character, rejecting falsehood, having good sense, temperance, and self-control over passions, frugality, and matching his philosophical stances and speech with practice (1:25-31). This idyllic portrait reflects the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king¹² and Philo's own Hellenistic education.¹³ These encomiastic overtones pervade the whole biography (e.g., 1:21, 27, 49-50, 63-64; 2:3, 10).

Another major aspect of Philo's rewriting of Moses' story is the philosophical mode

⁸ Burridge 1992, 129-148.

⁹ McGing 2006, 118.

¹⁰ Priessnig 1929, 143-55.

¹¹ As a rare voice of dissent, Edwards and Swain object that the *Vita Moysis* is more a biblical commentary than a biography. See Edwards and Swain 1997, 229.

¹² Feldman 2002, 270.

¹³ Sandmel 1984, 21.

of discourse that pervades the biography. Like Plutarch, Philo was a Middle Platonist (albeit with a Stoic rather than Aristotelian leaning)¹⁴ and wrote many treatises providing insight into his biographical craft. Along with interest in virtue, education, politics, and other key topics of philosophy, Philo's treatises focus on the book of Genesis, the Mosaic Law, its allegorical interpretations, and on some of its specialised content such as dreams or name changes. Philo's high regard for Moses and the Torah apparently led him to the conclusion that he was the father of philosophy and that it was his ideas that inspired Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.¹⁵

Only a few examples of how philosophy pervades the *VM* can be provided here. Moses is, of course, repeatedly described as exercising philosophy of the highest order (e.g., 1:29, 48; 2:2, 66, 212, 215-6). It is the divine providence (πρόνοια) which is at work to ensure the survival and later adoption of the baby Moses (1:12). Likewise, in the incident of the Burning Bush, "the angel was a symbol of God's providence, which all silently brings relief to the greatest dangers, exceeding every hope" (1:67). Moses rescues Jethro's daughters by addressing the bullying shepherds in a speech stressing their shameful conduct and warns that "the heavenly eye of Justice" is watching (1.54-58 c.f., 1:200-201, 322-327). Seeing the affliction of his people, he encourages them to look forward to good fortune which cyclically follows after times of suffering (1:40-41).

Other aspects of the biography which reflect its indebtedness to GRB include the discursive narrative style that recalls declamation, frequent authorial intrusions, and the author's presentation of some of his views as opinion (e.g., 1:35; 2:122).

There are, however, significant characteristics of the *VM* that do not fit with GRB but reflect a large degree of indebtedness to JB as well. First, the size of the work exceeds by far what is usual for GRB. It is clear that in this, the desire to do justice to the wealth of content found in Exodus-Deuteronomy took precedence over GR convention. This may be contrasted with Plutarch's prefatory apologies for having to abridge *Alexander* and *Caesar*.

Second, the structure of the work is unconventional for GRB. The first book presents the story of Moses in chronological order, starting with his ancestry and birth and extending to the end of his career in Moab. Omissions, additions, and expansions notwithstanding, it

¹⁴ Cf. Dillon 1977, 139-182.

¹⁵ Ibid., 143, 148 (e.g., Leg. All. 1:108; QG 4:152; Heres 214; Prob. 57; Aet. 18-19).

retraces much of the narrative material that can be found in Exodus-Numbers.¹⁶ The presentation is selective, however, casting Moses primarily as a kingly figure (c.f., 1:334) but reserving materials to be used in the second book to consecutively describe the subject as lawgiver, high priest, and prophet in thematic sections (c.f., 2:2, 66, 187, 191, 246). Significant events such as the Passover and the building of the Tabernacle are thus introduced out of sequence (2:77-154, 2:224).

The second book's thematic arrangement prompted Priessnig to compare *VM* to Suetonian biography. However, this cannot account for the first book. The structure of the *VM* does not correspond to the division between life and doxography in Diogenes Laertius either, since the second book still focuses on the merits of the subject and includes much narrative rather than just an account of his teaching. So here again, Philo does not simply follow the conventions of GRB but seeks to find a middle ground that allows him to retain much of the original emphases of his source material.

Third, a GR audience would not have been impressed by Philo's indications that his only sources were "the sacred scriptures" (2:292), what he heard from the elders of his nation and unspecified references to what he had read (1:4). This contrasts with Josephus' conscious effort to refer to external authors to corroborate elements of the biblical stories as is expected in GRB. This is yet another instance in which Philo's eminent regard for the Torah took precedence over his attempt to emulate GRB.

Fourth and most significantly, there are also strong indicators that Philo shaped his work on the basis of Jewish literary traditions. For instance, one finds in the idyllic representation of Moses' character and greatness, the tendency in Second Temple JB to emphasize the superiority of biblical heroes over GR heroes. GRB invites comparison of the merits of great men and promotes imitation of their virtues and achievements. For Philo, however, Moses is incomparable and ultimately inimitable, and his greatness cannot be separated from that of the Torah and the Jewish nation. The response that beckons the reader is not to be inspired by Moses but to become his follower. In other words, the *purpose* of the work is closer to the purposes of proselytising JB than to those of GRB.

Fifth, Philo's authorial intrusions often do not merely comment or provide cultural excursuses as in Plutarch's biographies, but stray into Midrashic interpretation.¹⁷ This also is

¹⁶ So McGing 2006, 119.

¹⁷ See Mack 1984, 227–71.

foreign to GRB.

Finally, this mixture of purposes and influences is also evidenced in the role of allegorical interpretation (idem in *De Abrahamo* and *De Iosepho*). Allegory was popularised by Homer as a method of interpretation that provides alternate and more dignified explanations to objectionable stories.¹⁸ It was appropriated by Diaspora Jews as a method of philosophical interpretation of the Scriptures for passages that seem otherwise tedious and of limited personal value.¹⁹ Thus, Philo's use of allegorical interpretation is certainly not a feature of GRB (e.g., 1:79-81).

It is clear from the above that Philo stands at crossroads between Jewish and GR biographical traditions with cultural adaptation in both directions: Greek philosophy is "judaized" while the biblical perspective is "hellenized."²⁰ This attempt to bridge both worlds is much more thorough-going than earlier proselytising JB's and illustrates how a Jewish story may be adapted (albeit only partially) to the conventions of GRB.

2.3 Flavius Josephus (c. 37 - 100 CE)

The general format of Josephus' *Judean Antiquities* emulates that of its OT source: it is a history within which biographies are embedded. The purpose of showing that Jewish heroes were no less praiseworthy than famous Greek men (*C. Ap.* 2.136) aligns well with the focus on achievement, renown, and virtue in GRB. Yet, this work too stands firmly within the proselytising JB tradition in that its purpose is to commend the Jewish way of life, extol the Torah as the best constitution and form of government (2.188, 222, 226), and Moses as the wisest and most virtuous of all lawgivers (1.6, 15-16).²¹ Nevertheless, in this work, one encounters the fullest adaptation of JB's to the conventions of GRB.

As is so frequently the case in rewritten Bible biographies, the subjects' merits are exaggerated, especially when elements of the story seem to undermine character or social status. In *JA*, merit is expressed on the basis of GR, mostly Stoic, ideals.

GR readers may have agreed with the Egyptians that the Israelites' multiplication in

¹⁸ Kennedy 1990, 85-86. See in particular the writings of Aristobulus of Alexandria (2nd c. BCE). C.f., Collins 1985, 831-42.

¹⁹ See in particular the writings of Aristobulus of Alexandria (2nd c. BCE). C.f., Collins 1985, 831-42.

²⁰ Borgen 1997, 62.

²¹ Mason and Feldman 2000, 3 n. 2.

their land represented a threat. Consequently, Josephus tweaked the story: it is because the Israelites were so virtuous and meritorious that they prospered exceedingly and incurred jealousy from their hosts (2.202 c.f., 2.212). The apologetic reworking of the passage is typical of Second Temple JB, but the Israelites' characterisation is GR.

Similar changes are made in the extensively reworked birth narrative (2.205-228). A critical GR audience would have been unimpressed by the fact Moses' parents found their child beautiful (c.f., Exod 2:2). Instead, Josephus ascribes Moses international renown from the start. First, an Egyptian scribe predicts his birth and great destiny (2.205 cf. 212-216). Then it is the Egyptian princess who takes notice of the baby's unusual size and beauty (2.224, 232). Again, the categories of fame are GR: the child will "surpass all men in virtue and acquire a reputation held in everlasting memory." Moses' Jewish qualities (faithfulness, obedience to God, etc.) have become GR virtues.²²

The biblical Moses has no special pedigree, so Josephus manufactures one: Moses' father is described as "well born," concerned not just for his household but for the whole people, and as taking the lead role in the birth narrative instead of his wife and daughter (2.210-11). Moreover, to prevent any notion that the subject's parents abandoned him, Josephus depicts what happened as a settled decision to entrust the child's future to divine providence in full confidence that the baby would be safe (2.219-223).

An account of the subject's childhood and youth is provided. By contrast to similar additions in intra-Jewish biographies, the GRB mode of representation translates into an emphasis on incipient traits (2.229-37; c.f., 3.317-322).²³ As in Philo's portrait, the boy is precocious in development (2:230; Philo *Mos.* 1.20) and everyone is captivated by his beauty (2.231).

In the main part of the biography, Moses is presented as a model Roman-like statesman who conducts himself according to Stoic ideals and is the champion of the people and their cause. Korah is presented as a formidable political adversary, a wealthy and aristocratic demagogue who appealed to the base desires of the masses leading to sedition (4.12-39). Moses labours for the freedom of his people (2.281, 329; 4.42) but repeatedly faces accusations of tyranny (4.3, 15-16, 22, 146, 148-49). Correspondingly, and in contrast

²² The Greek Torah never uses ἀρετή to describe Moses, but Josephus does it twenty-times in the course of his biography. See Mason and Feldman 2000, 188.

²³ Mason and Feldman 2000, 1-4, 196.

to Philo's portrait, Josephus' Moses is never presented as a king. Instead, he is a selfless and humble leader (3.74, 212) who promotes and practices in the Torah a form of aristocracy put forward by Josephus as the finest expression of government (4.223 cf. 4.187).²⁴

Moreover, the death account is also reworked to align better with the pathos of farewell scenes in GRB. To overcome the absence of family and friends from the biblical account, Josephus stresses the grief of the people as they anticipate Moses' death (4.320-321, 323-4, cf., 4:194-5). The subject himself faces the prospect of death with Stoic composure but is also drawn to tears by the grief of the people (4.322 cf. Jn. 11:33-35). The concluding eulogy epitomises Moses as a Stoic prophet:

Having surpassed in understanding all men who had ever lived and having utilized his thoughts in the best way. He spoke and dealt with masses, pleasing them both in other respects and as master of his emotions, so that none of them seemed to be present in his soul, and he knew only their names through observing them among others rather than in himself. If as a general he was in élite company, as a prophet he had no peer, so that in whatever he said one seemed, when he spoke, to be listening to God (4.328-9).

In addition to content, the biography also emulates stylistic features of GRB. Summary narration, indirect speech, and epideictic speeches regularly replace biblical scenic and dialogic representation (e.g., 1.228-231; 2.101-104, 140-158; 3.84-88; 4.25-34).²⁵ Matters that may incur scepticism are left to the readers' judgement and Josephus presents his views as opinions (cf. the use of οἱμαί in 3.184; 6.59, 63; 8.156). Moreover, since GR audiences were more sceptical toward tales of miracles, Josephus often explains them in ways that make them more believable (e.g. 3.25; 8.342).

As expected in GRB, Josephus extensively references supporting GR sources. The *Antiquities* refer to some fifty-five Greek authors including Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle.²⁶ Josephus strengthens the scholarly credibility of his work by referencing more eclectic sources: Berosus the Babylonian, Manetho the Egyptian, Diodorus the Phoenician, Menander of Ephesus, the Sibylline

²⁴ Cf. Feldman 1998, 386-397.

²⁵ Josephus' account of creation illustrates the propensity in GR literature to use simple narration rather than the scenic and dialogue-driven Hebrew narrative approach. Thus, God's creations are described, but the direct speeches of God and Adam (when he saw Eve) are omitted (1.27-40). The same applies to the account of the fall: direct speech in the serpent's deception of Eve, God's call to the hiding Adam, and the handing out of punishments are all replaced by description. The only direct speech is the isolated divine statement about his original intention for man (1.45-50, see esp. 48). Cf. Villalba i Varneda 1986, 111-7.

²⁶ Feldman 1998, 171-9.

oracles, and the Tyrian records.²⁷ He also emulates the styles of Thucydides, Herodotus, and Isocrates,²⁸ makes substantial use of Nicolaus of Damascus, and shows acquaintance with Philo.²⁹ Thus, while it is clear that Philo was certainly well-read, no Jewish writer before Josephus so infused his rewritten Bible biographies with such thorough-going scholarship, thereby making his work a product that would conform to the expectations of GR readers and peers.

Last but not least, Josephus' biographies regularly include moralistic content. This can occur in the form of digressions on themes related to the main narrative such as the corruption of power (7.37; 8.251), the role of envy in the affairs of individuals and nations (6.267; 7.37-38; 13.310), the rewards of piety (1.14-15), or the strength of fate (8.419). Occasionally, characters are held out as good examples of specific virtues (e.g., 6.340-50).³⁰

Much more could be said about Josephus' biographical craft,³¹ but the above suffices to demonstrate that this Jewish writer most thoroughly applied the conventions of GRB to his work. Even so, the work still retained Jewish literary characteristics such as (1) the embedding of biographies within historiography, (2) a much more active role for God in history than would be expected in GR histories,³² (3) the occasional use of allegorical interpretation (e.g., 3.180-187) and (4) most significantly, the proselytising purpose of the work. Thus, and like Philo, Josephus could not find in GRB a fully suitable medium to depict the biblical heroes whose records are based on the outlook, interests, and categories of representation of OTB.

It is worth noting, however, what both Philo and Josephus had to do to bring OTBs closer to GRB. They explicitly injected the story with expected categories of GRB such as pedigree, education, and farewell scenes. They describe character, virtue, merit, and achievements at length, and they recast characters in GR roles and activities: Moses becomes sage-lawgiver, brilliant general, and aristocratic statesman, and he practices philosophy, holds

²⁷ Thackeray 1930, xiv.

²⁸ Feldman, 1998, 3; Bilde 1988, 200-201.

²⁹ Cf. Wacholder, 1989, 147-72.; Thackeray, 1930, xiii.

³⁰ See also Feldman 1998, 197-204.

³¹ As the lifelong and unmatched work and many publications of Louis Feldman on this topic amply demonstrate.

³² Bilde 1988, 201; Villalba i Varneda 1986, 62-63.

to philosophical ideals, speaks in philosophical idiom, and even looks like a philosopher.

3. Conclusions

The last two chapters have demonstrated that there existed a well-established Jewish biographical tradition before and during the Second Temple period. This tradition is fundamentally enshrined in Israel's sacred Scriptures. The significance of the individual is defined narrowly in relation to Israel's sacred history. This means that *all* ancient JB's without exception reflect and/or promote the faith of Israel.

This study has identified many broad similarities between GRB and JB. Both of them focus on subjects of national importance and have no interest in the mundane life struggles of the ordinary person. They prefer to characterise through narratives that depict the significant deeds, decisions, and words of their subjects rather than through abstract psychological profiling. They use a natural biographical framework that starts with ancestry and birth, ends with death, and gives primary attention to the career that made the subject famous. However, this chapter has shown that the differences between the two biographical traditions are extensive and significant. There is a clear divergence in outlook, style, content, and purpose.

Beyond the OT and apart from *First Maccabees* and the *Lives of the Prophets*, all subsequent JB's are rewritten Bible and almost all continue to present biographies within the framework of larger histories. All these later biographies add supplementary biographical material and seek to remove or explain difficulties in the original stories.

This Jewish biographical tradition divides into two distinct currents. Intra-Jewish biographies hybridised OT-style biography with other Jewish literary genres such as apocalyptic or testamentary literature, and only show traces of GR influences. Proselytising biographies does not merely depict the greatness of heroes of the faith but sets them above those of other nations. They are frequently credited with the invention of sciences and other branches of knowledge. The means used to depict the heroes of Israel's faith in GR garb are not subtle and range from a few adjustments in earlier biographies to the extensive adaptations of Philo and Josephus.

Hence these three models of Jewish biography – OTBs, intra-Jewish biographies, and proselytising Jewish biographies – were all available options (in addition to GRB) for Mark to use or emulate as he set out to write the biography of his Jewish hero of the faith, Jesus.

CHAPTER 5: THE BIOGRAPHICAL CONTOURS OF MARK

This chapter will demonstrate that the compositional characteristics of Mark which are extrinsic to the story of Jesus correspond to the conventions of JB in the OT tradition. The ethos, structure, narration style, and use of sources are what one would expect from JB, not from GRB.

1. Biographical Ethos

Mark does not have the ethos of a GRB at all. First, its primary interest is not to portray Jesus' character, virtues, and fortunes.¹ Even though it offers in Jesus an inspiring model of discipleship and faithful obedience to God (e.g., 8:34; 10:42–45),² character description for the sake of imitation is not its primary purpose as is the case in moralistic biography. Thus, and by contrast not only to GRBs but also to Philo's and Josephus' emulations of the genre, Mark does not show explicit interest in Jesus' virtues and no generalised description is ever made of even just one of his character or personality traits. Only Jesus' reactions to specific situations are ever mentioned and solely when directly relevant to the action.³ Accordingly, although Jesus and others are characterised to a certain degree from their words and deeds, this is derivative from rather than central to, why and how the story is told. The primary purpose and interest of Mark simply is not to portray the sort of person Jesus was.

¹ A. Collins has pertinently observed that Mark does not fit the model of GRB (1990, 27-37). However, her analysis lacks specificity with regard to the ethos of GRB and she does not speak of the conventions of JB.

² Jesus' willingness to endure suffering irreproachably undoubtedly was an inspiring example for persecuted Christians. Cf., A. Collins 2007, 755.

³ Several traits recur and may be considered a form of characterisation. For instance, three times his response to a need is said to be pity or compassion (1:41; 6:34; 8:2). Jesus was repeatedly frustrated by the disciples and grieved or angry at the obduracy and hypocrisy of religious leaders (e.g., 3:5; 4:40; 8:12; 9:19). There is a pattern of goodwill as seen toward the leper, those considered sinners, the importunate such as the bleeding woman or the blind man on the road to Jericho, the Syro-Phoenician woman, the children brought to be blessed, and even the independent exorcist.

Second, Mark does not describe Jesus according to Greek philosophical ideals or relate his contributions to GR categories.⁴ Nor is Jesus presented as a notable representative of a profession as in the biographies of Suetonius and Diogenes Laertius.

Third, the importance of Jesus in Mark is not that he was an outstanding individual, an astonishing miracle-worker and exorcist, an inspiringly devout man, a remarkable and provocative teacher of wisdom and ethics, or a model of uncompromising fortitude in the face of injustice and suffering. Despite regular amazement of onlookers in the face of his miracles and sayings for instance, what is emphasized is the questions they raise concerning his identity and relationship to God, not his greatness or virtue (1:22, 27; 2:7; 4:41; 6:2, 14; 11:18; 12:17).

Indeed, the primary purpose of Mark is to demonstrate the identity of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, the primary significance of his activity as the proclamation and embodiment of the kingdom of God, and the giving of his life as ransom for many in order to establish a new covenant. Correspondingly, Jesus' character, activities, and story are only of interest insofar as they portray his walk with and service to God and their enduring significance for his people.

The story is saturated with biblical allusions which present it as the "continuation of the story of Israel" and Jesus as "the key figure who carries forward the story."⁵ In other words, the significance of the subject is his contribution to and role within sacred history. This is Jewish biography.

Finally, Mark is a theocentric biography. As is typical of JB, God is ever-present and intervenes at key moments in the story (Jesus' baptism, transfiguration, and supernatural phenomena around the crucifixion). This reflects the biblical assumption that the God of Israel actively shapes the course of history. Resultantly, the gospel presents events as fulfilment of biblical prophecy (e.g., 1:2; 9:11-13; 14:21) and features further prophecies that predict subsequent chapters of the sacred history (e.g., 13:2; 14:62). These are all standard features of JB in the OT tradition.

⁴ Although proposals that link Jesus to philosophers have been made and will be discussed in subsequent chapters, there simply is not in Mark the sort of explicit philosophical vocabulary and express comparisons that one finds in biographies that seek to portray Jewish heroes of the faith in GR garb.

⁵ Hays 2017, 44.

2. Structure

Mark's biography starts with a background section which includes the beginning of Jesus' activity, continues with an account of his "career," and concludes with the events that culminate in his death and resurrection. Within this biographical framework, the story unfolds chronologically but contains sections in which materials have been grouped thematically.⁶

There are topical sections in GRBs as well. Their function is to describe the subject in specific domains of professional activity, personal life, or character. This produces sections that are compartmentalised with little if any chronological progression from one to the next and no unifying plot. By contrast, Mark's thematic sections are integrated within the chronology of the biography and contribute to its plot and subplots. A sense of progression is maintained throughout the biography through the chronological and logical development of important elements of story. For instance, disciples are first called, then twelve chosen, later sent out, and their instruction intensifies as the story progresses (1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:6-13; 8:27-9:13; 13:1-14:42). Other themes develop as the biography unfolds, such as the disciples' struggle to understand Jesus' identity and kingdom ethics and the escalation of opposition that culminates in Jesus' arrest and execution.

The story's cohesion is reinforced through a trail of narrative "breadcrumbs" that anticipate later developments and prepare the audience to receive answers to questions previously left in suspense. For instance, when Jesus states that "the Son of Man... came to give his life a ransom for many" (10:45), the meaning of this loaded statement is left undefined at that point in the story. The audience must await the Last Supper (14:22-25) to receive indications of what this means. In 12:35-37, Jesus asks how the Messiah could possibly be both son and Lord of David. Again, the audience must wait subsequent revelation that David's Lord, who will sit at the right hand of God, is the Son of Man to come on the clouds, but that he is first to suffer as David's son (14:61-62).

Finally, the story is kept moving along through geographical progression as well. The earlier stages of the story take place in Galilean locations (1:14-4:41) but gradually expand into adjacent areas (5:1; 7:24, 31; 8:27), before moving southward (10:1), across Jericho (10:46), and around and in Jerusalem (11:1). The fact that the Markan Jesus only comes to

⁶ Thematic collections include controversy stories (2:1-3:6), parables (4:1-34), power demonstrations (4:35-5:43), testing questions (11:27-12:37), and eschatological predictions (13:1-37).

Jerusalem for Passion Week is historically unlikely and discordant with other gospel traditions. Yet it shows a deliberate decision to structure the story in a geographically climactic way.

This biographical structure recalls that of the biography of Moses in Exodus-Deuteronomy.⁷ The story progresses chronologically from Moses' birth to his death. Characters develop: Moses marries, has children, separates and is later reunited with his family; he, Aaron, and Miriam all age; Joshua goes from assistant to successor. In parallel, the story progresses geographically as well: from Egypt, to Mount Sinai, to the desert of Sin, and finally the Transjordan regions. Themes are also developed throughout the story. For instance, lack of faith and opposition to Moses which culminate as the Exodus generation is condemned to die in the wilderness (Num 14:22-23), Moses' faithfulness to God and people, and his temper which eventually costs him entrance into the Promised Land. All of these impart a sense of logical and chronological progression and unify the story despite substantial thematic collections such as tabernacle materials, the census, sacrifice regulations, and purity laws.

The OT biography of Abraham also illustrates interspersing of material related to subplots within an episodic structure that weaves in several significant subplots: the clan's relationship to the land, Abraham and Sarah's faith struggles, Lot's unworthiness to be Abraham's heir, the story of Ishmael, and the birth and choice of Isaac. Here also, a trail of narrative breadcrumbs is left throughout, anticipating later developments and unifying the biography (11:29-30; 13:13; 19:14, 26). Thus, Mark's structure differs from the models represented in GRB, but has antecedents in OTBs.

3. The Role of the Narrator

It was conventional for GR biographers to introduce single biographies or series with a preface, relatively frequently interrupt the narrative with self-referential comments, and often conclude with further remarks and commentary. This, however, did not apply to "open biographies," anonymously written popular life stories that circulated in multiple and fluid

⁷ Kline proposes a correlation between the form of the gospels and Exodus. However, his analysis is not comprehensive enough to note the broader correspondence to the whole of Moses' story, notably the unifying role of geographical progression (1975, 1-27).

versions such as the *Lives of Aesop* or *Secundus*. It has thus been suggested that the gospels might also be open biographies.⁸

There is, however, no evidence that the canonical gospels were ever regarded as popular stories in the “open” tradition. Open biographies tended to entertainment and did not make the sort of high claims one finds in Mark. This is one of the reasons why the identity of the authors of these biographies was inconsequential. By contrast, although author names do not appear in the original texts of the gospels, they were quickly, and perhaps from the start, attached to them. In fact, the identity of the authors of the canonical gospels was considered essential evidence of historical and confessional reliability.

The anonymity and covert narration of Mark makes perfect sense in light of the conventions of JB which emphasise the significance of the stories over against the literary aspirations of their authors.

Lastly, the reliability, omniscience, and, most importantly, complete identification of the narrator with the divine viewpoint are all standard features of JB.⁹

4. Narration Style

Mark is narrated through scenic episodes. These have widely been considered to be patterned on the model of *chreiai*, short stories used in the biographies of philosophers to describe their interactions with their disciples and others, and to provide narrative settings to their aphorisms. Since many of the Synoptic episodes contain analogous materials, it seems credible that the evangelists could have chosen to use the *chreia* as medium of representation. This would also have served to present Jesus to non-Jews by analogy to their philosophers.

Several studies have investigated the use of *chreiai* in GR education and public speech and have concluded that there is formal and functional correspondence with Synoptic episodes, especially “pronouncement stories” (short narratives in which one or several of Jesus’ *logia* have a central and climactic role).¹⁰ Ancient manuals such as Theon’s *progymnasmata* taught how to recast sayings and anecdotal materials to serve different rhetorical purposes, and this would seem to correspond to the kind of differences that characterise parallel passages in the gospels.

⁸ Hägg 2012, 175-6.

⁹ Petersen 1978, 100-117; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie 2012, 39-61; Fowler 2001, 81-154.

¹⁰ See Tannehill 1981, 1.

Although there are resemblances between Markan episodes and *chreiai*, significant differences indicate that they should not be equated. The types of *chreiai* which Synoptic episodes have been likened to can be categorised according to their intended primary usage: oratory or biographical. The reformulation techniques in Theon's *progymnasmata* pertain to the oratory use of *chreiai*. The manual specifies that its targeted audience was "those who elect to be speakers" and its purpose to impart them with "what one should know and reasonably practice before the speech."¹¹ Oratory *chreiai* were used to invoke the authority and rhetorical force of specific sayings attributed to famous persons to add persuasiveness to speeches on various topics.¹² Thus, the *chreia* was to be a "micro-model of the speech situation."¹³

This conception of the *chreia* pertains to a specific oratory sub-culture to which our gospel simply does not belong. Mark does not exhibit the epideictic and deliberative logic that characterises Greek declamation. In fact, and despite his emphasis on rhetoric in Mark, Witherington conceded that "even the longest continuous speech in Mark, in chapter 13, does not appear to take the standard form of a rhetorical speech" and suggested that instead, Mark used a more "elementary" rhetoric operating at the micro rather than macro level.¹⁴ While it is possible to read more rhetoric between the lines of Markan episodes than can be objectively demonstrated, the fact remains that Mark does not have the tenor or vocabulary of Greek oratory. Its methods of persuasion clearly lie elsewhere: the invocation of Scriptures, the evidence of miracles and divine intervention, and characterisations that align the sympathies of the audience with Jesus. Even Jesus' *logia*, although they are rhetorically potent, are not presented within the register of declamation. No GR audience would ever confuse Jesus for an orator, Mark for an oration, or even some of its content for oratory.

Beside oratory usage, *chreiai* could also be used for biographical purposes. The *chreiai* featured in the biographies of Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius are not intended to persuade readers of a particular point of view, but to illustrate the sort of person the subject was, and what his qualities or vices were (wisdom, wit, political acumen, striking views).

¹¹ Butts 1990, 97.

¹² Ibid., 217-223.

¹³ Ibid., 227-228.

¹⁴ Witherington 2001, 9.

However, and as already observed, Mark is more concerned with communicating the significance of Jesus' identity, activity, and message in relation to God and his people than with describing Jesus' character and personal traits. Markan episodes are not the sort of illustrative and anecdotal *chreiai* found in GRB.

What is more, the form of Markan episodes does not correspond as closely to those of *chreiai* as has been claimed. For instance, Tannehill classifies Mark 1:35-38 as a correction pronouncement story.¹⁵ Yet Jesus' reply to Peter in this episode ("Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby...") hardly qualifies as a pronouncement. Such an episode would not be included in a GR collection of *chreiai* nor would this *logion* of Jesus be considered a memorable saying suitable for inclusion in such a collection. The fact that this saying has little meaning and value outside of the context in which it occurs demonstrates that the episode is not a pronouncement story at all.¹⁶

Last but not least, the role of Markan episodes within the biography differs considerably from that of biographical *chreiai*. The main source of the latter in our period comes from Diogenes Laertius' biographies of philosophers, most particularly the biography of Diogenes of Sinope. Goulet-Cazé has analysed the form of these *chreiai* in detail and identified several phrases that serve as stock introductions.¹⁷ The two most common ones are ἐρωτηθείς (having been asked) and ὀνειδίζόμενος (being criticised). These are also found in Plutarch's biographies and in other collections of *chreiai*.¹⁸ The use of passive participles keeps the focus on the philosopher despite the fact that the exchange is initiated by another party. This provides a very minimal setting in the form of a circumstantial clause which immediately leads to and emphasises the philosopher's saying in the main clause. Since the intent is mostly to showcase memorable sayings, the *chreiai* are almost never located within the chronology of a biography, because it is irrelevant to their meaning and import. Mark, however, does not use these or similar constructions, nor provide minimal settings that only serve to showcase the sayings of Jesus. Narrative and dialogue in which Jesus' sayings occur

¹⁵ Tannehill 1981b, 102.

¹⁶ For similar conclusions based on form-critical considerations, see Ellis 1991, 328-329.

¹⁷ Goulet-Cazé 1992, 3983-3990.

¹⁸ See Plutarch's biographies (e.g., *Alex.* 64.2; *Pyrr.* 8.2), *Sayings of the Spartans*, and *Platonic Questions* (1007/B); Lucian (*Alex.* 53); Sextus Empiricus' *Against the Professors*, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, etc.

are of far greater importance not only in relation to the sayings themselves, but also to the whole story. Therefore, Markan episodes are not *chreiai*.

Rather, the characteristics of Markan pericopes clearly align with those of OTBs. Episodes are the medium through which the story is told and progresses. Their content corresponds to the kind of scenic representation which is conventional in HN and OTB. The style is concise and economical in details, and the story is driven by dialogue or direct speech. Generally, only details directly relevant to the plot are mentioned. For instance, Jesus and the other main protagonists are not described physically: only the Baptiser's and Jesus' clothing are partially described and even then, the aim is clearly not to provide a general description of the subject's appearance (1:6; 9:2-3).

Markan episodes are unified through vague chronological markers typical of HN, in conjunction with connecting themes and subplot developments. For instance, the sequence from Jesus' baptism to his departure from Capernaum is connected with these introductory temporal indicators: "in those days" (1:9) / "and just as" (1:10) / "and... immediately" (1:12) / "after John was arrested" (1:14) / "as Jesus passed by the Sea of Galilee" (1:16) / "they went to Capernaum" (1:21) / "as soon as they left the synagogue" (1:29) / "in the morning, while it was still dark" (1:35).

In some cases, an episode may be introduced without any temporal marker. For instance, the episode following Jesus' departure to Capernaum is introduced by "a leper came to him" (1:40), a type of introduction also found in the miracles collection in Elisha's OTB (e.g., "now the wife of a member of the company of prophets cried out to Elijah" in 2 Kgs 4:1). Yet the following Markan episode starts with "he returned to Capernaum after some days" (2:1) and thus connects the story back to 1:39. The effect is to inscribe the cleansing of the leper within the chronology of the story and to maintain a sense of chronological progression.

Episode conclusions also use HN techniques to unify the story and indicate progression. Concluding summary reports (e.g., 1:39; 4:33-34; 6:13) describe subsequent activities, especially when their duration prohibits scenic representation. For instance, Mark 1:35-39 begins with a sequence of actions: Jesus goes out early and Peter subsequently searches for him (35-36). This set the stage for dialogue: Peter tells Jesus everyone is looking for him, Jesus replies that he must leave to preach in other towns (37-38). The scenic part of the episode is then concluded with the summary report: "and he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons" (v. 39). A similar example is found in the story of Abram's journey to and within Canaan (Gen 12:1-9). After a

sequence of actions and direct speech, the scene concludes: “And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb” (Gen 12:9).

Other Markan scene conclusions that are common in OTB include the departure of protagonists (3:6, cf. Gen 13:1), the narrator’s description of the outcome/consequence of the episode (5:20, cf. Gen 13:18), unanswered questions (4:41, cf. Gen 34:31; Num 17:12-13), evaluations (6:52, cf. Gen 25:34), or combinations thereof. These are also commonly found in *chreiai*; however, in the latter, they simply end anecdotal episodes and serve no further purpose within the broader story. By contrast, in OTB and Mark alike, these conclusions regularly have extended significance. Thus, the departure of the Pharisees and Herodians to plot against Jesus in 3:6 contributes to the subplot of the escalation of opposition to Jesus culminating in Passion Week. Likewise, the concluding open question of the puzzled disciples in 4:41 (“Who is this?”) contributes to the gospel’s guided exploration of Jesus’ identity and anticipates further developments.

Episodes may also close with a memorable statement (e.g., 2:17), a concluding device of OTB (see Gen 18:15; 21:7; 28:20-22). This being said, Jesus’ subject type and his idiom are such that concluding climactic statements are much more frequent in Mark than in any other JB.¹⁹ Here again it must be emphasised that unlike those featured in *chreiai*, the concluding climactic statements in Mark and OTB are not provided as illustrations of the subject’s wit or wisdom. They have a more integral role within the plot of the story and contribute to its cohesion and progression.

Finally, Markan episodes exhibit further HN stylistic features including: (1) The introductory phrase καὶ ἐγένετο (1:9; 2:23; 4:4), translation of ܡܕܢܐ in the LXX, which has a similar function (e.g., Gen 12:10; 22:1); (2) Idiomatic expressions such as “and it came to pass in those days” (1:9 cf., Exod 32:28),²⁰ “answered and said” (3:33; 6:37, etc., cf., Josh 9:24), and even the favourite Markan phrase “and immediately” (Gen 15:4; 38:29);²¹ (3) Characteristically redundant repetition (e.g., Mk 3:30 c.f., v. 22; Exod 33:3-5); and (4) The

¹⁹ See subsequent discussion of Jesus’ subject type and the *logia* as constitutive materials of the biography.

²⁰ The phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ and its permutations occurs 625 times in the LXX.

²¹ Marcus 2008, 65.

intercalation of scenes (e.g., 11:12-14/15-19/20-26 c.f., Gen 14:1-17/18-20/21-24, Exod 4:18-23/24-26/27-31, and 32:1-33:6/7-11/12-34:28/29-35).²²

Thus, Markan episodes are not *chreiai*. Rather, they are scenic episodes which in their general content, function, and style correspond to the conventions of HN and OTB.

5. Literary Sources

Mark's use of literary sources also conforms to HN and OTB conventions. To provide a contrasting perspective on Mark's usage, it is worth quoting Hägg's apt summary of the use of sources in GRB:

The subordination of the narrative to sources, specified or unnamed, is typical for this 'learned' biographical style, as is the rapid switch between different authorities. What the account loses in narrative power, it may be said to gain in scholarly credibility: the reader is deprived of any illusion that historical truth is attainable.²³

In Mark, only one source is demonstrably or expressly identified as such in quotations or allusions: the Jewish Scriptures. Moreover, Mark never compares alternate versions of a story, nor speculates about historical accuracy or credibility. Instead, it follows biblical tradition in presenting itself as an authoritative and reliable depiction of the story of the subject. When the Scriptures are referenced, it is not as historical records but as validation of what Jesus did, said, and of what happened to him as conformed to the divine will. This assumption of the authority of Scripture is also typically Jewish and foreign to what one would expect in a GRB.

6. Conclusion

Many of the characteristics of Mark discussed above have been observed by others, but they have not been brought to bear on the question of its relationship to either GRB or JB. When these are indeed compared to what is conventional in these biographical traditions, the verdict is immediate and decisive: Mark has the biographical contours of a Jewish, not that of a GR biography.

²² In her forthcoming chapter on Mark in the *Oxford Handbook on Rhetoric*, Shively suggests that Mark uses conventions of Hebrew Narrative including "repetition of words and themes, intercalation, epitome (summaries), and symmetrical arrangements (inclusion or framing devices)," although she does not specify examples in Mark or OT parallels.

²³ Hägg 2012, 308.

CHAPTER 6: THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SON OF GOD

The last chapter focused on the literary characteristics of Mark extrinsic to the story. The next three chapters will demonstrate how the conventions of biography operate at the level of the story materials in Mark. The present chapter focuses on the introductory section of the biography. The main/career section and the Passion Narrative will be the focus of the next two chapters.

1. Introduction

Like many biographies, Mark opens with a section that provides a background and introduces the subject (1:1-13).¹ This introductory section consists of a titular sentence (1:1),² a background section anchoring Jesus' story in scriptural tradition (1:2-3), an account of his induction into ministry on the basis of prophetic and direct divine attestations (1:4-11), and a test of his worthiness before the beginning of his career (1:12-13).

Since the current consensus is that the gospels are GRBs, I will begin analysis of each major section of Mark with an evaluation of the main attempts to establish how some of its content may be interpreted as GRB. This will show that while the proposed interpretations of specific elements of Mark seem plausible at first glance, they do not stand up to close examination, nor contribute to a coherent interpretation of the gospel that satisfactorily accounts for its content and emphases. I will then argue that Mark is most cogently interpreted through the lens of JB.

¹ Although the limits of Mark's introductory section have been debated, the main section of a biography normally starts with the public career of the subject, which corresponds to Mark 1:14. I disagree on this point with Frickenschmidt who argues that biographies end opening sections with a climactic statement, and who thus includes verses 14-15 in the introductory section (1997, 351-352).

² N.T. Wright and a few others have proposed that the whole of Mark 1:1 may not be authentic. Wright 1992, 360 n.67. This view, however, lacks textual substantiation and rests on the unprovable assumption that 'gospel' in Mark 1:1 reflects second century usage and refers to a written life of Jesus.

2. Mark 1:1-13 and Greco-Roman Biography

2.1 Titular Sentence

The only specific resemblance to GRB Burridge proposed was that, like Mark 1:1, some GRBs begin right after an introductory sentence that includes the subject's name.³ Frickenschmidt proposed further correspondences in the way the subject is first identified by name (Jesus), "cognomen" (Christ), and "Son of X" (Son of God).⁴ Since the ancestry of the subject in GRB commonly indicates inherited traits or pedigree, Frickenschmidt interpreted "Son of God" as signalling that Jesus' identity is determined by his origin from and relationship with God.⁵ Additionally, Frickenschmidt and Collins correlated the use of ἀρχή in the opening sentence to its use in some GR histories to signal the beginning of a new narrative.⁶ Finally, the term εὐαγγέλιον was interpreted as echo of and counter-claim to the good tidings of Caesar Augustus' birthday in the *Priene* inscription and his adoption by Julius in Nicolaus' biography.⁷

2.2 The Baptiser

Frickenschmidt interprets the role of John as that of the well-known but lesser figure who points to the biography subject and predicts that he will have a great destiny. The fact that his clothing is described while Jesus' appearance is not is explained as deliberate: the evangelist did not want a physical description of Jesus to undermine belief that he was divine.⁸

2.3 Baptism and Temptation

The most original aspect of Frickenschmidt's interpretation of Mark 1:1-13 as GRB concerns the baptism and temptation of Jesus. In his view, the rending of the sky and divine

³ Burridge 1992, 186-189.

⁴ Frickenschmidt 1997, 352.

⁵ Ibid., 353.

⁶ Ibid., 354; A. Collins 1990, 28-29.

⁷ Ibid., 356, 358.

⁸ Ibid., 362, 364.

voice, as well as Jesus' subsequent stay in the wilderness in the company of angels and beasts, are intended to work together to evoke wonder toward Jesus and provide early characterisation as God's Spirit-endowed Son.⁹ Moreover, he compares the rending of the sky and the descent of the dove to the "vertical element" of Numa's ascent toward the Tarpeian Rock and the supernatural sign of a flight of birds during his election as king (Plut. *Numa* 7.2-3).¹⁰ Lastly, he observes that early temptation can also be found in some GRBs.¹¹ Thus, on the basis of these proposed parallels and interpretations, Frickenschmidt concludes that Mark 1:9-13 has a "very similar function" as GRB pre-characterisation, except that it is not expressed in terms of virtues but with the Jewish focus on the quality of the subject's relationship to God.

2.4 Evaluation

Frickenschmidt's analysis provides an interesting glimpse into how Mark's introduction may have been read/heard by GR audiences based on conventions and associations with which they were most familiar. However, the proposed analogies to GRB do not adequately explain the content of Mark 1:1-13.

First, Burridge and Frickenschmidt's claim that Nepos' openings to biographies are like Mark's is inaccurate. Nepos' biographies do not stand alone but are part of a series which is duly introduced with a preface (Nep., Pref. 1.1-8). Mark does not have a preface.

Second, provided that *υιοῦ θεοῦ* is original, it would be true that "God" stands in the titular sentence where the subject's father's name would normally be, but this convention is hardly distinctive of GRB and is routinely found in JB. Moreover, if "Son of God" were to be interpreted in a GR register, it would either refer to the offspring of a god or to apotheosis. Rather, the language of the baptismal scene alludes to Psalm 2:7 and probably Isaiah 42:1 (LXX) and points to a Jewish conception of divine sonship, which does not serve to establish an illustrious ancestry or present virtues in relation to ancestors.

Third, although the word *ἀρχή* can be found at the beginning of sections in Greek histories, these instances are too few to be considered conventional and the term is never used to introduce GRBs.

⁹ Ibid., 367.

¹⁰ Ibid., 368.

¹¹ Ibid., 369.

Fourth, the assertion that Mark 1:1 uses the word “gospel” to make a counter-claim to imperial claims deserves more attention. If the origin and significance of its use lie with the imperial cult, it would indicate that Mark chose to describe the narrative to follow in a GR register from the beginning. The most recent substantial defence of such an association, not only in Mark but more generally in Early Christianity, is provided by Stanton.¹² He argues that while Jesus used verbal cognates of εὐαγγέλιον which originate from the LXX (esp. Isaiah), the singular noun form was coined by early Christians, is closely related to Pauline usage, and was placed on Jesus’ lips by Mark. Since the substantive is not found in the LXX, it must derive from the use of the word group in relation to the imperial cult.

However, the absence of the substantive in the LXX does not establish that its source is to be found elsewhere. Such a strong wedge should not be driven between the verbal and noun forms. The importance of the verbal cognates in Isaianic passages (esp. Isa 52:7; 61:1-2), which are closely associated with the gospel traditions and messianic expectations (cf. 4Q521), makes it extremely unlikely that the two forms are unrelated in origin and meaning.¹³ There is but one small derivative step between Jesus’ appropriation of Isaianic passages that use the verbal forms to describe and interpret his own activity, and the use of the singular noun in the NT, including in Mark 1:1.¹⁴ After all, and as Hooker has rightly observed, Mark immediately adds that this gospel is “as it is written in Isaiah” (1:2).¹⁵ Moreover, this “good news” is shortly thereafter described as a very Isaianic proclamation of the impending eschatological kingdom of God (1:15).

Additionally, as Stanton himself observed, verbal and substantive forms are often collocated and clearly cognate in meaning in Paul’s writings.¹⁶ Romans 10:15-16, for instance, uses both and connects them directly to Isaiah 52:7. Most significantly, the singular substantive is not used in non-Christian writings whether in general or in relation to the imperial cult. Even the Priene inscription uses the very common plural substantive and not the distinctive singular form associated with Jesus in the NT.¹⁷ Moreover, examination of the

¹² Stanton 2004, 9–62.

¹³ Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁴ See Evans 1997, 653-667 and Marcus 2004, 12-45.

¹⁵ Cf. Hooker 2005, 35-37.

¹⁶ Stanton 2004, 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., 31.

occurrences of the lexical group in Philo, Josephus, and in Plutarch's biographies shows that the word group was most often used with no particular association with the imperial cult.¹⁸

What is more, since God is conceptualised as king in the OT and ancient religions in general, it is unsurprising that there should be significant overlapping vocabulary with the imperial cult (lord, saviour, god, son of God, the idea of ruling over the world). This does not require derivation. In fact, there is no indication in Isaiah that Babylonian rulers presented themselves as "good news," so that the origin of the use of the word group in Isaiah was not a counter-claim *against* the blasphemous claims of foreign rulers, but a proclamation of the good God promised *for* his people. Likewise, all uses of "gospel" in Mark have this positive proclamatory character, describing the significance of Jesus (1:1) and blessings associated with God's incoming kingdom (1:15) which are to extend to all nations (13:10). Thus, Mark does not start his biography of Jesus by describing it in relation to GR culture but, on the contrary, by grounding the story in the Jewish scriptures.

Fifth, for the Baptiser to have the role of the lesser person who points to a greater one, he would have had to be considered a famous person by the intended audience.¹⁹ However, it is extremely unlikely that the evangelist would have thought a GR audience (for whose sake this convention would be used) to consider him so. The significance of the Baptist lies rather with his role as prophet in the scriptural tradition which provides validation to Jesus as servant of God. In other words, the role of the Baptiser is presented within a Jewish register.

Sixth, Frickenschmidt's explanation for the lack of description of Jesus establishes an incorrect contrast with the Baptiser, since it is not the latter's physiognomy but his garb that Mark describes. To this, one may correlate the description of Jesus' transfiguration which again focuses solely on his clothing, providing no description of his physical traits (9:1-2). What is common to the two descriptions is their specific role in the narrative as clues to the identities of John and Jesus. The fact that Mark does not attempt to give a concrete mental image of the appearance of anyone in the story but only mentions details that are directly pertinent to the plot is a HN convention.

Seventh, Frickenschmidt's proposed analogies between Jesus' baptism, temptation and GRBs are not only stretched but leave out their most important elements which derive

¹⁸ See Plut. *Ages.* 17.3; 33.4; *Art.* 14.3; *Cat. Mi.* 51.1; *Demetr.* 11.3; 17.5; *Dem.* 22.1; *Phoc.* 16.6; 23.4; *Pomp.* 41.3; *Sert.* 11.4; 26.3.

¹⁹ For example, Agesilaus and Cyrus or Cicero and Demosthenes. See Frickenschmidt 1997, 228-232 for further examples.

their meaning and significance from the Jewish scriptures: empowerment by the Holy Spirit, confirmation by divine voice, the allusion to Psalm 2:7, the symbolism of the number forty, Satan's role, and the wilderness temptation (more on this below).

The composite portrait of the meaning and import of Mark's introductory section emerging from these proposals does too much violence to the text to be credible. Indeed, Mark could have simply used the word *bios* to refer to the work in the titular sentence as Philo did to introduce Moses.²⁰ Instead, his introduction is both unprecedented and foreign to the conventions of GRB.

3. Mark 1:1-13 and Jewish Biography

3.1 Titular Sentence

The form of the first sentence in Mark is well-represented within Jewish literary traditions. The books of Nehemiah, Tobit, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles all open a titular sentence that includes (a) a descriptive of content, (b) the name of the person with whom the content is associated, and (c) identification of the father.²¹ The person identified in (b) can be the author to whom the content is attributed (e.g., Solomonic proverbs or wisdom) or the person to whom it is related (e.g., Tobit). Since this form also approximates the short titular sentences found in prophetic books (Obad. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Mal. 1:1), it is possible Mark 1:1 was influenced by the introductory words in Hosea 1:2a (LXX) ἀρχὴ λόγου κυρίου.²²

As descriptor of content, the evangelist chose "gospel," a word already closely associated with Jesus among early Christians and one that wastes no time in linking the biography with what "is written in Isaiah," as discussed earlier.

The titles of the person to whom the work pertains are significant, since they convey as concisely as possible what the author wants to put forward about the subject. The divine voice calling Jesus "son" in Mark 1:11 alludes to Psalm 2:7, a royal Psalm about a Davidic king enthroned in Zion. It is further confirmed as the primary reference of the designation

²⁰ *De Vita Moysis*, 1.1-4.

²¹ See A. Collins 2007, 130.

²² A. Collins 2007, 131; Aletti 2017, 28.

“Son of God” when Mark associates “Son of God” with “King of Israel” and “Son of David” (1:1; 12:35; 14:61; 15:32) as titles that all qualify “Christos.”²³

Since the OT conception of the sonship of the Davidic kings does not rest on the claim that they were directly descended from Him, the placement of “Son of God” (if authentic) in the titular sentence should not be interpreted as identification of Jesus’ father, but as a *title* that identifies Jesus (c.f., Hab 1:1; Hag 1:1). Mark has little interest in Jesus’ family or place of origin.²⁴ Thus, the titular sentence conveys from the start what is most essential to JB: the significance of the subject in relation to God and his people. Jesus is Christ and Son of God and his story is good news.

3.2 Induction Narrative

Aside from basic identification of the subject, the topos most commonly introducing life story or career in JB is about the subject’s parents, a call narrative or some other indication of divine authorisation and empowerment. The main function of the Baptiser at this point in the narrative is to provide authentication for Jesus. The line of credibility is as follows: Scriptures predicts the coming “of the Lord” heralded by a voice in the wilderness. The Baptiser appears, preaches and baptises like a prophet, and draws comparison to Elijah. He heralds that the one is coming. Jesus is thus doubly accredited: his coming conforms to biblical predictions and is confirmed by a bona fide prophet whose coming also conforms to biblical predictions.²⁵ Consequently, the fact that Jesus enters the scene by being baptised by John is functionally analogous to being anointed into office by a prophet. Since priests and other contemporary representatives of Israel’s faith have no credibility in Mark, this prophetic attestation and induction are essential.²⁶

Charismatic endowment is a standard feature of call narratives which normally comes when or shortly before the subject begins activity as God’s servant (e.g., Deut 34:9; 1 Sam 10:6; 16:13). The visible descent of the Spirit, the voice of God, and the explicit designation of Jesus as beloved and well-pleasing Son of God fulfil the function of the miraculous

²³ Kingsbury 1983, 55.

²⁴ The story will only refer to Jesus as “of Nazareth” later in the story (1:24; 10:47) and mention family members, notably his mother’s name (6:3), in passing.

²⁵ For a similar interpretation, see Watts 2007, 119.

²⁶ For an analysis of Mark’s depiction of priests and other authorities, see chapter 7.

manifestations confirming God's choice. Thus, the narrative quickly confirms what the narrator announced in the titular sentence. As is typical in OTB, the narrator and God share the same viewpoint.

Scholars widely agree that the wilderness location of Jesus' temptation (1:12-13) carries symbolic value.²⁷ Although the wilderness was a rich and multivalent symbol in ancient Jewish literature within and outside the OT, the cluster of elements associated with it here point to Moses and Elijah traditions. First, the forceful driving of Jesus in the wilderness by the Spirit and subsequent angelic assistance both recall the experiences of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:12; 19:5, 7; 2 Kgs 2:17).²⁸ Second, the forty days evokes Moses' fast on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:18; 34:28), Elijah's journey to Horeb without food (1 Kgs 19:8), and the forty years of Israel's wanderings and shortages of food and water in the wilderness (Num 14:33-34).²⁹ Thus, Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness evokes self-denial, supernatural sustenance, and a period of testing.

Although Satan does not appear in these OT source narratives, he does in other narratives in which he plays an important role in inciting to disobedience or faithlessness (Gen 3:1-5; 1 Chr 21:1; Job 1:9-11; 2:3-5). Divine testing through a situation of crisis or need is a recurrent theme in biblical tradition (e.g., Gen 22:1-2, 16-18; Exod 15:25-26; 16:4). Passing or failing the test establishes how firm the subject's commitment to God is. As these examples indicate, the period of testing need not occur on the heels of a subject's consecration to service to God, as is the case in Mark. Yet nothing precludes that it could be the case. Indeed, one tradition casts responsibility on Mastema in the incident of Moses' failure to live up to divine expectations right after his calling at the Burning Bush (*Jub* 48:1-4). Guelich is probably right that while not plainly stated, the outcome of the temptation is implicit to Mark's account.³⁰ Since angelic assistance is synonymous with divine support, it must be interpreted as indication of divine approval, an outcome congruent with the remainder of the induction narrative.

²⁷ Guelich 1998, 38; Marcus 2008, 169; A. Collins, 2007, 151.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Guelich 1998, 40. While Mark does not specify that Jesus fasted or how he was tempted, the fact that Matthew and Luke do (Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2) confirms that Jesus' temptation was interpreted in relation to the Horeb and wilderness traditions.

³⁰ Guelich 1998, 38.

None of these parallels, considered in isolation, functions as an exact precedent to Jesus' temptation, but together they constitute an evocative cluster of frequently associated themes that are meant to inform the reader's interpretation of the subject's introduction in Mark 1:1-13.

4. Conclusion

The introductory section of Mark does not correspond to GRB conventions, but rather introduces the subject, establishes his divine authorisation and empowerment, and briefly demonstrates his faithfulness to God in classic JB fashion.

CHAPTER 7: THE CAREER OF THE SON OF GOD

The present chapter will demonstrate that the career section of Mark (1:14-13:37) does not operate according to the conventions of GRB but those of JB, especially as represented in OTBs.

In order to do so, it is first of all essential to carefully assess the impact of subject type and story context on the content of the biography. The type of subject to whom a biography pertains is usually associated with specific kinds of activities which translate into the sort of materials one will find in the career section. The historical and societal context of the story determines the kinds of characters and situations that feature in the biography and gives meaning to its events. This double assessment (story context, subject type) will be followed by an analysis of the origin and function of the content that defines the career of the Markan Jesus. The main categories of this content are Jesus' miracles, parables, *logia*, and disciple-making activities; they will be explored with a view to determine how they contribute to and illuminate the biographical project of Mark.

1. Story Context

Important aspects of the political, religious, and cultural context have a significant impact on the content of Mark: the Roman occupation, with its puppet high priests, Herodian client-rulers, and the fragmentation of Judaism into distinct groups such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees.¹ This situation accounts for many differences between the activities, locations, character types, and *modus operandi* of Jesus in Mark as compared to what can be found in prior JBs.

First, while classical prophets acted as the conscience of the monarchy, the activity of the Markan Jesus has singularly little to do with Herod or the Romans. The Herodians are only mentioned twice, as co-conspirators of the Pharisees (3:6; 12:13), and Jesus warns the

¹ The context of first-century Palestine is also represented in the late books of Josephus' *Antiquities*. However, his post-biblical stories no longer tell history through biography but adopt a more classic style of Greek historiography.

disciples once against the yeast of Herod (8:15). Pilate, likewise, plays a very limited, albeit important, role (15:1-15). Jesus does not seek to interact directly with either of them and when he is finally forced to face them, he mostly prefers to remain silent (14:60-61; 15:2-5).

Second, even in the Southern kingdom where Jerusalem and Temple remained central, OTB represents classical prophets as usually more influential than priests. The situation is quite different in Mark. While Jesus' actions indicate that the Temple is important to him (e.g., 11:11-19, 27; 12:35, 41; 13:1-2), Mark only documents one visit to Jerusalem. The priesthood has far greater official power than is the case in the OTBs of prophets, but it is portrayed as corrupt and is largely ignored by Jesus. Almost all of Jesus' activity and his greatest successes are confined to Galilee and surrounding regions, away from Jerusalem and its authorities. Correspondingly, priests have no presence or active role in the biography until the last week. Jesus only mentions them once in a statement that implies a negative view (Mk 1:44) and otherwise only to indicate that the chief priests would participate in his condemnation to death (8:31; 10:33).² Likewise, the High Priest's role in the story is negative and limited to Jesus' trial. Mark does not even identify him by name.

Third, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and synagogues now play important societal roles which translate into new types of scenes such as disputes concerning the interpretation and application of the Torah.

Fourth, the Passion Narrative (PN) owes much to the story context. In first-century Palestine, it is not the king who opposes and swiftly condemns prophets as in OTBs. Rather, Jesus' execution requires a betrayal and the cooperative effort of Jewish sects, priesthood, and Roman authorities, resulting in elaborate plot and trial scenes.

Finally, the story context of Mark reflects the interest of first-century Judaism in eschatology, apocalyptic visions, angelology, demonology, Satan and similar figures, and corresponding practices such as exorcisms. As first-century servant of God, Jesus is not battling Baalism or the social concerns of the post-exilic community with intermarriages and neglect of priests and Levites. Gentiles are in to stay and enough Jews live as "sinners" to be referred to as "many" (2:15). Instead, Jesus battles against "the Enemy" (1:13; 3:27; 4:15; 8:33), casts out demons, and interacts with sinners.

² In 2 Kings 5:8, the healing of the leper (Naaman) is to show the king of Israel that "there is a prophet in Israel." As in Mark 1:44, the implication is that the authorities have ceased believing that the power of God operates in the land.

The development of apocalyptic and eschatological thought and literature in this period is particularly significant to assess how Mark appropriates Jewish traditions in his biography of Jesus. Although some of its constitutive elements were incipient in the prophetic books of the OT, it is in the intertestamental period that this mode of thought and its associated literature become a distinctive current of expression and expectation within Judaism. While neither Mark as a whole nor the eschatological speech of chapter 13 fully qualifies as apocalypse,³ the preaching, teaching, and praxis of the Markan Jesus exhibit many apocalyptic traits, most of which are concentrated in Mark 13: prophecy related to current events (i.e., the destruction of the Temple), focus on persecution (13:9), prediction of eschatological upheavals (13:24-25), judgement of the world (13:27 cf. 12:9; 14:62),⁴ the themes of resurrection and afterlife (9:42-48), periodisation and determinism (13:19-20, 32-33), the activity of angels and demons, the proclamation of a new way of salvation (8:35-38), a mediator with royal functions, the catchword “glory,” and the manifestation of the kingdom of God.⁵ Mark 10:28-31 for instance, envisions a reality in which the faithful dissociates from the social and economic norms of society in “this age” which is distinguished from “the age to come.” Persecution is predicted, eternal life promised, and judgement announced: the first will be last and the last, first.

To summarize, the contextual factors described above all contribute to produce new types of scenes that become integral to the career of Jesus but that are without precedent in OTBs. One must therefore be careful not to confuse differences that are due to the story context with those that may indicate generic divergence.

2. Subject Type

Jesus’ subject type is undoubtedly the single characteristic that is most determinative of and best explains the content of Mark as a biography.

³ A. Collins 1979: 96-97.

⁴ The allusion is to a scene of judgment in Daniel, not just enthronement.

⁵ J. Collins 1998, 6, 10. Pace Horsley 1993: 224. Horsley’s criteria, such as minimising the import of son of man because only a few references point to “the future or ‘apocalyptic son of man,’” (223) are exaggerated. “Son of man” does not need to occur in expressly apocalyptic passages: the passages in which it does clearly link its usage to Daniel 7, which is apocalyptic. It is therefore a title, as Jesus uses it, with intrinsic apocalyptic overtones.

2.1 Unprecedented Fusion of Subject Types

Despite parallels and analogies (e.g., prophet, king, philosopher), Jesus' subject type is unique among previous and contemporary biographies.⁶ One finds subjects who wear more than one hat, but one role always predominates in their biographies. Thus, while Cato Minor was also an orator and philosopher, Plutarch portrays him primarily as a statesman. David left a significant legacy as Israel's sweet psalmist, but it is his role as king that determines the best part of the format and content of his story in Samuel-Kings.

It is more difficult, however, to single out one of the titles or roles used to describe Jesus in Mark as his subject type. The gospel opens by describing him as Christ and Son of God (1:1 c.f., 1:11; 9:7; 14:61). In the course of the biography, Jesus refers to himself most commonly as "Son of Man" (e.g., 2:10, 28; 8:38; 9:12), and occasionally as prophet (6:4) and teacher (14:14). Other characters address him as rabbi or teacher (e.g., 4:38; 9:5, 17, 38) and believe him to be prophet or Messiah (8:27-30). As he approaches Jerusalem, he is acclaimed as "Son of David" (10:47 c.f., 11:10; 12:35-37), and the Passion Narrative emphasises the title "King of the Jews."

Additionally, the story compares him to Moses the great lawgiver and covenant-maker of Israel, the prophets Elijah and Elisha (8:28-29; 9:4-7), David as the suffering king, and to the Son of David and divine Servant of Isaiah. Some of these designations occur in close succession (8:29-31; 14:61-62) and are presented as interconnected aspects of Jesus' identity, role(s), and therefore, subject type.

This fusion of subject types has a direct incidence on the categories of content and claims to fame of the biography. Jesus is portrayed as preaching the kingdom of God, performing miracles, and confronting the religious authorities like a classical and eschatological prophet. He draws crowds, instructs authoritatively, and constitutes a new people of God by blood covenant like a new Moses. He teaches in synagogues, Temple, and open spaces as teacher and prophet. He appears in luminous transfiguration as the Son of Man. He rides into Jerusalem as the humble Davidic king and offers himself in sacrifice like the Isaianic Suffering Servant. Again, several of these activities, which are each appropriate to a specific subject type, seamlessly follow one upon the other: Jesus' prediction of whence

⁶ Frickenschmidt 1997, 351, suggests that there is a relationship between the particularities of the content of Mark and the "*Einzigartigkeit*" (uniqueness) of Jesus but does not elaborate.

the colt was to be fetched is what could be expected of a prophet and is immediately followed by his ride into Jerusalem as king (11:1-11).

2.2 Fusion of Roles in the Second Temple Period

Although this specific blend is unprecedented especially in biography, the sort of fusion of roles one finds in Mark corresponds to the tendency in the literature of Second Temple Judaism to combine and even blur the distinctions between previously separate roles.

Thus, Enoch is described as a scribe, who also serves as intermediary between heaven and earth (prophet) and interpreter of dreams (sage, cf. 1 Enoch 12:4; 13:4-6; 4Q530 Frag. 2 ii:14).⁷ Daniel, likewise, appears first as a sage having “an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems” (Dan 5:11–12) and in the second half of the book, as prophet who receives and mediates divine revelations and exhortations.⁸ A similar phenomenon is reflected in Ben-Sira’s description of the ideal scribe who studies Torah and hones the skills of the wise (Sirach 39:1-3).⁹ In Qumran’s Teacher of Righteousness are also conjoined the roles of priest, prophet, and interpreter of Torah.

This combination or fusion does not apply only to different subject types. The cryptic figures associated with messianically interpreted OT texts are also combined to produce composite Messiahs whose activities fulfil the aspirations represented in each of these texts.

In the *Melchizedek Scroll* (11Q13), Melchizedek is an eschatological messianic figure who, in the last days (described as eschatological day of atonement in line 8), will release captives (lines 4-6). This includes freeing the “sons of light” (cf. Matt 13:38; John 8:44) from “Belial and the spirits of his lot” (lines 12-13, 25). Significantly, this scroll portrays these events as fulfilment of some of the key Isaianic texts which will prove formative in Mark as well. The reference to the release of captives is very likely to be based on Isaiah 61:1, since the event is subsequently referred to as Isaiah 61:2’s “year of favour” (line 9). Melchizedek will fulfil Isaiah 52:7 in proclaiming peace, announcing salvation, and the good news of God’s kingdom (lines 15-16, 23). As for Jesus in Mark, elements from Daniel and Isaiah are combined: the anointed of Isaiah 61:1 and proclaimer of 52:7 is interpreted as being the prince of Daniel 9:25.

⁷ J. Collins 1990, 343-5. C.f., Hengel 2003, 202-10.

⁸ From the late OT, one also notes Ezekiel’s use of *meshalim* (e.g., 17:2; 20:49; 24:3).

⁹ In several passages Ben-Sira seemed to consider himself a prophetic voice as well (cf., Sir 24:30-33). See Witherington 1994, 80.

In the *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521), the activity of the Messiah is associated with a special work of the Spirit (line 6), manifestation of the kingdom of God (line 7), freedom for prisoners and sight for the blind (line 8), healing of the wounded, raising of the dead, and preaching of good news to the poor (line 12). One notes again the influence of Isaiah 61:1-2, and the confluence of many of the elements represented in Jesus' ministry in Mark.

2.3 OT Prototypes and Messianic Expectations

The building blocks of the biography of Jesus thus derive from three sources. First, Jesus is portrayed according to conventional activities connected with specific subject types (prophet, king). Second, Jesus is portrayed by analogy to prototypical figures in OTB (Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David). Third, he is portrayed by analogy to OT figures which were messianically interpreted (the Son of David, the Suffering Servant, the Son of Man). It is important to note, however, that there are tensions between the expectations linked to these various prototypes and that at several points, one finds that Mark's fusion subverts these expectations. As the reactions of story characters indicate, it was certainly not conventional of the role that a Davidic king should "give his life a ransom for many" (10:45 cf. 15:32) or that the Son of Man should suffer, be rejected, killed, and then rise again (8:31-32).

These observations are essential to analyse the biographical import of the materials one finds in Mark, especially in the career section. One will find role-conventional materials and other materials therein that are clearly influenced by the content of OTBs. However, since messianically interpreted OT prophetic texts are not biographies and are mostly evocative and cryptic, the representation of Jesus as one whose career fulfils these texts implies a greater level of creative interpretation similar to that found in the aforementioned scrolls. Thus, one will *not* find that Jesus' parables or exorcisms are associated with a specific subject type or prototypical figure in OTB. The relationship between what one finds in Mark and these OT texts is not direct and obvious, but, as we will see, is just as critical to understanding the origin and function of much of the material that constitute the biography.

2.4 Greco-Roman Parallels

There have been a number of influential proposals pointing to GR literary/cultural origins and function for materials of Mark's biography. In addition to the already discussed claim that gospel episodes were patterned on GR *chreiai*, several studies have argued that Jesus' sayings mimicked the aphorisms of philosophers, his disciple-making that of their

gathering of followers, and his miracles and itinerant activity that of Mediterranean miracle-workers. If any or all of these views are correct, it would indicate that the evangelist associates Jesus with activities that may be conventional of GR subject types. Although the ethos of the gospel is that of JB, this could reveal some influence from and accommodation to GRB.

These proposals will be examined as part of the analysis of the origin and biographical function of each major material type (i.e., Jesus' "claims to fame") in the career section. It will be found that despite their wide acceptance, these approaches require contrived argumentation, substantial overlooking of contrary evidence, and do not produce coherent or illuminating interpretations of Mark.

3. Jesus' Claims to Fame

3.1 Parables

Parables were a literary form found in many cultures and different types of literature.¹⁰ The παραβολή was famously referenced and described by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 2.20) who includes an example from possibly the most well-known person associated with the form in Greek literature, Aesop. Thus, Jesus' parables undoubtedly had a ring of familiarity to audiences around the Mediterranean Basin.

However, close examination of Jesus' parables in Mark makes it clear that this is not the cultural and literary horizon from which they originate, and which govern how they should be interpreted. Greek parables include full allegories, symbolic stories, poetic descriptions, self-evident stories with no value beyond the particular situation to which they were attached, fables that on the contrary have no relationship to a particular context, or parables and fables used to further an argument in oratory.¹¹ None of these shares in the specific traits and functions which the parables of Jesus have in common with precursors from the OT.

Despite the fact that there are few direct parallels to Jesus' parables in the OT,¹² there are clear indications that the latter is the conceptual source determinative of this literary form

¹⁰ Snodgrass 2008, 37.

¹¹ Ibid., 46-50.

¹² OT parables include Judges 9:7-21; 1 Samuel 12:1-15; 2 Samuel 12:1-24; 1 Kings 20:35-43; 2 Chronicles 25:17-24; Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-13; 28:23-29; Ezekiel 15:1-8; 17:1-21; 19:1-14; 23:1-14.

and content type in our gospel. First, the broad use of the term παραβολή in Mark parallels that of the LXX where it translates the similarly flexible OT word מִשְׁלָּה.¹³ Thus, the term can be used of a narrative parable in 4:1-9, a simile in 4:30-32, or a pronouncement in 7:14-17.

Second, several of Mark's parables are intertextually connected to specific OT texts.¹⁴ The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk 12:1-12) is an adaptation of that of the Unfruitful Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. There is an allusion to Joel 3:13 in Mark 4:29 and to Daniel 4:12 in Mark 4:32. In the last two examples, the intertext is an integral part of the parable itself.

Third, in all three Synoptic gospels, the Parable of the Sower explains Jesus' use of the form as derived from Isaiah 6:9-10 (Mk 4:1-20).¹⁵ Since Isaiah 6:9-10 makes no reference to parables, it does not explain the form, but rather the *prophetic function* Jesus attributes to his parables. The paradigmatic significance of this association of parabolic form and prophetic function is emphasised through the generalised challenge issued by Jesus to his disciples: "Do you not understand *this* parable? How will you understand *all* the parables?" (Mk 4:13, *italics mine*). The fact that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, which is the OT parable most clearly and extensively adapted in Mark, almost immediately precedes the commission narrative in Isaiah (Isa 5:1-7; 6:9-10) suggests that the proximity of the two Isaianic passages contributed to this association of form and function in Mark.

Fourth, the OT parables of national judgement (Isa 5:1-7; Ezek 17:2-10; 19:1-14; 23:1-35) deploy elements featured in variegated ways in a number of Jesus' parables and exhibit a similar narrative movement. The people of God are compared to a vine or a great tree. Despite God's great care, the recipients of divine favour respond thanklessly and disloyally and incur God's judgement. Indictment comes either as a pronouncement or in the form of a rhetorical question (cf., Nathan's parable to David in 2 Sam 12:1-4). These are also the basic themes that pervade a number of Markan parables. Thus, the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (12:1-12) tells a different yet similar story to that of Isaiah 5:1-7, no longer applying to "the house of Israel" and "the people of Judah" but to a succession of prophets that

¹³ Snodgrass 2008, 10, 39, 46. The noun מִשְׁלָּה can refer to a parable, allegory, enigmatic oracle, taunt, or proverb (Aune 1991, 219).

¹⁴ Jeremias 2010, 31.

¹⁵ This clearly does not describe the function of all of Jesus' parables. However, the posited relationship between Jesus' parables and Isaiah 6:9-10 is critical to understanding the relationship they have with OT source materials.

culminates in Jesus himself. The basic idea of failure to respond appropriately to divine nurture resulting in disaster is also the backbone of the parables of Unshrunk Cloth and New Wine (Mark 2:21–22).¹⁶

Fifth, the book of Daniel is also an important formative source for Markan parables. Daniel's dreams about the kingdom of God (2:31–45; 4:10–37) have a "parabolic" quality and formal similarities to them. The vision of the great statue in Daniel 2, like that of the Parable of the Sower, involves four discrete elements in graded order (from gold to clay, from roadside to good soil). Both parable and dream are followed by an interpretation that details the significance of each element. The idea of a mysteriously growing kingdom of God that will achieve universal greatness in the kingdom parables of Jesus (Mk 4:26–29, 30–34) most likely originates from these dreams and visions. The title "Son of Man," which is Jesus' preferred self-designation, is itself derived from another "kingdom of God" vision (the four beasts, Dan 7:1–12), which expands the two aforementioned dreams by specifying divine judgement and the Son of Man's subsequent rule. In the context of the whole of Daniel, the thematic links and progression between the visions connect the allusion to the kingdom of God as the stone that becomes a great mountain (Dan 2:35), with his sovereign rule over the tall tree that provides shelter to all (4:10–12; cf., Mk 4:30–32), and God's ultimate dominion through the Son of Man whose "kingship shall never be destroyed" (7:14).

Sixth, OT prophetic and Markan parables both ascribe a similar role to God (usually assumed rather than stated). It is God who would cause "old wineskins" to burst, the seed of the word of the kingdom to be sown, wicked tenants to be punished and faithful servants rewarded. Parable history is divine history: the metaphorical fig tree will put out its leaves at the divinely appointed time (Mk 13:28). Even where they allude to Jesus, the parables concern most frequently God's people and kingdom. Thus, the primary characteristic of the

¹⁶ The same point is made not just at the level of one parable but in the cumulative effect of parables and explanations in Mark 4:1–29. The Parable of the Sower does not stress judgement but nevertheless differentiates between fruitful and fruitless. This is followed by an explanation implying that the parable, in effect, equates these two groups respectively to outsiders (to whom the words of judgement of Isaiah 6:9–10 are applied) and those to whom the mysteries of the kingdom are given (vv. 11–12). Another "sowing" parable immediately follows in which, once the harvest has grown, the sower puts the sickle (vv. 26–29), an unspecified but clear reference to a time of reckoning, presumably positive for the fruitful but also a metaphor of judgement for the fruitless (Joel 3:13).

parables is not their rhetorical effectiveness or aphoristic language, but their prophetic character, predicting what will happen or urging faith, faithfulness, obedience, or repentance.¹⁷

Bultmann and others have argued that Jesus' parables can be compared to those found in rabbinical sources, which are ostensibly from the Tannaitic period.¹⁸ I agree with Snodgrass' assessment, however, that beside the perennial difficulties attached to dating specific rabbinical materials, the few pertinent examples do not really parallel Jesus' prophetic and authoritative use of the form.¹⁹ Broader cultural currents such as scribal and rabbinical practice (which themselves might have been influenced by Hellenistic sources) may have played a role in the adoption and development of the use of parables in the Jesus tradition, but the weight of the evidence points to the preponderant formative role of the OT.

Mark's adaption of OT parabolic traditions provides a clear illustration of his method of conversion of OT messianically-interpreted texts into biography. The original divine pronouncement in the context of Isaiah's commission narrative has been appropriated by Jesus to explain his praxis. The oracular parable of Isaiah 5:1-7 has been contextualized and integrated into the subplot of Jesus' interactions with his opponents. Daniel's oracles and dreams have morphed into parabolic biographical narrative. These are not appropriations and adaptations of random OT materials: For Mark, Jesus is the Isaianic Son of David and Suffering Servant and Daniel's Son of Man. Consequently, he is also the one who fulfils the "program" set forth in the broader scriptural traditions associated with these figures.

3.2 Logia

A corollary of the previously discussed view that the Markan episodes are *chreiai* is that many of Jesus' *logia* are memorable sayings such as are found in the biographies of philosophers.²⁰ Both Burridge and Frickenschmidt made this connection as well.²¹ This view is itself the birthchild of two streams of influence. First, Bultmann influenced NT scholarship to consider that the sayings of Jesus found in the gospels originally circulated as independent

¹⁷ For similar conclusions, see also Meier 2016, 36-43.

¹⁸ Witherington 1994, 159.

¹⁹ Snodgrass 2008, 42-46.

²⁰ See discussion earlier in this chapter and references to Robbins and Downing.

²¹ Burridge 1992, 201, 209; Frickenschmidt 1997, 369, 376.

logia and were only subsequently adapted to narrative settings.²² Hence, the narrative frames in which they occur are for the most part to be considered redactional.²³ For instance, Mark 2:17a is regarded as a “single-stranded *marshal*” and 17b as a secondary explanation.²⁴ This was only one step removed from drawing comparison to the sayings of philosophers which are likewise often featured in different short stories.

Second, the sayings of Jesus have been widely held to be sapiential aphorisms on account of shared formal and thematic characteristics.²⁵ This seems to find support in the facts that Jesus was called rabbi and teacher and on occasion praised for or associated with wisdom in the gospels. Witherington goes as far as claiming that Jesus both was, and was intended to be perceived as, sage.²⁶ One study even argued, on the basis of the motif of the disciples’ misunderstandings and the thematic links shared between Mark 6:1-6 (the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth, which includes a reference to *Sophia*), the rejection of Wisdom in 1 Enoch 42:1-2, and that of the *logos* in John 1:11, that Mark represents a clash between conventional and revealed wisdom.²⁷ Moreover, the fact that specific sayings appear in different contexts and multiple forms in the gospel tradition is seen as confirmation that they functioned as aphorisms in the oral and written traditions of the Early Church.²⁸

These assumptions and arguments are problematic however. First, whether a *logion* is judged memorable enough to be used and quoted in a variety of contexts is a different question than whether it is an aphorism in the sapiential tradition.

Second, whether a pre-existing saying originally had a function akin to aphorisms in the tradition is also a different question than whether it does in the particular context in which it is used in Mark. Proverbs 25:21-22 was certainly preserved as part of Jewish sapiential tradition yet is used as epistolary paraenesis in Romans 12:20.

Third, it is improbable that Jesus uttered only *one* version of a specific saying whose “original” form (the “aphorism” of tradition) must be teased out of the different formulations

²² Bultmann 1963, 1.

²³ Ibid., 11.

²⁴ Ibid., 81, 92.

²⁵ E.g., Witherington’s comparison of Jesus’ sayings with those of Ben-Sira (1994, 143-146). See also Aune 1991; Gerhardsson, 1991.

²⁶ Ibid., 155.

²⁷ Barton 1999, 98-101.

²⁸ Aune 1991, 212.

and contexts in which it appears.²⁹ As itinerant preacher and teacher, Jesus probably re-used and adapted similar sayings to different situations. In fact, the interpretation of Jesus' *logia* is closely related (and often specific) to the context in which they occur in the NT gospels. Confirmation of this is found in the fact that the *Gospel of Thomas* frequently obscures the meaning (and changes the flavour) of Jesus' *logia* by listing them without narrative contexts. For instance, it is not clear at all how "If a blind person leads a blind person, both fall into a pit" (*Gos. Thom.* 34) should be applied as an independent saying (cf., Matt 15:14; Luke 6:39). Whether the *Gospel of Thomas* reflects an earlier and more rudimentary stage of the tradition or, on the contrary, an attempt to convert the kerygma to a collection of sayings, is a question beyond the scope of the present study. The important point is that in the Synoptic gospel tradition with which we are concerned, *logia* are more dependent on their narrative context than is the case for sapiential aphorisms.

Fourth, it is doubtful that either of the titles "teacher" or "rabbi" were considered coterminous with "sage" in the first half of the first century in Palestine even if in later rabbinical tradition, some rabbis were certainly regarded as such. That Jesus' wisdom is presented as superior to Solomon's in Luke 11:31, that there is analogy between the Johannine *logos* and Lady Wisdom, and that Jesus was considered wise, do not establish that he was perceived in the specific role of sage by either himself, his contemporaries, or the Early Church, or that his *logia* were regarded as sentences of the wise.

Although there are indeed formal similarities between Jesus' sayings and sapiential aphorisms, they also differ significantly in themes and, most importantly, function. While the nature and boundaries of Jewish wisdom remain the subject of ongoing debate, its general description and main characteristics are largely uncontroversial. Wisdom is "the reasoned search for specific ways to ensure personal well-being in everyday life, to make sense of extreme adversity and vexing anomalies, and to transmit this hard-earned knowledge so that successive generations will embody it."³⁰ It expresses general truths in concise and incisive form and typically addresses the individual rather than larger groups.³¹ It aims to produce certain types of outcomes: political acumen, knowledge of nature, discerning decision-making, insight about everyday life, and skills of various kinds.³² Its focus on practical

²⁹ Ibid., 225.

³⁰ Crenshaw 2010, 3.

³¹ Ibid., 3; J. Collins 1993, 174.

³² Witherington 1994, 4.

savoir-faire and social ethics translates in a set of typical themes such as wealth and poverty, suffering and death, injustice, adultery, drunkenness, propriety, family, and the right use of speech.³³ Mantic wisdom is related to the above because it involves insight and superior knowledge, but as ability to interpret dreams and visions, it stands in a category of its own and produces its own forms of communication and themes of interest.³⁴

While wisdom has a predilection for forms such as riddles, parallelism, chiasmus, poetic imagery, allegories, hymns, and arguments based on observation of life and nature, it does not have exclusive monopoly of these forms which can all be found across different genres in Jewish literature.³⁵ Consequently, one must beware of characterising texts as wisdom solely on the basis of references to wisdom or understanding, shared vocabulary and themes, or formal characteristics. To qualify as wisdom, a marriage of form, content, and function is required.³⁶

A few examples taken from Aune's list of Jesus' aphorisms illustrates why it is problematic to classify them as such (at least in Mark).³⁷ The first is Mark 2:17a, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." The *logion* bears formal resemblance to a wisdom saying because of its parallelism and concise formulation. The fact that it is a truism lends it rhetorical force, but this must not be confused with the sort of general truths that are the staple of wisdom. The statement does not have the function of a general principle applicable to different situations and domains of life but is solely offered as support to Jesus' assertion "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (2:17b). The *logion* defends Jesus' praxis and clarifies the nature of his mission. Any extended didactic value (e.g., opponents and disciples should imitate Jesus and be willing to associate with sinners) is secondary. Clearly the *logion* is not an invitation to learn wisdom, and its meaning would be obscure had it previously circulated independently.³⁸

³³ Aune 1991, 214.

³⁴ Hengel 2003, 202-18; J. Collins 1993, 168. Mantic wisdom is associated with apocalyptic writings and prophecy rather than with pithy sayings such as aphorisms.

³⁵ Crenshaw 2010, 28.

³⁶ Ibid., 28-9, 11.

³⁷ Aune 1991, 242-258.

³⁸ Even in Matthew 9:13, it is *not* the wisdom of the *logion* that is to inspire opponents to imitate Jesus but application of the cited scriptural principle from Hosea 6:6 "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

Likewise, while it is true that it is not wise to sew a new patch on old clothing, to put new wine in old wineskins (2:21-22), or that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (3:24), these are offered not as general principles to ponder, but as specific analogies that give rhetorical potency to Jesus' responses to his disciples and opponents. These examples illustrate that while Jesus' *logia* frequently appeal to reason (c.f., 12:35-37), they are not so much invitations to wisdom as *a mode of argumentation* based on supporting illustrations or analogies applied to a specific situation or point.

This is, in fact, a distinguishing mark of prophetic discourse.³⁹ For instance, in Isaiah 1:3, the prophet appeals to a general truth: "An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger." Yet this is not a proverb, but a truism that gives potency to the indictment to follow: "But Israel does not know, my people do not understand." The saying does not call for application beyond this point (see also Isa 10:15; Jer 15:12; 28:23-29; Amos 3:3-6; 6:12).

It is indeed significant that the Synoptic tradition presents Jesus as "a *prophet* mighty in deed and *word* before God and before all the people" (Luke 24:19, italics mine). Correspondingly, all the answers to Jesus' question "Who do people say that I am?" refer to prophets and even in Mark 6:1-6, Jesus does not lament at the townspeople's rejection of wisdom but that a *prophet* is without honour among his kin (v. 4).

The fact that Jesus' idiom belongs with the prophetic rather than sapiential tradition is underscored by three important characteristics of his *logia*. First, they are Christological. "The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28) is a concise and memorable saying with derivative didactic value (i.e., implications for Sabbath-keeping). Yet it is a Christological assertion, not a sapiential insight. The same applies to Jesus' declaration that no one can enter the house who does not first bind the strong man (3:27): it is not a general insight nor even an exorcistic principle, but Jesus' claim to have bound Satan. Likewise, the pronouncement concerning those who do the will of God (3:35) applies specifically to those who are *Jesus'* brother, sister, and mother. Even the aforementioned statement that "prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown" (Mark 6:4), although seemingly applicable to all prophets, only has Christological import in the setting in which it occurs.

Yet the Christological aspect of Jesus' discourse does not derive from the idiom of the prophets themselves. Rather, it recalls YHWH's role as his own witness in the prophets. To claim that Jesus' discourse is not prophetic because he did not use typical prophetic formulae

³⁹ See Lindblom 1955, 197; Shields 2012, 643-645.

such as “thus says the Lord,” “as I live,” or “the word of the Lord came to”⁴⁰ is to misconstrue the relationship of the Christological and self-referential aspects of his *logia* to the prophetic corpus. The Markan Jesus is not presented as a mediator of divine revelation in the limited sense of the prophets before him, rather he himself is the content of the “good news.” His authority, superior to that of Moses and Elijah (9:7), entitles him to speak in his own name (“ἂμην λέγω ὑμῖν” occurs 11 times in Mark). The analogy of his self-referential assertions to the words of YHWH in the prophetic corpus is most clearly expressed in the declaration that “heaven and earth will pass away, but *my* words will not pass away” (13:31 cf., Isa 40:6-8; 51:6). Thus, the Christological character of Jesus’ *logia* firmly grounds his idiom within OT prophetic discourse.

Second, Jesus’ *logia* are eschatological. The whole of Jesus’ message is summarised as the declaration that the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near (1:15). The rhetorical question “The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they?” (Mark 2:19) has appearances of a truism, but it is a Christological (Jesus is the bridegroom) as well as eschatological statement (this is a special time of fulfilment in which fasting is inappropriate). The same applies to Jesus’ sayings about the arrival of new wine, the binding of the strong man, and parables of the kingdom.

Finally, Jesus’ *logia* are predictive. They do not simply describe what a sage might anticipate such as “whoever digs a pit will fall into it” (Prov 26:27), or merely express a belief such as the day of trouble reserved for the wicked (Prov 16:4). The pronouncement that “many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” expresses knowledge of the future, hard on the heels of the promise that those who forsake all to follow Jesus will be rewarded and receive eternal life (Mark 10:29-32). The foretelling aspect of Jesus’ *logia* must, of course, be understood in relation to his other predictive discourse which includes short term predictions (11:2-4; 14:13-16), predictions of his death and resurrection, the “Little Apocalypse” of chapter 13, and prediction of a return in glory (8:38; 13:26; 14:62).

It may be objected that the arguments above drive too hard a wedge between wisdom and prophecy. Indeed, John Collins has demonstrated that wisdom and apocalyptic (for instance) are not incompatible and suggested that they co-exist in Q.⁴¹ However, the

⁴⁰ See Kloppenborg 1987, 321; Witherington 1994, 177; Robbins 2009, 60.

⁴¹ J. Collins 1993, 174-185.

characteristics of the examples he produces significantly differ from Jesus' *logia*.⁴² They mostly consist of exhortations of unquestionable sapiential origin or character (in both form and themes) which are adapted so as to replace a this-worldly focus on retribution, success, and the life well-lived with an eschatological view of rewards and judgement, and are portrayed as supernaturally revealed rather than solely based on observation or insight. Unlike Collins' examples, Jesus' *logia* do not mimic the usual themes of wisdom but offer their own distinctive set of themes and mode of discourse, which are more characteristic of prophetic literature.

In conclusion, the sayings material that are such an important component of the Markan Jesus' "claims to fame" and career are not aphorisms in the sapiential tradition intended to draw comparison to Greek philosophers and their biographies. Like the parables, Jesus' *logia* depict him in the tradition of OT prophetic discourse. This is a mode of discourse congruent with Mark's portrait of Jesus as the prophet greater than Moses and Elijah and as embodiment of the hopes and expectations of Jewish prophecy. His Christological, eschatological, and predictive discourse are eminently suitable as claims to fame that correspond to his characterisation as the hoped-for Messiah who ushers in a new age and decisively advances the kingdom of God.

3.3 Miracles

Miracles are central to Mark's biographical depiction of Jesus and his career. Since influential studies have argued that this element of the biography depicts Jesus by analogy to miracle-workers around the Mediterranean Basin and in Second Temple Judaism, establishing the origin of this class of claims to fame is essential to determining how they should be interpreted and what they contribute to the biography.

3.3.1 *Greco-Roman Parallels*

Although Bultmann and Thiessen have most influentially argued that the forms and motifs of Synoptic miracles derive from miracle stories in GR literature, the evidence does not support this conclusion.

⁴² See 1 Enoch 2-5, 4 Ezra, the lengthy extract of Pseudo-Phocylides in Sibylline Oracles 2.56-148, the Epistle of Enoch in 1 Enoch 91-104, 2 Enoch, and the collocation of sapiential and apocalyptic elements in Testamentary literature.

The “shared motifs” Bultmann proposed are elements one would expect to find across miracle stories from diverse cultural and literary horizons.⁴³ Thus, it is hardly remarkable and certainly not a distinctively GR literary feature that a miracle story should indicate the seriousness of the situation being remedied (e.g., length of sickness, dreadfulness/danger of the disease, ineffective treatment attempts).⁴⁴ In the OT, this “motif” can be found in relation to barrenness (2 Kings 4:14), poverty (1 Kgs 17:12; 2 Kgs 4:1), or other desperate situations (Gen 22:10–14). Likewise, it is unremarkable that some sort of interaction takes place which typically involves preliminary inquiry and dialogue about the need, followed by remedial action (1 Kgs 17:21; 2 Kgs 2:21; 4:34–35, 41), some sort of pronouncement (2 Kgs 1:10, 12), a conclusion that indicates the result (Ex 15:25; Num 20:11; 21:9; 2 Kgs 2:22) and the reactions of onlookers (Ex 14:31; 1 Kgs 17:24; 18:39; 2 Kgs 4:37).

The same applies to Thiessen’s considerably more detailed list of shared motifs.⁴⁵ The arrival of the miracle-worker and other participants on the scene or arrival to a specific location are also well-represented in OT miracle stories.⁴⁶ The overall distribution of motifs (expositional, central, and concluding) is also commonly found in them, and it is difficult to imagine that such elements could be presented in a different order if the miracle story is narrated chronologically.⁴⁷ Such resemblances provide no decisive evidence that Mark’s miracle stories use a form distinctively derived from emulating those found in GR sources.

Both scholars bolstered their claim by arguing that miracle workers were a familiar phenomenon in the Roman Empire in the first century, and that Jesus was either represented by analogy to, and/or would have been understood in relation to such a class. However, this argument is not sustainable either.

GR literature features a number of tales of miracles that fall into four groups.⁴⁸ First, there are a few tales of isolated miracles (e.g., *Hdt.*, *Hist.* 4.13.1–14.3, 36.1, 95.1–96.1).⁴⁹ These stories were reported as anecdotes and often regarded with suspicion.

⁴³ Bultmann 1963, 229–31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁵ Thiessen 1983, 43–74.

⁴⁶ See 1 Kings 17:10; 2 Kings 2:23; 4:38, and 2 Kings 2:19; 3:12; 4:1, 25; 5:9.

⁴⁷ Blackburn 1990, 238–9; Van der Loos 1965, 120–33.

⁴⁸ For a comprehensive compendium and classification of GR miracle stories, see Cotter 2012.

⁴⁹ Garland 2011: 82–83.

Second, Pythagoras was credited with supernatural feats. The sources date from centuries after his lifetime.⁵⁰ These stories were not embraced by many Pythagoreans.⁵¹ Thus, whether Pythagoras was considered a “miracle worker” in his time or generally thereafter cannot be determined conclusively. Moreover, his supernatural feats are bizarre and sporadic and do not compare to Jesus’ miracles in either frequency or kind. The philosophers Empedocles and Medemenus were also associated with miracle stories but were both ridiculed as frauds (D. L., Vit. Phil. 6.102; 8.67–72).⁵²

Thus, while philosophers were occasionally credited with miracles, such accounts are so few and generally told with such reservations that it cannot be claimed that there is a close connection between the role of philosopher and miracle-working. There was no greater expectation of miracle from a philosopher than there was for Vespasian, whom Tacitus credits with two miracles (Hist. 4.81).

Third, most miracle reports are associated with healing cults centred on institutions and specific deities, notably Asclepius, Serapis, and Isis.⁵³ These miracles are most often granted in response to the supplicants’ prayers and gifts to the deities and do not involve the agency of a miracle worker. Menecrates of Syracuse (4th c. BCE) was a physician who claimed divine identity and miraculous nature of his cures, but his claims were also considered fraudulent.⁵⁴ The association of medicine with claims of miraculous cures in ancient Greece represents a conception of miracle that is clearly distinct from the OT and gospel traditions of direct miraculous healing.

Fourth, the miracles of Jesus have been compared to those of Apollonius of Tyana, who was also connected with Neo-Pythagoreanism and its interest in miracles, although his representation as philosopher was probably more apologetic than historical.⁵⁵ While his miracle-working activity is closer to that of Jesus in volume and kind, he is an isolated case of dubious historical value. The description of Apollonius’ feats came in the context of polemics with Christians and is much more likely to reflect the influence of the gospels than the other way around. Additionally, it is questionable whether Apollonius was as widely

⁵⁰ The sources are: Diogenes Laertius and the Neo-Pythagoreans Iamblichus and Porphyry.

⁵¹ Tiede 1986, 14-20.

⁵² C.f., Thiessen 1983, 266.

⁵³ Ibid., 269; Garland 2011, 81-2.

⁵⁴ Athen. *Deipn.* 7.33-35; *Suda* 602.

⁵⁵ Tiede 1986, 24.

known in the first century as Philostratus suggests.⁵⁶ Even if his miracle-working activity was as extensive as is claimed, Apollonius would be the *only* miracle-worker in GR lore whose activity can be compared to Jesus before and up to the first century. He would have been a curiosity rather than representative of a “familiar phenomenon” and “well-known class” of miracle-workers.

Finally, there is no parallel to Jesus’ exorcistic activity in GR literature. In the latter, *daimonia* are demigod creatures or the souls of defunct heroes and ghosts (Plut. *Def. orac.* 415B)⁵⁷ who function as intermediaries between the worlds of gods and men and are not necessarily evil (Plut. *Def. orac.* 416 E-F). They empower men and are responsible for divination, magic, revelatory dreams, and omens (D. L., *Vit. Phil.* 8.32 cf., Apuleius, *Apol.* 43). A story in Plutarch’s *bios* of Marcellus features an anecdote of a faked possession. The protagonist mimics a deep voice, bares himself and acts like a madman before wildly running away (a subterfuge to escape arrest, *Marc.* 20.5-6). Onlookers presumed this to be retribution from the “Mothers,” local goddesses whom he had offended. Yet although this scene presents resemblances to the behaviour of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5:3-5, it is a frenzy and not a possession in the biblical sense that would require exorcism. Since demons are not necessarily evil, seizures may even be the will of the gods. This contrast with the gospels’ assumption that possession is an ill that must be remedied as a sign of the presence of the kingdom of God. Indeed, Jesus’ sustained battle against Beelzebul and his minions in Mark would have been bizarre and foreign to a GR audience (cf., Acts 16:16-24).

The evidence above indicates that the Markan Jesus’ miracle-working activity would have been unusual and exceptional for GR audiences and would not have been readily associated with any particular social role or office.⁵⁸ Since miraculous claims were regularly met with scepticism, derision, or scorn, it is more likely that a GR audience would have reacted to these stories as fantastical.⁵⁹ Moreover, the Jewish elements of the miracles (e.g.,

⁵⁶ See discussion of the historical evidence in Dzielska 1986, 9-50.

⁵⁷ C.f., Cotter 2012, 75-89.

⁵⁸ Thiessen 1983, 265.

⁵⁹ Garland 2011, 83-84. Thiessen refers to the Hellenistic period as the least superstitious of antiquity (1983, 269). Although he argues that the end of the first century saw a revival of belief in miracles, the illustrative examples he provides are of questionable relevance for the period during which Mark and the other NT gospels were written. On several occasions, Josephus acknowledges that his audience may not be inclined to believe the miracles of old he recounts (Jos. *Ant.* 1.108; 4.158; 17.353 c.f., Acts 17:32; 1 Cor 1:22-23).

Sabbath controversy settings, references to Beelzebul, the Holy Spirit, etc.) and points of interpretation of the miracles (e.g., healing the paralytic shows that Jesus has authority to forgive sins on earth, 2:10-12) would have produced substantial confusion about how the witnesses' questions about the identity of Jesus should be answered (Mk 2:7; 4:41; 6:2-3, 14-16; 8:27, 29).⁶⁰ Therefore, the evidence does not support the claim that Mark attempted to present Jesus as a miracle-worker in a GR register.

3.3.2 *Second Temple Parallels*

Scholars have also proposed that the miracle stories in the Synoptics are to be interpreted within the context of Jewish miracle-working in the Second Temple period.⁶¹

However, the number of Jewish miracle-workers during the Second Temple period and the resemblance of their miracles to those of Jesus have been considerably exaggerated. Most references to miracles in Second Temple literature are retelling of scriptural miracles (notably those of Moses). Actual references to Second Temple period praxis are rare and amount to (a) some references to warding evil spirits off in the DSS and Tobit, (b) references in Josephus to several messianic claimants who promised miracles but failed to deliver,⁶² (c) one exorcism account,⁶³ (d) references in rabbinical writings to several individuals with whom a few miracle stories are associated,⁶⁴ and (e) references to other Jewish exorcists in the NT.⁶⁵

Several observations undermine the claim that this evidence provides a credible background for Jesus' miracles. First, the number of Jesus' miracles largely exceeds all of these put together. Only ben Dosa is associated with enough miracles to warrant description

⁶⁰ For a more detailed discussion of these contrasts, see Van Cangh 2008, 93-97.

⁶¹ E.g., Bultmann 1963, 231; Thiessen 1983, 272. Marcus interprets the demon's utterance in 1:21-22 ("I know who you are, the Holy One of God") as "an attempt to gain magical control over him through disclosure of his identity" (2008, 192) and the evening healings and exorcisms of 1:32-34 in relation to the "Havdalah," which "in some rabbinic and Jewish magical texts and formulae... is associated with the fight against demonic powers and other magical procedures" (194 c.f., Aune 1980, 1507-1557).

⁶² Many of the post-biblical miracles in Josephus are portents and other direct manifestations of divine intervention or will (cf., 2 Maccabees) rather than miracles directly performed by individuals.

⁶³ Jos. *Ant.* 8.46-49.

⁶⁴ These individuals are: Honi the Circle Drawer, Hanina ben Dosa, Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, and Nicodemus ben Gurion.

⁶⁵ Mark 9:38; Matthew 12:27; Acts 19:13-14.

as “miracle-worker” but the tales of his miracles are too likely to be a much later fabrication to have been a likely influence on either Jesus himself or on Mark’s description of Jesus’ miracles.

Second, first-century figures credited with miracles were not itinerant, did not gather disciples, and are not associated with a particular eschatological message.⁶⁶ Unlike Jesus, they worked within the system and were close to the Temple establishment.⁶⁷

Third, the only information provided on the Jewish exorcists mentioned in the NT is that they invoked Jesus’ name and were “the sons of the Pharisees.” How comparable their conception of exorcism and methods were and how common they were is unknown. There is simply not enough evidence to affirm that miracles and miracle-working were constitutive of the fabric of first-century Judaism.

Moreover, all these miracles reports are also surprisingly unlike those of Jesus. First, procedures to ward off demons are not exorcisms such as are found in the gospels, in which Jesus liberates individuals from the indwelling of evil/unclean spirits that can override personality, lead to self-harm, and cause physical pathologies (Mk 5:3-9; 9:17–26).⁶⁸ In the DSS, Tobit, and Josephus, dealing with demons involves the use of objects and rituals and are not based on the authority of the exorcist to order demons to depart (cf., Mk 1:27).

Second, the miracles messianic prophets promised, as well as Honi and ben Dosa’s drought-ending miraculous rainfalls, were all national deliverance miracles, a type of miracles Jesus did not perform.

Third, no one is credited with raising the dead or performing most of the types of miracles with which Jesus is credited. Although a number of healings are described as the result of ben Dosa’s intercession, he himself did not actually perform these miracles and knew only after he prayed whether one was going to be healed and live (this suggests that the outcome was not always positive).⁶⁹ The other miracles associated with ben Dosa are divine interventions on his behalf that confirm that he himself did not have the power to grant or operate a miracle. By contrast, the Markan Jesus is able to pronounce that a request for a miraculous intervention is granted without any indication that he first prayed (Mk 7:29–30).

⁶⁶ Freyne 1980, 243.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 244; Harvey 1982, 100; Van Cangh 2008, 75.

⁶⁸ Eve 2002, 326-330.

⁶⁹ Blackburn 2011, 121.

Jesus does not defer to God when the leper tells him he can cleanse if he so chooses but confirms “I do choose” and effectively pronounces “Be made clean!” (Mk 1:40-41).

The evidence simply does not support the claim that Second Temple Jewish miracle stories are the likely background for the depiction of Jesus’ miracles in Mark. There are, however, connections that point to the common influence of biblical traditions.

First, despite rabbinical caution toward miracles (cf., b. B. Mes. 59A-B), Judaism was not sceptical of the possibility of miracle as GR intellectuals were. Both in Jesus’ praxis and in Judaism, miracles were interpreted theocentrically.

Second, there were expectations that God’s next decisive intervention(s) for Israel and the coming of the Messiah would be accompanied by miracles.⁷⁰ The false prophets in Josephus were messianic claimants who purported to give credence to their claims through miracle promises.

Third, the vast majority of miracles recounted in Second Temple literature are connected to prophets, mostly Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. While this is not surprising since these figures were most prominently associated with miracles in the biblical tradition, it illustrates that miracles were closely associated with the role of prophet for Jews of the period. Even though it postdates the first century, the *Lives of the Prophets*, a compendium of miracle accounts credited to biblical prophets, further illustrates this close association.

Finally, one aspect of Second Temple Judaism that most definitely contributed to Jesus’ miracles, especially his exorcisms, is the development of a more defined and pronounced angelology and demonology (e.g., *Jub.* 10.6–14; *1 En.* 10:15; *1QM* 13:10-18). While afflicting or deceiving spirits can appear to be God’s servants in the OT (1 Sam 16:14–16; 1 Kgs 22:19–23), Jesus’ praxis assumes that the battle lines are drawn between the kingdom of Beelzebul/Satan and that of God (Mk 3:22–27).

What these connections demonstrate is that while Jesus’ miracles cannot be explained as the product of Second Temple Jewish miracle-working,⁷¹ they are nevertheless very much at home in first-century Judaism. As I will show presently, it is to biblical traditions that one

⁷⁰ 11QMelch; 1 En. 54–5; T. Mos. 10.1. Cf. also T. Levi 18.12; T. Dan 5.10–11;

T. Sim. 6.6; T. Jud. 25.3; T. Zeb. 9.8. See Blackburn 2011, 122–3; Eve 2012, 379–81. As Blackburn observes “There is little evidence that in Second Temple Judaism the Messiah was expected to perform miracles; however, this ‘little’ evidence should not be overlooked” (123).

⁷¹ Meier 1994, 537–52; Eve 2002, 361–367.

must turn to find the most likely sources for the depiction of Jesus' miracles in Mark's biography.

3.3.3 *Old Testament Sources*

The background of Jesus' miracles lies particularly with the biographies of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, which are fused and developed with elements from Isaiah's visions of the coming Kingdom and the role of the Servant of God.

3.3.3.1 The Conventions of OT Miracle Stories

Despite frequent recurrence of specific elements, OT miracle stories vary considerably in form and content.

In the biography of Moses, the form of the Ten Plagues follows a specific stereotyped format which includes stock phrases (e.g., "let My people go"), and symmetrical arrangement not only at the level of each miracle story but also across the series.⁷² God instigates each of the plagues. Instructions are given to Moses who is sent to confront Pharaoh. When the latter responds defiantly as expected, the predicted miracle ensues. In some cases, Moses subsequently offers intercession at Pharaoh's request. The form may be summarised as instructions – confrontation – miracle – intercession – outcome.

Wilderness miracles are quite different. Most start with the discontent of the congregation. Moses is confronted and then takes up the matter to God. The latter responds with instructions and the miracle follows. The form is thus: setting (complaint) – confrontation – intercession – instructions – miracle – outcome. The most distinctive element is Moses' role as mediator which issues into intercession and the relay of instructions.

The kinds of miracles associated with Moses are mostly punitive. Provision miracles are not generous offers of relief to suffering people but responses to complaints and typically take place despite deficient faith; there are almost no healing miracles.⁷³ Moreover, almost all of the miracles associated with Moses are for the benefit of the whole or large sections of the congregation, not individuals. Finally, Moses is not presented as a miracle-worker like Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus, who can perform miracles of their own initiative.

⁷² Coats 1999, 60-66; Zevit 1976: 193-211.

⁷³ The only two exceptions are actually relief from previously inflicted judgement miracles (Num 12:9-15; 21:4-9).

By contrast, Elijah's and Elisha's miracles are not based on previously detailed divine instructions and both prophets appear to have more initiative in wielding divine power directly. Elijah even boldly declares that there will be no rain except at *his* word (rather than God's, 1 Kgs 17:1). Elisha's curse of the youth seems to be a spontaneous reaction rather than the execution of a previously divinely appointed miracle (2 Kgs 2:23-25). Although intercession also occurs in the Elijah and Elisha miracle stories (1 Kgs 17:20; 18:36-37, 41-44; 2 Kgs 4:33), it is a more sporadic motif. Moreover, when there are instructions, they are not from God to the prophet but from the latter to supplicants (e.g., 1 Kgs 17:13b, 19; 2 Kgs 3:2-4). As a result, God is less of an explicit actor and supplicants have a more active role, demonstrating faith as they ask for or receive help. Finally, although they perform some punitive and national deliverance miracles, many of Elijah and Elisha's miracles focus on the needs of individuals or small groups.

3.3.3.2 Elijah the Prophet like Moses

Despite these important differences, there is strong evidence that the Elijah/Elisha traditions were considerably influenced by – and to be interpreted in relation to – those associated with Moses (and to a lesser degree, his successor Joshua).

Indications of derivation come mostly in the form of allusive resemblances. The parallels between the Elijah/Elisha and Mosaic traditions include similar miracles unique to them in the OT: feeding miracles (notably the provision of bread),⁷⁴ the provision of water,⁷⁵ the purification of water/food,⁷⁶ the miraculous crossing of water bodies,⁷⁷ and fire coming down from heaven to consume opponents.⁷⁸ Both Moses and Elisha throw something in water to purify it and they are the only two OT figures (if we consider Aaron as Moses' representative in the miracles in which he plays a role) who use a staff to do miracles (Exod 4:17, 20, etc.; 2 Kgs 4:29, 31). Both Moses and Elijah meet God at Horeb, an event associated with fasting, a forty-day period, and a journey in the wilderness. Both appoint a successor (Joshua, Elisha) whose first miracle is to reproduce the water-crossing miracle to

⁷⁴ Exodus 16:8-13, 14-35; 1 Kings 17:4-6, 10-16; 19:5-7; 2 Kings 4:2-7, 42-44.

⁷⁵ Exodus 17:5-7; Numbers 20:7-11; 2 Kings 3:16-20. The three-year drought is a related miracle in which the opposite occurs: food and water are miraculously withheld (1 Kings 18:1-2, 41-47).

⁷⁶ Exodus 15:23-25; 2 Kings 2:19-22; 4:38-41.

⁷⁷ Exodus 14:21-24; Jos 3:1-17; 2 Kings 2:8, 14.

⁷⁸ Numbers 16:35; 2 Kings 1:10, 12.

confirm their new status (Jos 3:7; 4:14; 2 Kgs 2:15). Both of Moses' and Elijah's life endings are extraordinary, mysterious, and take place in Moab across the Jordan.⁷⁹ They are the only two OT figures who use *Θάρσει* ("do not fear") as prelude to miracle (Exod 14:13; 3 Kgdms 17:13). In addition, DeVries has shown that some miracle stories from either tradition use the same "prophet-authorization narrative" form.⁸⁰

3.3.3.3 Jesus the Prophet like Moses

Through a number of distinctive allusions Mark likewise represents Jesus, especially through his miracles, as the preeminent prophet like Moses. This is signified most clearly in the direct allusion to Deuteronomy 18:15 during the Transfiguration in which Moses and Elijah appear alongside of Jesus, and the latter is singled out by the heavenly divine voice as the prophet to be henceforth heeded (Mk 9:7).⁸¹ Moses and Elijah are not present on the Mount of Transfiguration merely as somewhat independent figures who are significantly connected with eschatological ideas in Second Temple literature. The connection is specific and forceful: it is that of "the prophet like Moses" a tradition in which a significant eschatological figure like Enoch, for instance, does not belong.

Beyond the Transfiguration, Mark links Jesus to Moses, Elijah and their successors Joshua and Elisha in numerous ways. Beside Moses and Elijah, Jesus is the only subject in biblical tradition who also combines a period of fasting associated with forty days in the wilderness, feeding a large number of people, miraculously crossing water, and an extraordinary end of earthly life narrative. There are also two-way connections between Jesus and Moses, and Jesus and Elijah/Elisha. Thus, the only biblical figures to raise the dead are Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus. They are also the only three who had itinerant ministries providing relief miracles to individuals, and who could perform miracles at their own initiative. Additionally, the only two cursing and leprosy-cleansing miracles in biblical tradition are credited to Elisha and Jesus (2 Kgs 2:23-24; 5:1-14; Mk 1:40-45; 11:12-14).

⁷⁹ Josephus emphasised the relationship between the two stories by aligning the language of the second with the first: "no one knows to this day" of Elijah's death (Jos. *Ant.* 9.28) cf. Moses' burial site according to Deuteronomy 34:6. See Hobbs 1998, 21.

⁸⁰ DeVries 2003, 209-210; See also Carroll 1969: 400-415;

⁸¹ For the multiple allusions to the Moses' Sinai tradition in the Transfiguration, see Evans 2001, 34. This interpretation of Jesus is found in other parts of the NT (John 5:46; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22; 7:37) suggesting that this was a well-established element of the Jesus traditions in the Early Church.

There are additional extensive resemblances between specific Markan episodes and the biographies of these OT figures, not least in miracle stories. First, the parallels between the bread multiplication miracles of Elisha and Jesus have long been recognised (6:30–44 cf., 2 Kings 4:42–44).⁸² In both cases, the prophet asks others to feed a large group of people with a ridiculously insufficient quantity of bread. The assistant(s) question(s) how this can be done, bread is multiplied, all eat to satisfaction, and there are leftovers.

Second, Jesus' exorcism of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter (Mk 7:24–30), Elijah's interaction with the widow of Zarephath, and Elisha's resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son (7:24–30; 1 Kgs 17:8–24; 2 Kgs 4:18–37) are also connected.⁸³ These are the only instances in biblical tradition in which a prophet, while temporarily sojourning in the Tyre/Sidon area, effects a miracle on the child of a foreign woman who engages him in dialogue. In each case, the husband is either absent or unimportant to the story.⁸⁴

Third, the calling of the disciples by Jesus also echoes that of Elisha by Elijah (1:16–20; 1 Kgs 19:19–21). In both cases, those who are called leave family and business to become first assistants, and then successors to their new master.⁸⁵ The importance of the links between the gospel traditions and the biographies of Elijah and Elisha finds further expression especially in Luke (e.g., Luke 4:24–27; 7:11–17).⁸⁶

Since allusions and resemblances to episodes and aspects of the biographies of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha play such a significant role in the depiction of Jesus' miracles as that of the greatest prophet like Moses, Mark can also use key differences as communicative devices

⁸² France 2002, 262; Guelich 1998, 336; Van Cangh 2008, 89.

⁸³ Donahue and Harrington 2002, 236; Marcus 2008, 467.

⁸⁴ The influence of this set of OT stories on Mark is also reflected in the demon's reply to Jesus in Mark 1:24 which curiously echoes the words of the Shunammite in 3 Kingdoms 17:18 LXX. Both ask, "What is there between you and me/us" and whether the prophet has come to deal harm (Donahue and Harrington 2002, 80; Edwards 2002, 57).

⁸⁵ A. Collins 2007, 48. The disciples of Jesus can only be successors in a limited sense. There are, however, tantalizing points of connection. Thus, while the timing of the giving of the Spirit of Jesus has traditionally been interpreted in relation to the cross, it is also appropriate timing as part of a succession rite (cf. 2 Kgs 2:9, 15; John 20:21–22). The pre-eminence of Peter may be compared to that of Elisha over the other prophets. The depiction of Peter's significantly increased miraculous activity in Acts also recalls that of Elisha after Elijah's departure.

⁸⁶ Hays 2017, 237–443.

fraught with Christological significance. For instance, the language of Mark 6:48 alludes to God's passing by to reveal himself to Moses and Elijah at Horeb (Exod 34:6; 1 Kgs 19:11).⁸⁷ The narrator ensures that the connection to the "prophet like Moses" is not missed by indicating that this miracle should be interpreted in relation to the feeding miracle (v. 52).⁸⁸ Thus, and however it may be interpreted, it is certainly a bold twist that it is now Jesus who is passing by. The narrator teases the audience by stressing that the disciples did not understand the point yet, without stating what that point is. Point however there clearly is.

Another example of a difference perhaps intended to foster Christological interpretation is that unlike Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, Jesus needs no symbol of mediated power at all (staff or mantle), reinforcing the impression that he wields miracle power directly at a level that exceeds theirs: his own body is the symbol of power.⁸⁹ Moreover, Jesus' radiance on the Mount of Transfiguration alludes to that of Moses when he met God (Exod 34:29–35). Moses' shining face symbolised his close relationship to God and eminent status as prophet, yet this is exceeded by Jesus' radiance.

From all the evidence above, one can safely conclude that the "OT prophet like Moses" biographical traditions had a significant formative role in relation to miracle stories in Mark. Both resemblances and differences are used to depict Jesus in relation to these prototypical figures of the past.

3.3.3.4 Jesus the Eschatological Healer

However important as formative sources for Jesus' miracles the OT biographies of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha are, they cannot explain the eschatological aspect of his miracles and his exorcisms in Mark. It is the fusion with Isaianic traditions and intertestamental

⁸⁷ Guelich 1998, 346-47, 50.

⁸⁸ In all gospels but Luke, the crossing and feeding miracle are told in immediate succession (Matt 14:13-33; Mk 6:30-52; John 6:1-21). Although Jesus' feeding miracle resembles most that of Elisha rather than Moses, John makes the connection to the prophet like Moses explicit and indicates (like Mark for the Transfiguration) that Jesus is greatest (John 6:14, 31-33, 43, 48-50).

⁸⁹ This is not negated by the fact that it is by touching Jesus' clothing that the bleeding woman is healed in Mark 5:27-31, on the contrary. The role of his clothing is not paramount in this story and is unique to it. Moreover, even in this case, Jesus does not actively use his clothing like Elijah his mantle. The closest analogy to the function of Jesus' clothing in Mark 5:27-31 may be that of Elisha's bones in 2 Kings 13:21. The emphasis is not on the medium of power but on power of the individual that is such that it can even extend to objects related to him (cf., Acts 5:15; 19:12).

interpretations that contribute these essential aspects of Jesus' miracles and biography to depict him as an eschatological prophet and Messiah.

As with the prophet like Moses theme, Mark mostly signifies the derivative relationship of Jesus' miracles to Isaiah through allusions rather than explicit commentary. This begins with the introduction of the narrative as what is written in Isaiah (1:2a). Jesus is then announced as the one who would baptise ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (Mk 1:8). Although left unexplained at this point, this at the very least connects the significance of Jesus' ministry to the promises of eschatological outpouring of the Spirit announced by the OT prophets (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26–27; 37:14; Joel 2:28–29). It is immediately followed by the descent of the Spirit on Jesus (1:10), an endowment which is conventionally associated with the expectation that the receiver will subsequently perform feats in the power of God. Jesus is then designated as the well-pleasing Son (1:11) with the language of Isaiah 42:6–7 LXX and is thereby associated with the Servant of YHWH chosen to be “a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon.”

Jesus is then charismatically raptured to the wilderness (1:12–13). The evocation of the Moses and Elijah experiences reinforces the expectation that wonders are to follow. He then begins proclaiming the Isaianic εὐαγγέλιον of the kingdom (1:14–15), and immediately starts calling disciples, teaching and performing miracles and exorcisms on a large scale (1:16–34). Thus, in just a few lines, the evangelist has set the stage to interpret Jesus' activity, including his miracles, in relation to the Isaianic gospel with Jesus as YHWH's Servant. “In Jesus the salvation promised by Isaiah has arrived.”⁹⁰

The strongest indicator of the formative role of Isaiah in shaping both concept of miracle and miracle stories in Mark is the latter's interplay between blindness and deafness that can physically be cured by Jesus' miracles and as metaphors of spiritual obduracy in Jesus' teaching. Blindness and deafness as metaphors of obduracy is a prevalent Isaianic theme (Isa 6:9–10; 29:10–12; 56:10; 30:20–21; 42:18–20; 43:8).⁹¹ However, it is often unclear whether references to the cure of the blind and the deaf should be understood literally

⁹⁰ Hooker 2005, 37–38; c.f., Dowd 1995, 136.

⁹¹ Clements considers that it is one of two themes that bind the whole of Isaianic traditions together (1985, 95–113). The importance of these metaphors in Isaiah has been scrutinised but beyond passing suggestions of a link with the promises of eschatological physical healing of the blind and deaf, how the two relate has largely been left undefined. See Dowd 1995, 133–43; Carroll 1997, 79–93; Marcus 2004, 34–35; Robinson 1998, 181–183.

or metaphorically. For instance, although Isaiah 35:5-6 seems at first glance to refer to the physical cure of the blind, deaf, lame, and mute, the high degree of correspondence with Isaiah 42:1-20, for instance, and the indications in the latter that blindness is in fact metaphorical (esp. verses 18-20) casts doubt on whether it is question of the physical conditions at all. YHWH's servant "opens" the eyes of the blind in 42:7 and in the immediately following oracle, the blind are *led* and *guided* on a way they do not know through the wilderness (v. 16). In Isaiah 35:6 the lame leap as deer presumably because they are cured, but in 33:23 they participate in the plundering of God's enemies (note also the tension with the very next verse "and no inhabitant will say, "I am sick").

In Mark, this ambiguous relationship is interpreted as acted metaphors: physical cures are signs of the kingdom which signify the need for spiritual obduracy to be cured as well. This can be seen at several points in the gospel. First, the description of the beneficiary of the miracle as *μογιῶλον* (speech impaired, v. 32) in 7:32-37 is significant because this hapax legomenon only occurs otherwise in Isaiah 35:6-7 (LXX).⁹² The acclamation of Jesus as making "the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (v. 37) picks up the early allusion to Isaiah 42:6-7 and resonates thematically with Isaiah's special interest in the eschatological healing of the blind, deaf, mute, and lame (29:18, 32:4; 35:6-7).⁹³

Second, in Mark 8:17-28, the rebuke of the disciples for failing to perceive the meaning of a miracle is expressed in terms of Isaiah 6:9-10. The fact that this very text was already invoked to explain Jesus' use of parable to keep the obdurate in the dark (4:11-12) underscores the importance of the theme for Jesus' ministry as a whole, as well as in relation to his miracles.⁹⁴

Third, the line between the physical and metaphorical is also blurred in the healing of the deaf and blind men in Mark 7:32-37 and 8:22-26. These two passages stand out among Jesus' miracles in Mark as the only ones in which Jesus uses a healing medium (in both cases, saliva). The two miracles are also linked by common wording ("And they brought to him, and begged him to, and he spat") and other elements (request to touch the individual,

⁹² Marcus 2008, 472.

⁹³ A. Collins 2007, 375; Hays 2017, 73-5. As illustration of the distinctive importance of these themes in Isaiah, almost half of all OT occurrences of the relatively rare term עִוִּיר (blind) occur in Isaiah (11 times). A similar observation applies to שָׁמֵן (deaf, 5 out 9 OT occurrences in Isaiah).

⁹⁴ C.f., John 9:1-40; 12:39-40.

taking aside for secrecy).⁹⁵ As noted earlier, the first of these passages alludes to Isaiah 35:6-7 (LXX). The second is also the only time in Mark where, strangely, healing is not immediate, but progressive. This miracle comes on the heels of Jesus' use of Isaiah 6:9-10 to rebuke his disciples for their lack of spiritual perception (8:14-21) and is immediately followed by Peter's insightful confession of Jesus as the Christ (8:27-30). These special features draw attention to the symbolic meaning of these miracles: the journey from spiritual dullness to perception is compared to recovery of sight and hearing.⁹⁶ Even though not all of Jesus' healings pertain to blindness and deafness, the cure of other ills are also signs of salvation and of the arrival of the kingdom that are to be perceived and that signify the role of Jesus in opening the eyes of faith.⁹⁷

3.3.3.5 Jesus the Eschatological Liberator

The only Markan episode in which Jesus offers some interpretation of his exorcisms is the Beelzebul controversy which depicts them as warfare against Satan, the strong man being bound whose house is being plundered (3:19-30).⁹⁸ Jesus' description of his exorcisms as undermining of Satan's βασιλεία is revealing (3:24). It reflects the belief that Satan's rule is in direct conflict with God's and is being defeated by Jesus. Part of "the secret of the kingdom of God" is that Satan was also actively seeking to undermine the proclamation of the word (Mk 4:10, 15).

The exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac is the most detailed account of exorcism in Mark and several of its details command attention. First, whatever else is made of the naming of the Gerasene demons as "legion," it is at the very least a military term that reinforces the conception of possessions and exorcisms as warfare. The victim is depicted as a prisoner (shackled with chains), alienated, and severely afflicted. Exorcism is most clearly represented here in a way that evokes the release of captives that is so frequently associated with the cure of ills in Isaiah. The symbolism of the scene may extend to the location outside of Israel, the

⁹⁵ Hooker 1991, 197.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 197-198; France 2002, 322-324.

⁹⁷ Isaiah also associates other cures with eschatological salvation but particularly stresses blindness and deafness as metaphors of obduracy.

⁹⁸ The parallel Synoptic episodes attribute this activity to the Son of David (Matt 12:23), ascribe it to the power of Spirit (Matt 12:28a), and explain that it heralds the coming of the Kingdom of God (Matt 12:28b; Luke 11:20).

theme of uncleanness, the hostile attitude of the Gentiles, and the commissioning of the freed man to be, as it were, “a light to the nations.”

While it is important to read Mark on its own terms, supplementary evidence from Matthew and Luke also indicate that Jesus’ exorcisms were understood not just in relation to OT eschatological hopes generally, but to Isaiah most specifically. Matthew adds to Mark’s account of the evening of healings *and exorcisms* in Capernaum (Mk 1:32-34) the interpretation “This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, ‘He took our infirmities and bore our diseases’” (Matthew 8:17 cf. 12:15-21). Jesus’ reply to John’s messengers associates the preaching of good news with the healing of the blind, the deaf, and the lame *and exorcisms* as proof that he is the one who was to come in a way that distinctively combines major components of Isaianic eschatological hopes (Matt 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23; cf. Luke 9:11). In Luke 4:16-21, Jesus claims that his activity fulfils Isaiah 61:1-2. It is difficult not to equate the mention of “release of captives” (v. 18) to exorcisms as Luke later describes an exorcised woman as freed from Satanic bondage and captivity (Luke 13:16). Through exorcism, Jesus and his disciples trample over the power of Satan, “the enemy” (Luke 10:17-19). Thus, the evidence from Matthew and Luke make explicit and agree with this interpretation of exorcisms in Mark.

In Isaiah, the captives to be released were the victims of warfare and conquest. However, Daniel may have contributed to associating them with demonic oppression since it links the captivity to a struggle between Michael and “the prince of Persia” (10:12-14, 20-21 c.f., 8:10), refers to the intervention of holy watchers in the affairs of Babylon (4:13, 23), and depicts the judgement of the fourth beast in terms that may suggest demonic involvement and eschatological denouement (7:7-14).

The reinterpretation of release from captivity in relation to Satan and demons became more pronounced in the Second Temple period. Since the reinterpretation of biblical history gave demonic forces a central role in the origin and continued promotion of evil and sin in creation, eschatological salvation would have, of necessity, to deal decisively with these. Indeed, the Enochic traditions about the Watchers and their offspring the giants contain most of the major elements that are assumed in Mark’s representation of demon-possession and Jesus’ exorcisms.⁹⁹ Demons are evil spirits working under a ruler: Satan/Beelzebul in Mark,

⁹⁹ There are indications that Daniel’s apocalyptic and eschatological outlook was also influenced by Enochic traditions as well (Nickelsburg 2001, 68).

also Mastema, Semhazah, or Beliar in Second Temple literature (cf. 1 En 1-36 esp. 15,8-16.1; Jub. 10.5).¹⁰⁰ These unclean spirits work against the welfare of mankind, cause ungodliness, and are believed to cause blindness and illness (Jub. 10.2, 11-12).¹⁰¹ Imprisoned spirits await a final judgement while the eradication of Satan and his influence is portrayed as a blessing of the last days and manifestation of the kingdom of God. The Messiah will release captives in the last days and free the “sons of light” from “Belial and the spirits of his lot” (11Q13).

Thus, the release of captives was already interpreted metaphorically in Qumran and connected to demonic/satanic oppression. However, it would appear that its specific interpretation as exorcism from individual possession is original to gospel traditions. This would have been a natural and plausible elaboration of the ideas that germinated in the intertestamental period; ideas that, once again, indisputably show that Isaiah and Daniel prevailed particularly on eschatological imagination and messianic conceptions of the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, Jesus’ miracles and exorcisms represent the fusion of elements from (1) the prophet like Moses OT traditions, (2) the Isaianic eschatological conception of miracle as cure for ills and spiritual obduracy, and (3) Second Temple interpretation of the release of captives as liberation from the oppression of Satan and demons. These claims to fame correspond to the blend of roles that characterises the Markan Jesus as Messiah. Although largely unprecedented, this is a thoroughly Jewish representation and interpretation of the significance of Jesus and his career in keeping with the purposes of JB.

3.4 Disciple-Making

According to Robbins, Jesus’ disciple-gathering is portrayed on the basis of GR model of teacher-disciple relationship, most evident in the Socratic traditions. Although he recognises contributions from the OT and some Jewish terminology, he argues that the call of the disciples right after the summary of Jesus’ teaching patterns that of Socrates to Euthydemus (*Mem.* 4.2.1, 40).¹⁰² Moreover, the διδάσκαλος-μαθητής terminology is not used to describe a teacher-student relationship in the LXX as it is in Mark. Although the terms are

¹⁰⁰ Eve 2002, 149.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 163.

¹⁰² Robbins 2009, 85-86.

applied to Moses-Joshua and Elijah-Elisha in the adaptations of Philo and Josephus, he argues that the biblical texts present them as servant-successors, not disciples.¹⁰³

However, these arguments cannot hold. First, Robbins placed too much weight on the importance of the terms διδάσκαλος and μαθητής as indications of the origins of disciple-making in Mark at the expense of other evidence. Indeed, Jesus is also called ῥαββί, a term used interchangeably with διδάσκαλος in gospel traditions (Matt 23:8; John 1:38) but that cannot, as Robbins recognises, reflect a rabbinical model. The term διδάσκαλος may even only be the evangelists' translation of ῥαββί, since it is unlikely that the Jewish disciples and interlocutors of Jesus would have preferred to address him in Greek and using a Greek title. Thus, there is not a direct correlation between terminology and a specific model of discipleship.

Second, Jesus' relationship to the disciples corresponds much better to the Jewish prophet-successor than to the GR teacher-student model. Jesus' disciples are not students in a scholastic sense of the term, but trainees, who are trained to "proclaim the message and to have authority to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14-15). Nor is Jesus a scholastic kind of teacher like philosophers and rabbis were; in fact, his "teaching" is inseparable from charismatic authority (1:22, 27).

Third, Robbins overstates his case with regard to the impossibility of an OT background. The verb מלך (teach, instruct) is used to describe Moses' activity repeatedly, especially in Deuteronomy (e.g., 4:1, 5). Mark compares the relationship between Jesus and his disciples to that of Moses and Joshua (9:38).¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Jesus' calling of disciples closely parallels that of Elisha by Elijah (1:16-20; 1 Kgs 19:19-21). Jesus' favourite phrase to call disciples ("δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου," Mk 1:17) only appears in biblical tradition in Elisha's mouth (4 Kgdms 6:19). The words "ἀκολουθήσω ὀπίσω σου" used by Elisha to accept becoming Elijah's disciple (3 Kgdms 19:20) is the same expression Jesus uses to refer to others becoming his disciples (Mk 8:34).¹⁰⁵ This makes very good sense, since Jesus is presented in the tradition of the prophet like Moses.

Additionally, Byrskog has demonstrated that there is more that indicates a master-disciple instructional relationship in the Elijah/Elisha biblical narratives than may appear at

¹⁰³ Ibid., 97-100.

¹⁰⁴ The disciples' reaction to and interaction with Jesus concerning the 'strange exorcist' mimics that of Joshua concerning two men prophesying with Moses in Numbers 11:28-30 (Witherington 2001, 271).

¹⁰⁵ A. Collins 2007, 48.

first glance. First, Elisha called Elijah “father,” an honorific title used to show deference toward a teacher. Correspondingly, OT bands of prophets are repeatedly referred to as “the sons of the prophets” reflecting a hierarchy in which these prophets accompany, assist, and serve a head prophet.¹⁰⁶ Second, the sons of the prophets are described as “sitting in front” of the head prophet, a posture associated with receiving instruction. Third, although the reference to Elisha as “he who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah” in 2 Kings 3:11 seems at first sight to denote the function of a servant, it is clear that in its context it is meant to underscore Elisha’s credential as a former disciple and close associate of Elijah. Thus, while Philo and Josephus indisputably adapted terminology to GR standards and presented the biblical Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha relationships by analogy to GR roles, other Jewish sources interpreted them as those of master-disciples as well (*Sipre* Num. 27:18; 2 Kgs 2:12 in b. Sanh. 68a., etc.).¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, one must not discount the influence of Isaiah in this regard also. While discipleship is not a prominent theme, the cryptic reference to disciples in Isaiah 8:16 is significant in its context and in relation to the rest of the Isaianic Corpus. It probably does not refer to a band of prophets such as those associated with Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, but it refers at the very least to a distinct group that were to receive instruction (תּוֹרָה) by the prophet. In addition, the תַּלְמִיד (taught, trained) is someone who listens to instruction and relays it in 50:4 as well. More importantly, the small community identified in Isaiah 8:11-15 is a group urged to fear God and demarcate themselves from the people. This smaller group was to become a minority “remnant” who believes and responds to the prophet’s message, God’s promises of future salvation, and who will be saved from the judgment facing the otherwise unresponsive nation (c.f., Isa 10:20-22; 66:22-24).

There are multiple indications that this Isaianic perspective on the nation influenced that of the Markan Jesus and his calling of disciples. Those who refuse to listen to Jesus are explicitly compared to the hypocrites in danger of eschatological judgement in Isaiah (Mk 7:6; 9:42-49 cf. Isa 29:13; 66:24). Jesus too must speak to those who have ears but won’t hear, eyes but won’t perceive (Mk 4:11-12; Isa 6:9-10) and who have corrupted Temple

¹⁰⁶ Byrskog 1994, 37-38. See 1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1. A related passage is the reference to the father of the prophets in 1 Samuel 10:12. See Klein 1998, 93. In my view, the evidence from 1 Samuel is a significant oversight in Hobbs’ analysis of the expression בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים (sons of the prophets). Cf. Hobbs 1998, 25-27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; Hengel 2005, 17 n. 4.

worship (Mk 11:17; Isa 56:7). Like the **לְמִנְיָם** of Isaiah 8:11-16, the μαθηταῖς of Jesus also stand out from the whole people. Jesus' disciple-making activity instantiates the remnant of Israel, as the symbolic number of apostles which alludes to the twelve tribes of Israel signals. These disciples, no longer the whole nation, are the "elect" (Mk 13:20, 22, 27) out of a "faithless generation" (Mk 9:19). As in Isaiah 8:16, they receive instruction and are entrusted with a vision of the future to which they must cling as hope (Mk 13).

This eschatological element reflects a broadly similar outlook with Qumran's elect community under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness and most sharply distinguishes the notion of discipleship as one encounters it in Mark from that of the rabbis or GR philosophers.

Thus, disciple-making in Mark is also a direct product of the depiction of Jesus as the eschatological prophet like Moses and the Isaianic Messiah whose proclamation of the kingdom requires the reconfiguration of a new people of God. It is no longer the fellow Israelite who is brother, but he who does the will of God, that is, who follows Jesus (3:33-35; 10:29-30).

4. Conclusion

The analysis proposed in this chapter has demonstrated the pervasive and formative influence of the OTBs of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, and of messianically-interpreted and related OT texts, particularly from Isaiah and Daniel, on the biographical portrayal of Jesus in Mark. Through Jesus' parables, logia, miracles, and disciple-making – that is, his claims to fame – Mark effectively portrays Jesus as the one who fulfils messianic expectations attached to the Son of Man, YHWH's Servant, and the prophet like Moses. In so doing, he has produced what one would expect of a JB: expression of the significance of the subject in terms of the subject's impact on the faith of Israel and the nation's sacred history.

CHAPTER 8: THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD

As expected in biography, Mark concludes with an account of the subject's death and its immediate aftermath. However, the Passion Narrative (PN) is not merely the story of how Jesus' life and career ended. It unveils aspects of Jesus' identity and mission which had only been hinted at up until then and in so doing, provides a climactic completion to Mark's biographical portrait.

What follows will demonstrate that interpreting the PN through the lens of GRB and other GR literature does not illuminate but rather obscures the biographical role of this section. The PN continues to work out the Jewish biographical representation of the significance of Jesus as prophet like Moses, Son of David, and YHWH's Suffering Servant.

1. The Passion Narrative and Greco-Roman Biography

Probably the two most detailed attempts to argue that Mark's PN should be read in light of GR cultural values and literary conventions are those of Frickenschmidt and Adela Collins.¹ In Collins' view, the PN emulates the genre of the *exitus illustrium virorum* and *teleutai*, the death stories of famous men. Xenophon's and Plato's accounts of Socrates' death, which exemplify "a noble death in accordance with the heroic ideal," are the most influential exemplar of the genre.²

Two main arguments are used to contend that Mark follows the model of *teleutai* in its depiction of Jesus' last days. First, the Last Supper is interpreted as a farewell meal. Judas' betrayal, the role of Peter, James, and John as Jesus' inner circle, the disciples' desertion at his arrest, and Peter's denials are all interpreted as evaluations of the loyalty of Jesus' "friends" in his most desperate circumstances.³ This is regarded as equivalent to the farewell meals of GRB in which the subject spends his last moments in intimate conversation with

¹ Frickenschmidt 1997, 398-414; A. Collins 2007, 627-639.

² A. Collins 2007, 629-632.

³ Frickenschmidt 1997, 402-404.

family, friends, and close associates (e.g., Plut. *Pomp.* 73; *Brut.* 40; *Cat. Min.* 67-69).⁴ It also invites comparison to Socrates' last hours which were devoted to interaction with several of his students.

Second, Jesus' "serene acceptance of God's will" at the conclusion of the Gethsemane scene and his refusal to be drugged to alleviate pain on the cross are interpreted as noble deportment and heroic composure in the face of death based on the Socratic model.⁵

Moreover, Collins and Frickenschmidt point to a number of situational similarities between death accounts in GR biographies and other literature and the PN. This includes the frequency of conspiracies and betrayals in these accounts. There is similarity between Mark 14:1-2, 10-11 and the "motif" of waiting for the opportune time in conspiracies (e.g., Nep. *Alc.* 3f.).⁶ The role of the woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany is likened to that of Cornelia's weeping at the approach of Pompey's certain death (Plut. *Pomp.* 78).⁷ Like Jesus, Eumenes is handed over to enemies by his own people (Nep. *Eum.* 17), Dion is betrayed by a favourite companion (Plut. *Dion.* 54 ff.), and Cicero by someone whom he had previously defended in court (Plut. *Cic.* 48).⁸ A mock trial can be found in the biography of Phocion (Nep. *Phoc.* 4).⁹

Moreover, Jesus' dialogue with Pilate is held to be based on the model of the *cognitio extra ordinem*, a Roman judicial proceeding that does not require a formal charge.¹⁰ The mockery from the soldiers who disguise Jesus and hail him as king is believed to have been influenced by similar stories in which crowds or soldiers dress up and mock an individual who is, or represents, a ruler (Philo, *Flacc.* 6 §§36-39; Suet. *Vit.* 17; Plut. *Crass.* 32).¹¹

⁴ Ibid., 402.

⁵ A. Collins 2007, 635-636.

⁶ Frickenschmidt 1997, 399.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 401.

⁹ Ibid., 405.

¹⁰ A. Collins 2007, 636; Frickenschmidt 1997, 410-413.

¹¹ A. Collins 2007, 636; Frickenschmidt 1997, 412.

Finally, the phenomena that accompany Jesus' death and the account of the resurrection are compared to occasional reports of prodigies at the death of a famous person and of body disappearance that imply translation to heaven in GR literature.¹²

These arguments, however, hardly constitute a convincing case. First, several of the broad resemblances mentioned above are not unique to GR literature, and some can be found in OT narratives as well. For instance, like Judas, David and Jonathan used a sign as part of their covert interaction which Saul perceived as conspiracy (1 Sa 20:18–23; 22:8) and Joab kissed Amasa before killing him (2 Sa 20:9–10). Instances of a hero handed over to enemies by his own people, betrayed by a friend, or of conspirators waiting for the opportune time can hardly be considered evidence of GR influence.¹³

Most of these resemblances only indicate similar historical circumstances. The depiction of the Roman cohort mocking Jesus corresponds to the increasing role Roman troops played in hailing popular Imperators, ridiculing fallen leaders, and their general hostility toward Jews whom they considered troublesome. Yet the soldiers' mockery should not be read in isolation from the treatment Jesus also endured from fellow Jews (Mk 14:65; 15:29–32). Together, these scenes contribute to the pathos of Jesus' trial and condemnation, depicting him unjustly treated and condemned, and victim of a conjunction of shameful impulses from all parties involved. A contrast is thus established between Jesus' willingness to die for others and the wickedness of those who were directly involved in his condemnation, especially the authorities and their representatives.

As for Pilate's use of the *cognitio extra ordinem* procedure, no particular literary derivation is required to explain why a Roman official would be using a Roman judicial procedure when presiding over a trial.

Moreover, Jesus' deportment does not correspond to the model of the noble and heroic death. His signs of distress in Gethsemane, repeated requests to have the cup pass him by, and cry of dereliction on the cross are irreconcilable with the calm acceptance, even welcoming of death, that characterise Socrates, Cato Minor, or even Eleazar in 2 Maccabees. Collins attempts to circumvent the import of these differences by insisting there are

¹² A. Collins 2007, 637, 638.

¹³ C.f., Genesis 37:26–28; Judges 15:9–13; 1 Samuel 23:12, 19–20.

nonetheless indications that his death was to serve as example.¹⁴ However, it is not Jesus' composure that Mark presents as model: Jesus calls his disciples to imitate him in the willingness to sacrifice all even to death to serve God and follow in discipleship, but not to welcome death with noble deportment or philosophical detachment.

Furthermore, Mark gives no indication that Jesus' disciples are playing the part of friends in a GR farewell meal. Unlike friends and families in such scenes, the twelve are still oblivious to what is about to happen even during the Last Supper. They are not present to accompany and comfort Jesus in his last moments.¹⁵ No one pleads with him to seek escape. Jesus does not discourse on his life or offer a reflexion on virtue and how to welcome death nobly. Moreover, and in contrast to the distress of Pompey's wife and Socrates' and Cato's family and friends, neither the woman who anoints Jesus, nor anyone else weeps for Jesus in Mark's version of the PN!¹⁶

Finally, the primary context for interpreting Judas' betrayal is not GR cultural conceptions of friendship, but as the allusion to Psalm 40:10 LXX in Mark 14:18-20 indicates, the paradigmatic sufferings of David. The accent is not on the moral failure of the betrayer as much as it is on the plight of the righteous who is persecuted even by some in his entourage. Peter, likewise, does not stand in the role of Jesus' "best friend." Mark never brings attention to friendship as part of what characterises the relationship of Jesus to his disciples. By analogy to the privileged role of the three, Peter stands in the role of the leader, who like his peers, had yet to see his good resolutions as disciple tested by the rigours of persecution. One betrays, most desert, he denies. Yet in the end, they are restored not as friends but as disciples (16:7). This provides a challenge to Mark's audience to consider their own past, present, or future behaviour when faced with persecution, rather than whether they would prove loyal friends during crises.

¹⁴ A. Collins 2007, 754-5.

¹⁵ Even in Gethsemane, the disciples do not realise what is about to transpire and sleep to the end of the scene (14:32-42). Jesus' words "I am deeply grieved, even to death" (v. 34) could signify that he was seeking comfort in their presence. However, this possibility is discounted by the fact that he removes himself away from them to pray and rebukes them not for failing to pray for him but failing to pray for themselves (v. 38). It is best to interpret Jesus' choice to take the three with him at this time in light of the same on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:2) and as indication of their leadership role.

¹⁶ Peter is the only associate of Jesus who weeps during the Markan PN (14:72) but he weeps for himself rather than for Jesus.

Thus, neither the theme of loyalty in friendship, nor that of the noble death model, nor any of the other alleged parallels discussed correspond to or illuminate Mark's PN. There is yet to be shown how the concluding section of Mark can be read as GRB without forced interpretation and ignoring of substantial contrary evidence.

2. The Passion Narrative as Jewish Biography

2.1 Introduction

Ancient JB had little use for extended death accounts. Its outlook was that God vindicates and blesses the righteous and this usually meant dying "full of years" and at a "good old age" (e.g., Gen 15:15; 25:8; 35:29; 1 Chr 29:28). As a result, one cannot find in JB a story like Socrates' or Cato Minor's in which virtue is powerless in the face of corruption, and only fortitude, dignity, and ideals held to the end can seem to transcend death and not leave the last word to injustice.¹⁷ There are a few OT stories in which the righteous dies tragically (e.g., Gen 4:4-8; 2 Chr 24:20-21) but these are exceptions rather than the rule. Even the story of Job, despite the questions it raises about justice and the lot of the righteous, concludes with a blessed Job who dies "old and full of days" (42:17).

It is in the intertestamental period that Judaism changed its outlook on this question. Torture and executions of Jews who would not compromise their faith under Seleucid rule led to the recognition that righteousness was not incompatible with, and might even lead to, tragic death. In such cases, vindication was to await the afterlife and the resurrection of the just.

Since there is not much to recount about peaceful deaths, it is not surprising that there is little besides mention of the deaths of the patriarchs, Joshua, or David in their biographies. However, it is significant that the only noteworthy end of life accounts in OTB are those of Moses and Elijah. Thus, Jesus' resurrection makes a further contribution to the gospel's claim that he is the ultimate prophet like Moses. Still, Moses' and Elijah's deaths correspond to the older outlook on the death of the righteous, whereas Jesus' suffering and death reflect the new paradigm. Since righteousness now includes willingness to die, there is no contradiction but rather congruence between the agonising experience of suffering and death, the struggles

¹⁷ Cf. Burridge 1992, 160.

in Gethsemane, the cry of dereliction on the cross, and the description of Jesus as righteous and divinely approved in Mark.

Yet the gospel tradition goes further than depicting the godliness of the righteous ready to suffer and die for God such as is portrayed in *2 Maccabees*. The Maccabean tradition presented Jews with a model of uncompromising faith destined to inspire other Jews to be ready to do the same. The ideal was more important than the persons whose deaths exemplified it. The PN, however, puts the thesis forward that not only Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, despite what happened to him, but that his suffering and death are indispensable to understand his identity and the significance of his career. Unlike the death stories of Socrates or Cato Minor, Mark does not leave the option open to consider Jesus' death as a regrettable turn of events and sad end to his biography.

The observations above have important consequences for how one may evaluate the PN's relationship to JB. First, since death narratives are largely irrelevant in OTB, they have no conventional JB form(s) to which the PN may be compared.¹⁸ Second, the PN has too different a perspective from the death accounts of Maccabean Jewish martyrs to follow their form. What will be found instead is that Mark's approach to the events of Passion Week reflects a hermeneutic similar to that already observed so far in the gospel: they are depicted and read in relation to OT prototypical figures and related, messianically-interpreted, texts.

2.2 The Passion as Biographical Climax

So far in Mark, Jesus has been described rather triumphally. Despite opposition from leaders, misunderstandings from disciples, and signs that many in the crowds remain outsiders to the mysteries of the kingdom of God, Jesus amazes through his displays of divine power, the authority of his words, and the way he interacts with crowds and individuals. However, had the story concluded that he lived and died at a good old age, leaving disciples who continued in his teachings to this day, one would be left with the depiction of a powerful prophet, but certainly not the Messiah of Israel's eschatological hopes. It would be an underwhelming and unconvincing conclusion to the narrator's claim to tell the story of the Christ (1:1), God's well-pleasing Son (1:11; 9:7), and last envoy to Israel (12:6). The

¹⁸ At best one may draw an analogy between the last words of the biblical heroes before their deaths and those of Jesus during the last meal. However, Mark does not depict Jesus' last words to his disciples in this register like John 17 does.

kingdom of God, it would seem, would have come with a fanfare and then quietly retired. It would have been even worse after all that Mark has claimed, if the conclusion merely was that Jesus had proved to be yet another promising figure who was put to death by the ungodly.

Instead, Mark has carefully prepared his audience to expect that the revelation of Jesus' identity and significance has yet to reach its climax. By keeping Jesus' coming to Jerusalem for the very end, Mark has allowed several threads to converge on this final chapter of the story. Leaders have been portrayed in opposition to Jesus and he has predicted that they will mistreat and kill him. Then Jesus confronts them on their own turf, causing a stir in the Temple, denouncing them as robbers (11:15-19) and predicting that the holy precincts will be destroyed (13:2; 14:58). Finally, the conflict escalates as the leaders increase their public attempts to discredit Jesus (11:28; 12:13-34) and his words likewise challenge them (11:29-12:12, 38-40).

As Jesus moves toward Jerusalem, allusions to the Son of David suddenly multiply. Jesus is hailed as such by the blind man outside Jericho (10:47-48). The crowd's acclamation of Jesus, as he enters the Holy City reprises the words of Psalm 118:25-26 with the significant addition "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David" (Mk 11:9-10). Jesus himself then teases the crowd (and gospel audience) with a riddle: How can the exalted figure of Psalm 110:1 be also David's Son (12:35-37)?¹⁹ The question of Jesus' relationship to David has come to the fore.

In addition, hints have also been given to prepare the audience to interpret Jesus' suffering and death as part of the divine plan. Jesus has come "to give his life a ransom for many" (10:45). The Son of Man "must" (δεῖ) suffer "as is written of him" (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34); this is "of God" (8:33). Moreover, suffering and death will not be how the story ends. The Son of Man will rise on the third day and yet come "in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (8:38). There awaits a throne after Jesus' baptismal cup (10:37-40). Predictions of a future and Parousia that look well beyond Jesus' death have been placed just before the beginning of the PN (13:24-37).

Through all this, the narrator has raised tantalizing questions: Could Jesus be the Son of David and if so, how is this to be understood? What is the place of his suffering and death

¹⁹ Hays 2017, 47-57.

in in the divine plan? How was this “written”? How does this fit with the claim that Jesus is the Son of God and that his story is good news? By raising these questions, the narrator has left the audience unsettled about the nature of Jesus’ identity and of his mission. The biography needs its revealing conclusion.

2.3 The Passion as Divine Plan

Three motifs impart the Markan narrative with the overwhelming sense that the Passion fulfilled the divine plan: (1) Jesus’ foreknowledge and announcement of what is to happen and willingness to undergo it, (2) the unfolding of events according a predetermined timetable, and (3) the demonstration that many PN details were prefigured in Scripture.

The PN opens with the indication that “it was two days before the Passover” (14:1). This statement is striking on two counts. First, it is the most precise time marker provided in Mark so far. This is remarkable because what is being so precisely dated, the conjunction of the leaders’ intensified resolve to kill Jesus, the anointing in Bethany, and Judas’ agreement to betray Jesus, does not at first glance seem to warrant such precision. Second, it is the first and only time in Mark that an event is dated in relation to a festival. This provides the gospel audience with hints that both the timing and nature of the festival are essential to the interpretation of the Passion.

Two important pieces of information are then provided. First, the religious leaders are intensifying their efforts to find a way to kill Jesus. Second, the increased determination of the leaders is qualified by the fact that they want to avoid acting on it during the feast. The significance of these elements of timing is brought to light in the next two scenes. The narrative will shortly recount the next significant development in the plot against Jesus as Judas strikes a bargain with the leaders to betray him at an opportune time (ἐνκαίρως, 14:10-11). The intention of these participants in the plot is therefore to act at the earliest convenience after the feast.

However, between these two complementary parts of the plot, the anointing in Bethany is intercalated (14:3-9), an indication that all three sections are to be interpreted together. By contrast to other gospels which draw attention to the disciples (Matt 26:8) or specifically to Judas (John 12:4-5), only Jesus is specifically identified in Mark’s version. This focuses all attention on the import of the woman’s actions, which is that Jesus’ death and burial are in fact imminent and that Jesus, who interprets the anointing, knows it (v. 8).

This signals that despite the part they are to play in the drama, it is not the conspirators' timing that will prevail.²⁰ A greater will is at work in what is about to take place.

The twin episodes in which Jesus sends his disciples on an errand reinforce the sense that all is now proceeding on schedule. Jesus' mount awaited at a precise location at the time of his coming and in set circumstances that include even what its owners would tell the fetching disciples (11:1-7). Later, the disciples are sent to follow the most improbable trail at just the right time to find everything "ready" for the Passover meal and as Jesus "had told them" (14:12-16). Shortly after, during the meal, Jesus reveals that he knows exactly what will transpire: "one of the twelve... one who is dipping bread into the bowl" will betray and the Son of Man will go "as is written of him" (14:17-21). He then foretells that the disciples will all desert him, again, as "is written" (vv. 26-27). Peter will deny precisely three times before the cock crows twice (14:30). In Gethsemane, Jesus is conscious that these are his last hours and it is not the arriving mob, but he, who stirs the disciples from sleep by telling them that "the hour has come" and "the betrayer is at hand" (14:41-42). The sense that everything follows a predetermined timetable is reinforced through Mark's depiction of the events of Jesus' last day as occurring at regular three hours intervals (15:1, 25, 33, 34, 42).²¹

Jesus' mysterious foreknowledge is paired with revelations that the events of the Passion are also prefigured or predicted in the Scriptures. The PN's use of Scriptures as prefigurations of specific circumstances or elements of the story is markedly different from the much broader correspondences established between Jesus' ministry and paradigmatic OT figures or messianically-interpreted scriptural texts in the rest of the gospel. This highlights the particular importance for the narrator to demonstrate that this shocking denouement in Jesus' story also was the fulfilment of Scriptures. The prefiguration in Psalm 41:9 of the betrayal by a close associate is signified through the allusive words "one who is eating with me" and "one is who dipping bread with me the bowl" (14:18, 20). The scattering of the disciples fulfils the scattering of the sheep following the striking of their shepherd in Zechariah 13:7. Jesus' silence during the trial probably alludes to that of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:7, the offer of wine mixed with myrrh to Psalm 69:21, the dividing of his

²⁰ Brooks 1991, 220.

²¹ France 2002, 645.

clothing to Psalm 22:18, the mocking of onlookers to Psalm 22:7, and the cry of dereliction quotes the words of Psalm 22:1.²²

Through these, Mark takes care to present the PN not primarily as what was done to Jesus, but rather as what Jesus did as further fulfilment of his messianic identity and vocation. The suffering and sacrifice of Jesus become just as much a part of his claims to fame as the parables, sayings, miracles, and calling of disciples in the context of the whole biography.

2.4 The Passion as Messianic Vocation

While predetermination, scriptural prediction/prefiguration, and the foreknowledge of Jesus were themes that would undoubtedly have had considerable apologetic value for the Early Church, this must not obscure how these elements contribute to the biographical program set out in the gospel of Mark. Indeed, they allow the evangelist to make significant additions to the portrait of Jesus as fusion of prototypical messianic figures (the Son of David and Suffering Servant) and of what he achieves to redefine God's people on the basis of a new covenant (the prophet like Moses).

2.4.1 *The Prophet like Moses*

The most climactic expression of Jesus' role as prophet like Moses comes in the representation of the mediator of a new covenant drawing comparison to both the Passover and the covenant at Sinai.

The interpretation of Jesus' death in relation to the Passover is anticipated in 10:45, in which Jesus describes his mission as having come to give his life a ransom for many. The fact that the authenticity and meaning of this statement have been so extensively debated points to the unusual and striking character of the *logion* where it appears.²³ The view taken here is that the reference to giving life as ransom is too specific and evocative language to likely refer only to an altruistic lifestyle. Although scholars have been puzzled by its location in this context, it has already been noted that Mark laces the narrative with early hints that await later elucidation. For instance, not only is Jesus' first prediction of his sufferings, death, and

²² Watts 2007, 229-237; Hays 2017, 44-87.

²³ For a summary of issues and main views, see Evans 2001, 119-124.

resurrection left unexplained in the context in which it occurs, but so is the following exhortation to take up one's cross and lose life for his sake (8:31, 34-35).

The collocation of ψυχή, ἀντί, and λύτρον evokes texts in the Torah where the life of sacrificial animals is offered as ransom to avert the death of individuals (Exod 21:30; 30:12; Num 35:31 LXX).²⁴ Most significantly, similar terminology is found in the foundational account of the institution of the Passover which prescribes sacrifice and the use of blood to protect the Israelite firstborn sons from death (Exod 12:1-14, 21-28) and which is shortly thereafter interpreted as ransom (13:11-16).²⁵ The spared firstborn sons now belong to YHWH (13:2) and necessity is laid to redeem (λυτρόω) every firstborn in future generations. This allusive background makes it difficult not to read the words “ἀντί πολλῶν” in 10:45 in relation to the later use of “ὑπὲρ πολλῶν” in 14:24 and the context of the Passover and sacrificial overtone of Jesus' words.²⁶

Elucidation of what 10:45 alludes to is found in the Last Supper scene which picks up the sacrificial language and explicitly interprets Jesus' voluntary death as the basis for a new covenant. Why then does Jesus speak of his blood as “ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν” (poured out for many) instead of “giving his life as ransom” in 14:24? Again, the collocation of key terms is evocative: ἐκχέω and αἷμα are commonly used in the OT to refer either to the sacrificial pouring of blood or to shedding blood, that is, murder (e.g., Gen 9:6; Lev 4:7). Jesus' blood is thus being described as being both shed and poured out. The description of the blood as “τῆς διαθήκης” (of the covenant) richly blends the Passover meal context with Sinai allusions. While the latter event marks the official ratification of the Mosaic covenant with “τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης” (Exod 24:8), the Passover is the emblematic event during which God redeemed Israel: “ἐλυτρώσατο ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραῶ βασιλέως Αἰγύπτου” (Deut 7:8 cf. Deut 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 24:18 LXX).

The fact that the PN is timed in relation to the Passover not only conveys that events took place at a precisely chosen symbolic time, but the mysterious advance preparations of

²⁴ Marcus 2009, 749-750; A. Collins 2007, 499-504.

²⁵ Note the terminology of verse 13 which brings substitution and redemption/ransom in close connection to interpret Passover: “ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀλλάξῃς, λυτρώσῃ αὐτό” (Exod 13:13 LXX).

²⁶ C.f., subsequent discussion of 14:24 in relation to Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Jesus' meal with the disciples also stress its importance as interpretative event.²⁷ The convergence of allusions and terminology in the narrative show that the giving of life in 10:45 and pouring out of blood in 14:24 both refer to the killing of a sacrifice which effects both redemption and covenant, sealed by Jesus' blood ("τὸ αἷμά μου"), that is to be shed. In other words, Mark presents Jesus' death as the New Passover. Thus, and perhaps most emphatically here, Jesus appears yet again as "prophet like Moses," the covenanter at Sinai.

2.4.2 *The Son of David*

The PN also elucidates the earlier statements that the Son of Man "must" undergo great suffering and be killed (8:31). This question is answered by focusing on the Son of David and the Isaianic Servant as prototypical messianic figures and paradigmatic sufferers. Since little is revealed about the Son of David in the Isaianic tradition that so influenced the Markan conception of the Messiah, it is the experiences of David himself, as described in the Davidic psalms, that Mark sets forth as paradigmatic of the sufferings of David's Son.

Again, Mark has prepared the audience by hailing Jesus as Son of David as he came to Jerusalem.²⁸ Here Psalm 117 (LXX) plays a pivotal role. It is first introduced as a positive reference to welcome Jesus as the bringer of "the coming kingdom of our ancestor David" (Mk 11:9-10).²⁹ Soon it is referred to again but this time to point to the prospect of a more sombre experience: the one destined to be the cornerstone must first be rejected by the builders (vv. 22-23; Mk 12:10-11). Hence Mark's use of Psalm 117 (LXX) allows the PN to depict the David paradigm as two-sided: there is glory and blessedness in the rule of David, but also a great deal of opposition and suffering.

Another important hint is provided through the Son of David riddle (12:35-37). Although the logic of the riddle is not immediately obvious, too much evidence militates

²⁷ Despite historical questions about the chronology of Passion Week in relation to the Passover, it is biographically significant that Mark indicates twice that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (14:14, 16).

²⁸ Hooker 1991, 260; Watts 2007, 206.

²⁹ All four gospels have a reference to David and/or the title king during the triumphal entry (cf., France 2002, 434). The application of this text to Jesus may have been encouraged by traditions that describe the son of Jesse as the one rejected by the builders who is later restored and enjoining praise (Ps.Tg. 118:22-28; cf., Evans 2001, 146) and by the traditional singing of Psalm 118 on Passover Eve (cf., Watts 2007, 207). The more Jesus approaches his death, the more other characters speak truths they do not understand. The crowd's acclamation may therefore ironically indicate that through the Passion, the promised kingdom of the Son of David is about to be established.

against interpreting it as denying that the Messiah is the Son of David. Jesus does not object to but responds positively to the blind man who calls him “Son of David.” He deliberately enters Jerusalem seated on the traditional mount of a Jewish king. As noted earlier, the whole sequence of events, including the disciples’ fetching of Jesus’ mount, portrays Jesus’ regal behaviour during the triumphal entry as conform to the predetermined divine will and thus constitutes a positive biographical element. Moreover, Jesus will be further described as king during his suffering, and the claim that his suffering was prefigured in the Psalms presupposes the Davidic connection. Finally, not only was Psalm 110:1 (to which the riddle pertains) commonly interpreted as referring to Jesus in the Early Church, but Jesus applies it also to his own description of the future station of the Son of Man (Mk 14:62).

Therefore, it is best to understand this passage as a riddle. It is not a statement, but a question that goads hearers to think about the implications of the passage and hints that the scribes have not understood it.³⁰ The riddle challenges the audience to consider the potential tensions between the different mantles associated with the Messiah. An attentive gospel audience would recall the question when Jesus, being tried and about to be condemned, mentions the Psalm again to indicate that messianic glory will come... but later (14:61-62).

This becomes the key to irony in the PN which sees Jesus repeatedly referred to as king by his opponents (15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32). The audience does not merely know that Jesus really is king. Unlike his opponents, they know that the messianic (and Davidic) king must not come down from the cross to prove who he is (15:32) but is there proclaimed “truly... God’s Son” (v. 39). After all, from a Jewish perspective, “Son of God” is a royal, and – in view of its particular connection with 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Psalm 2:7 – Davidic, title. For Mark, Jesus proves to be David’s Son through his sufferings.

This once again highlights the climactic importance of the PN to Mark’s biographical project, since hereto, little content has been given to what precisely it means that God calls Jesus his Son (1:11; 9:7). Jesus is thus not enthroned on the cross,³¹ but most paradoxically exhibited as king through it.

³⁰ Hooker 1991, 292. Marcus’ suggestion that other passages affirm that Jesus is the Son of David but this one suggests a redefinition of what that means to reject the contemporary nationalistic interpretations makes good political sense but does not explain the terms of the riddle (2009, 749).

³¹ Williamson Jr. 2009, 278; Hooker 1991, 374.

2.4.3 *The Suffering Servant*

Although Jesus' role as Son of David explains his sufferings, it does not explain his death, since David was not handed over to die for the benefit of others. However, Mark has already portrayed Jesus not only as fulfilling the Isaianic eschatological program but also as YHWH's Servant (Mk 1:11; Isa 42:1). The Suffering Servant paradigm provides the gospel audience with the final answer to why it was Jesus himself (unlike Moses or David) who gave his life as the basis of covenant, that is, why the Son of Man had to "be killed," and how this was "as is written."

Hooker has argued that Mark does *not* allude to the Suffering Servant. She observes that there are no verbal links or references to vicarious suffering linking Mark 8:31 with Isaiah 53;³² Moreover, she argues that despite the fact that the idea of servanthood is found in Mark 10:45, its use of διακονέω instead of Isaiah's δουλεύω indicates that the two texts are not connected. This passage speaks of Jesus giving his life as ransom (λύτρον), whereas in Isaiah 53:10, the Servant's life is offered as an ἁγίασμα, a sin offering. Finally, in her view, the preposition ἀντί in Mark 10:45 does not have a substitutionary sense that would link it to Isaiah 53, but only means that Jesus' death is for the benefit (not "instead") of many. She concludes that "many" is in fact the only word in common between the two passages in Greek.³³

Several elements indicate that these criteria are inadequate to reveal how Mark leads the gospel audience to interpret Jesus' death in relation to Isaiah 52:13-53:12. First, the Markan Jesus repeatedly claims that his sufferings and death are "as is written" and "must" (δεῖ) happen (8:31; 9:12; 14:21, 27, 49). Of these, only 14:27 mentions a specific scriptural text, Zechariah 13:7 (LXX).³⁴ Although Jesus uses the passage primarily as a prediction of the disciples' flight, it also predicts that their leader (the shepherd) will be killed (struck with the sword). Yet this still does not explain why the death of the Messiah "must" happen, nor is there any apparent connection to the interpretation of Jesus' death as a covenant-making new Passover sacrifice in 14:24. One must ask therefore why Mark would insist that Jesus' death

³² Hooker 1991, 204.

³³ Ibid., 248-9.

³⁴ Cf., Hays 2017, 79.

is scripturally grounded without giving any obvious indication of how it is so, especially when one considers how deliberately and meticulously he has otherwise provided a rich scriptural background to interpret Jesus' identity, activity, and significance.

One approach to the question is that of Marcus (following C.H. Dodd), who argued that "as is written" in Mark 9:12 assumes that the Son of Man is identified with the sufferings of the people described in Daniel 7, 14 and in Psalm 80 LXX.³⁵ This is an attractive proposal, but one cannot find any supporting evidence for this in Mark. While Jesus is presented as representative of God's people in several NT texts (e.g., Matt 2:15; 1 Cor 15:20-22), it is unlikely that the gospel audience could have guessed that this is what "as is written" alludes to in Mark 9:12 in the absence of any clue to that effect there or elsewhere in that gospel. Neither 10:45 nor 14:24 can be adequately explained by such a broad interpretation. Moreover, there is no evidence in the NT that Jesus' death was interpreted in relation to Daniel 7, 14 or Psalm 80 in this way.

However, Marcus is right to interpret "as written" as "not so much a biblical citation or even an allusion, but a creative exegesis that brings together a number of passages."³⁶ He also points to Mark 1:2-3, which conflates Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3, as an example of a flexible use of *καθὼς γέγραπται*.

Mark 1:2-3 is even more important in relation to our question as evidence of the type of exegesis that the evangelist (or his sources) used to connect passages together to interpret the significance of Jesus and his career. Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 are linked by the notion of an eschatological herald and in Hebrew, the *פנה-דרך* phrase. Malachi 3:1 is, of course, close to Exodus 23:20 LXX, while Isaiah 40:3 links with Exodus 23:20 through their common reference to the wilderness.³⁷ In other words, these three texts are strung together like the links of a chain attached through different connection points. Once texts have been connected on the basis of shared terminology or themes, Mark can depict Jesus as fulfilment of them all. For instance, in Mark 14:62, Mark blends references to Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1.³⁸

³⁵ Marcus 1989: 43-44.

³⁶ Ibid., 44, 45. He helpfully provides evidence for such an approach to scriptural validation in Second Temple Jewish texts

³⁷ France 2002, 64.

³⁸ Watts 2007, 234.

Although terminology and specifics differ, Mark connects the two passages as texts pointing to a king highly exalted by God and dominating over enemies.

In the same way, Mark's allusions to Isaiah 53 are established through connections with other paradigmatic OT passages used to interpret Jesus. One of the important clues to this is the exchange of the verbs used in the "Son of Man" clauses of Jesus' predictions of his death. The Son of Man must suffer many things (πολλὰ παθεῖν), be rejected (ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι), be treated with contempt (ἐξουδενηθῆ), and be "handed over" (παραδίδοται) (8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33). Although one could assume that these verb changes are mostly stylistic variations, the repetition and emphatic placement of these predictions and their emphases on the "must" and "as is written" suggest that they have been thoughtfully formulated. Indeed, a revealing pattern emerges as one traces the connections of these verbs to key OT texts Mark uses to interpret Jesus.

First, the verb ἀποδοκιμάζω in 8:31 appears in Mark 12:10 to describe Jesus' rejection as the stone that becomes the cornerstone in Psalm 117:22 LXX. This verbal link is important because it indicates that the verb used in the Son of Man clause in 8:31 was probably not randomly chosen. In point of fact, Mark 12:10 connects Jesus' at first cryptic prediction in 8:31 to a specific OT text that compares Jesus' sufferings to David's.

Second, the substitution of ἐξουδενέω in 9:12 where ἀποδοκιμάζω stands in 8:31 perhaps intends to allude to Psalm 21:7 LXX.³⁹ There is, however, textual evidence indicating that this verb could establish a link between Psalm 117:22 LXX and Isaiah 53:3. It appears instead of ἀποδοκιμάζω in the quotation of Psalm 117:22 LXX in Acts 4:11 and as translation of the double reference to בָּזָה ("despised") in Isaiah 53:3 in Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.⁴⁰ Admittedly, one can only speculate that such textual traditions might have been available to and influenced Mark. Yet, this is an intriguing possible connection which could have influenced the evangelist to connect these two texts as descriptions of the sufferings of the Messiah.

Third, the Son of Man clause then switches to the verb παραδίδωμι (9:31, 10:33). This is Mark's favourite verb to describe not just Jesus' betrayal but his being handed over to death (10:33; 14:10-11, 18, 21, 41-42, 44; 15:1, 10, 15). Unlike the previous predictions, this

³⁹ Collins 2007, 431.

⁴⁰ France 2002, 359-60.

verb cannot be explained as an allusion to a Davidic psalm; it does, however, feature prominently in Isaiah 53 LXX.⁴¹ In Isaiah 53:6, the Servant is handed over “ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν” and in verse 12, “διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν” where he is further described as “παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἢ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ.”

It is particularly significant that the last prediction (10:33-34) is the context from which the immediately following episode develops, concluding with Jesus’ *logion* that “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (10:45). The fact that παραδίδωμι most likely alludes to Isaiah 53 in Mark 10:33, the notion of service (regardless of the verbal difference with Isaiah 53:10), the phrase “τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ” (cf., Isa 53:12 LXX), and the important (pace Hooker) reference to the “many” (Isa 53:11-12 LXX) is too much converging evidence to ignore. What is more, there is simply no other OT text in which “it is written” that an agent of God will instrumentally suffer and die for or in place of others and be vindicated.⁴² Mark 10:45 thus blends allusions to Moses and Passover with the Suffering Servant, whose own life is given to serve God and for the benefit of many, which both in Isaiah and Mark probably refers to the “remnant.”⁴³

A similar method of textual conflation is at play in Mark 14:18-21, where Jesus refers to going “as is written of him.”⁴⁴ While Psalm 40:10 LXX describes the action of David’s close associate as treachery (πτερνισμός) and speaks of a conspiracy (v. 8), the key verb παραδίδωμι is not used to describe the king’s sufferings, nor is he fated to die. The verb only occurs in Davidic Psalms in 117:18 LXX to assert that the Lord “did not deliver (παρέδωκέν) me (i.e., David) to death.” However, Isaiah’s Suffering Servant is twice described as being “led” to death with the cognate ἤχθη (53:7-8) and as handed over as a sacrifice (“κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν,” v. 6). Similarly, while the references to blood

⁴¹ Cf. Watts 2007, 190; Marcus 2009, 667. Aside from Isaiah 53, both authors also refer to a possible allusion to Daniel 7:25 LXX. Yet, although the influence of the Son of Man in Mark makes this connection tempting, the verb does not refer to the Son of Man being “handed over” in this passage.

⁴² Watts 2007, 176.

⁴³ Hooker’s contention that ἀντί in Mark 10:45 cannot have a substitutionary sense is undermined by the fact that Numbers 3:12 LXX speaks of taking Levites as ransom (λύτρα αὐτῶν ἔσονται) *in place of* the Israelite firstborns (ἀντὶ παντὸς πρωτοτόκου) (cf. Collins, *Mark*, 501-2).

⁴⁴ The subject of the sentence is once again “the Son of Man.” Marcus and Dodd’s approach to Mark 9:12-13 fails at this point, since while that passage only refers to suffering, here the reference is clearly to death and there is no corporate dying in Daniel 7, 14, or Psalm 80 LXX.

poured out can be explained in light of sacrificial language in relation to the Passover and Sinai, that it be poured “ὕπερ πολλῶν” points to the influence of Isaiah 53.

Finally, the otherwise seemingly arbitrary interpretation of Zechariah 13:7 LXX as predicting the disciples’ flight (Mk 14:27) can be most satisfactorily explained if it assumes that Isaiah 53, which also speaks of God’s agent as “struck” (נִכָּח) and of God’s people as sheep drifting away, does indeed describe and interpret the death of Jesus. The first passage can be interpreted as applying to Jesus on the basis of these similarities/links according to the same kind of connection found in Mark 1:2-3.

Mark’s use of the Suffering Servant as one of the prototypical figures Jesus embodies thus makes an important contribution to his biographical project as a whole. The logic of Jesus’ instrumental death and his demeanour during his trial are explained, as this cumulative evidence increases the likelihood that the declaration of Jesus’ innocence, his silence before his accusers, and his crucifixion among robbers, all allude to Isaiah 53:1-12 as well (Mk 14:60-61; 15:4-5, 11, 27; Isa 53:7, 9, 12).⁴⁵ This, in turn, together with the Passover and Davidic references, add layers to the greater emphasis on the Son of God, prophet like Moses and Son of Man paradigms that appear earlier in the gospel. Jesus’ identity, activity, and mission are thus all explained on the basis of these scriptural prototypes. This is Jewish hermeneutics at the service of what Jewish biographies do: telling the story of a subject so as to demonstrate his significance in relation to God, his people, and the sacred history.

3. Conclusion

The gospel of Mark is not a *bios*. It is not the adaptation of the life story of a Jewish sage and miracle-worker made to look like a philosopher. Unlike the biographies written by Philo and Josephus, Mark does not use specific vocabulary, word its claims, or reference GR sources to make the story of Jesus more like what Greeks and Romans would expect from a biography. Mark is not the biography of an extraordinary, divine man whose feats are intended to evoke wonder like those of Apollonius of Tyana. Neither is it written for the express purpose of serving as a model of selfless living, uncompromising ethics, subversion of religious and political power, or a noble death that leaves an inspiring legacy worthy of imitation. Such a figure is not the object of faith that the gospel commends, not the Christ, not

⁴⁵ Certainly, other NT writings demonstrate that the Early Church did make the connection between Jesus and the Suffering Servant (Matt 8:17; Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32-33; 1 Pet 2:22-25).

the Son of God, not the Son of David, not the Son of Man, not the Suffering Servant, not the Markan Jesus.

Instead, the Gospel of Mark is a JB which recounts first of all the significance of Jesus of Nazareth in the history of God and Israel. Steeped in Scriptural traditions and its biographical stories, it tells of how Jesus came to the public scene and was powerfully revealed to be the embodiment of Israel's eschatological hopes in word and deeds. This life concludes shockingly with a climactic denouement that boldly instantiates a new covenant, emphatically confirms his identity, and looks forward to the epilogue of his resurrection and to his coming as the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven. Written in biblical idiom and HN episodic style, it mostly shows, rather than tells, who Jesus is through deeds and words saturated with Scriptural evocations. The result is a biography that echoes episodes from the lives of towering characters of Israel's sacred past and from messianically-interpreted texts whose cryptic eschatological figures have fused to become flesh and blood in Jesus.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

This study started with the story of the reversal of Bultmann's low estimate of the gospels as literature and denial of their biographical nature. While I have argued that Burridge, Frickenschmidt, and their predecessors erred in the assumption and their subsequent conclusions that the gospels had to be GRB, they helped us to see past Bultmann and appreciate the biographical shape of the gospels. The pioneering works of Burridge and Frickenschmidt, their interest in genre theory, detailed study of GRB, and comparisons with the gospels, were revolutionary advances that caused NT scholars to reconsider the question of the genre of the gospels and take greater notice of their biographical characteristics. Thus, despite departing considerably from their methodological assumptions, arguments, and conclusions, the present work remains significantly indebted to theirs and may be conceived as a furthering and fine-tuning of their quest.

Not unlike their forays in the study of GRB and its comparison with the gospels, I am aware that my own work on OTB is but a first attempt at describing and classifying this family of biblical texts. The study of biography as a genre in the OT is of intrinsic value and could prove helpful not only in relation to other domains of OT study, but also in relation to intertestamental and NT literature that this family of texts has influenced. As such, the present work cannot but be enlarged and enriched if it becomes part of a larger conversation which involve the insights and expertise of others. So, I hope that others will find the topic of OTB as worthwhile a field of investigation as I have.

I purposefully set out to limit my investigation to the gospel of Mark and this has proved a rewarding decision. Readers might wonder whether I sought to drive a wedge between Jewish and GR influences on the thought of the Early Church and the writing of NT writers. Such is not the case. While I cannot find any concrete or conclusive evidence that specific GR modes of thought or literary patterns have influenced Mark, I do not exclude that this might be the case for other gospels. Luke's prologue, nativity speeches, and childhood story, are just a few examples that seem to indicate influence from GRB. The different overall style of narration of the Fourth Gospel in comparison to the Synoptics, its extended speeches in chapters six to ten and thirteen to seventeen, its prologue, epilogue, and authorial

intrusions all require a separate investigation which, I suspect, would yield very different conclusions than those reached about Mark. While I prefer to leave the question of the priority of Mark open-ended, it is hoped that the present study would still constitute a starting point that can be used in the evaluation of the genre of the other gospels.

In this regard, the re-evaluation of the characteristics, conventions, ethos, and primary purposes of GRB that I have proposed will no doubt be improved by the critiques and contributions of others. While it could be perceived as setting aside the value of GRB for the study of the gospels, it would be more accurate to consider it as seeking to set a better foundation for such comparisons. Knowledge of the conventions of JB can function as the “control group” that Hägg thought was missing from Burrige’s and Frickenschmidt’s studies, in future evaluations of the relationship of the other gospels to Mark and to other biographies, GR or Jewish. It may also very well be that my own studies of both genres as I have presented them here may lead others to spot important points of contacts with Mark that I have missed.

These questions and possibilities of the future notwithstanding, one’s understanding of Mark as a JB can provide insight into significant areas of debate on its interpretation and function(s). First, much of the disagreements behind the variety of genres that have been proposed for Mark reflect a struggle to account satisfactorily for all of Mark’s functions as opposed to over-emphasising one at the expense of the others. Collins and others were not wrong to think of OTBs in relation to historiography since the first derive their significance from the broader canvas of the second. The gospels are “historiography” in that sense, proposed by their authors as a major and penultimate chapter of the greater history that still awaits its *telos* to come. Thus, the gospel of Jesus Christ is “as it is written” and the larger story will continue to unfold till this gospel is “preached to all the nations” (Mk 13:10). There is perhaps no need then for the tension that has often been felt between the biographical shape of Luke and the historiographical outlook of Acts. The two genres were not as demarcated from each other in Jewish tradition as in GR literature. Collins had proposed that whether one considers that Mark is an historical biography, or an historical monograph depended on one’s estimate of whether the emphasis is more on Jesus the person or on the event of his coming. There is no such dichotomy in JB: the importance and significance of Jesus as a person is inseparable from the event that he himself signified: the coming of the Messiah and in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. It is not just the gospel: it is the gospel of Jesus (1:1).

Green was also right to point out that the gospels are a story about God. While this is foreign from what one might expect from the GR conception of biography, it is a central

characteristic of its Jewish counterpart. Jesus is supremely important not because he did spectacular miracles, astonished crowds with his sayings, or founded a significant movement. He is above all the Servant of God, predicted by God, empowered by the Spirit of God, declaring God's kingdom, setting a new covenant between God and his people, and opening the proclamation of God to the nations. Thus, the gospel of Jesus Christ is also the "gospel of God" (1:14). God is always the significant Presence in every biography in the biblical tradition and every individual's story is, in a sense, also God's own story.

Bultmann was also right that the gospels are very much about the Early Church. This is borne out by Mark's emphasis on the disciples, the special role of Peter, its ethical instruction and predictions of the future. There is more than chapter thirteen for "readers to understand" if only they have eyes to see and ears to hear. All JB's in biblical tradition are likewise intended for the instruction of the people of God, not as inspiring models of ethics, values, and philosophy as in GRB, but as the outworking of a covenant relationship between God and his people. Thus, the story of Abraham is not just about Abraham the righteous, the origins of the nation, nor just about God generally, but also *for* the people of God. The same is true of the way Jesus is depicted in Mark. The "many" for whom he came to give his life (10:45) and for whom his blood was shed (14:24) looks beyond the few to whom these words were spoken in the context of the story. Bultmann was therefore mistaken to think of biography and kerygma as competing alternative explanations for the genesis of the gospels. The JB of Jesus shows the significance of the person Jesus in relation to both God and his people.

Moreover, recognising that Mark is a JB pulls all the "OT background" material together. Bultmann and subsequent commentators were not wrong to think that the depiction of Jesus in the gospels cannot be satisfactorily explained by analogy to any one particular OT figure or story type. Miracle stories, parables, sayings, and other materials could not find one simple correspondence in precursor texts. On the other hand, Richard Hays' study of the use of the OT in Mark in *Echoes of Scripture* and Rikk Watts' work on Mark in the *Commentary on the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament* have demonstrated the need to take a more wholistic approach to the question that does better justice to the multi-dimensional wealth of Mark and the other gospels' OT background. Yet in the end, the format of their studies could not quite connect all the pieces together. It is the logic and unfolding of Mark's *biographical* project that pulls it all together. It provides a clearer matrix against which Mark's use of quotations, allusions, and echoes can be understood than that of speaking of these more vaguely as a "theological" background or as Aune had put it a "Jewish ambience."

The recognition that Mark is a JB also holds promises in relation to specific issues at debate, such as the significance of the Messianic Secret. Mark clearly chose to use the Passion Narrative to complete his *biographical* portrait of Jesus not just chronologically, but climatically. The previous chapter has highlighted the techniques that he used to set a trail of narrative breadcrumbs and leave questions that pertain to Jesus' identity and mission in suspense until the end. In the context of the story, it was Jesus himself who raised these questions and made enigmatic statements about what was to befall him and why. Instead of interpreting the Messianic Secret strictly as a retrospective apologetic device, it can be appreciated as a feature of the story that combines with those other aspects of Mark to prepare the audience for the climax of the Passion Narrative and the grand revelation of Jesus' full messianic identity. In other words, the Messianic Secret is also a narrative breadcrumb that plays an important role in how Mark chose to fill out his biography of Jesus.

Another question on which the nature of Mark as JB can shed light is that of whether it is likely to have ended abruptly at 16:8 or whether the end of the story is missing. As observed earlier, the story was intended *for* the Church but a Jewish biography is always first *about* the subject (Jesus) and God. If Mark ends with frightened women running from the tomb and telling no one, the climax of the Passion Narrative is defused. The Messianic Secret is not judiciously extended but instead the trail of narrative crumbs is found to lead to nowhere specific. Was Jesus really resurrected as he and the white-robed young man said? Was this messenger an angel or a fraud that took advantage of the women's state of shock and their putative credulity? Did God vindicate Jesus his Servant? Can Jesus' disciples rest assured of their own resurrection if they too lose their lives for his sake? By analogy to the extraordinary end of the life stories of Moses and Elijah, Jesus must be, as Paul would put it — "declared the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4). Jesus said he must suffer and be killed, and it was so. He also said he must be raised on the third day: at 16:8 one can only suspect that it might be so, but not more. Disciples must know that it is not in vain that the servant waits for his master's return. A GRB might leave questions of belief to the decisions of their readers, but Mark, in biblical tradition, does not. Readers must understand, perceive, hear, take up their crosses and follow. Thus, although many find the idea of such an ending attractive and have proposed that it is deliberate, it is an extremely unlikely ending for a JB.

These considerations will probably not be found persuasive by all, but they illustrate how the genre proposed here for Mark can contribute to how such questions are approached.

Further exploration must await future studies and conversations as it is time now to thank my readers for their patience and draw this study to a close.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Athenaeus. *The Learned Banqueters*. Edited and translated by S. Douglas Olson. 8 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007-2012.
- Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. Stuttgart, 1990.
- Charlesworth, James H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*. Vol. 2. London: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Cornelius Nepos. *On Great Generals. On Historians*. Translated by J. C. Rolfe. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929.
- Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Translated by R. D. Hicks. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.
- Gellius. *Attic Nights, Volume I: Books 1-5*. Translated by J. C. Rolfe. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927.
- Isocrates. *Evagoras*. Translated by La Rue Van Hook. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945.
- García Martínez, Florentino, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar. "The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (transcriptions)." Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–1998.
- . "The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (translations)." Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–1998.
- Jacoby, Felix (ed.). *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. (25 vols.) Leiden: Brill, 1957–1964.
- Lucian. *Demonax*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913.
- . *Alexander the False Prophet*. Translated by A. M. Harmon. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.
- Nestle, Eberhard, and Erwin Nestle. *Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece*. Edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger. 28th revised edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
- Nicolaus, of Damascus. *Life of Augustus*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1984.

- Philostratus. *Apollonius of Tyana: Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Edited and translated by Christopher P. Jones. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Philostratus, Eunapius. *Lives of the Sophists. Eunapius: Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*. Translated by Wilmer C. Wright. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921.
- Plato. *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- Porphry. *Porphyry on the Life of Plotinus*. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- . *Vie de Pythagore ; Lettre à Marcella*. Translated by Édouard Des Places. Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1982.
- Plutarch. *Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. 11 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914-1926.
- Rahlf, Alfred, and Robert Hanhart, eds. *Septuaginta: SESB Edition*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.
- Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*. Revised and Translated by Jeffrey Henderson. Introduction by K. R. Bradley. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Tacitus. *Agricola*. Translated by M. Hutton, W. Peterson. Revised by R. M. Ogilvie, E. H. Warmington, Michael Winterbottom. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.
- Worthington, Ian (ed.). *Brill's New Jacoby*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Xenophon. *Agesilaus*. Translated by E. C. Marchant, G. W. Bowersock. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.
- . *Anabasis*. Translated by Carleton L. Brownson. Revised by John Dillery. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- . *Cyropaedia*. Translated by Walter Miller. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- . *Memorabilia. Symposium. Apology*. Translated by E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd. Revised by Jeffrey Henderson. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Vermes, Geza. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. Revised and extended 4th ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Secondary Sources

- Adams, Sean A. *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography*. Vol. 156 of *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Aletti, Jean-Noël. *The Birth of the Gospels as Biographies: With Analyses of Two Challenging Pericopae*. Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017.
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. London: Allen & Unwin, 2011.
- Aune, David. "Magic in Early Christianity," ANRW 23.2:1507–57. Part 2. *Principat*. 33. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1980.
- . "Oral Traditions and the Aphorisms of Jesus." In *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, edited by Henry Wansbrough, 211–65. Vol. 64 of *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- . *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1987.
- Baltzer, Klaus. *Die Biographie der Propheten*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975.
- Bar-Efrat, Shimeon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Barnes, Jonathan. "Diogenes Laertius IX 61-116: The Philosophy of Pyrrhonism." ANRW 36.6:4241–4301. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.6. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1992.
- Bartlett, John R. *I Maccabees*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Barton, Stephen C. "Gospel Wisdom." In *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the Contemporary World*, edited by Stephen C. Barton, 93–110. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999.
- Bauckham, Richard, ed. *The Gospels for All Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Baum, Armin D. "Biographies of Jesus in Old Testament and Rabbinic Style: The Genre of the New Testament Gospels." In *The Earliest Perceptions of Jesus in Context: Essays in Honor of John Nolland*, edited by Aaron White, David Wenham, and Craig A. Evans, 33–58. Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Nottingham: Apollos, 2007.
- Becker, Eve-Marie. *Das Markus-Evangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006.
- Birley, A. R. "The Agricola." In *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, edited by A. J. Woodman, 47–58. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Blackburn, Barry. *Theios Aner and the Markan Miracle Traditions*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990.

- Blackburn, Barry L. "The Miracles of Jesus." In *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, edited by Graham H. Twelftree, 113–30. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Bollansée, Jan. "FGrHist IV.A.3: Preface." In *Felix Jacoby: Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker Continued: Biography and Antiquarian Literature IV A: Hermippos of Smyrna*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- . "Hermippos of Smyrna (1026)." In *Felix Jacoby: Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker Continued: Biography and Antiquarian Literature IV A: Hermippos of Smyrna*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Bradley, R.K. "Introduction." In *Suetonius: Lives of the Caesars, Volume I*, by Jeffrey Henderson, 1–30, Revised edition. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Loeb, 1989.
- Brisson, Luc. "Diogène Laërce, 'Vies et Doctrine Des Philosophes Illustres', Livre III: Structure et Contenu." *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt* 36.5 (1992): 3619–3760.
- Brooks, James A. *Mark*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1991.
- Brown, Raymond Edward. "Jesus and Elisha." *Perspective* 12, no. 1–2 (1971): 85–104.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1963.
- Burridge, Richard. *What Are the Gospels: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Butts, J. R. *The Progymnasmata of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1987.
- Byrskog, Samuel. *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994.
- Cangh, Jean-Marie van. *Les sources judaïques du Nouveau Testament: recueil d'essais*. Leuven: Peeters, 2008.
- Carroll, Robert P. "Blindsight and the Vision Thing: Blindness and Insight in the Book of Isaiah." In *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, edited by Craig C Broyles and Craig A. Evans, 79–93. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Chandler, Daniel. "An Introduction to Genre Theory." *Media and Communication Studies*: [http://www. Aber. Ac. Uk/Media/Documents/Intgenre/Intgenre1.html](http://www.Aber.Ac.Uk/Media/Documents/Intgenre/Intgenre1.html), 1997.
- Clark, Gillian. "Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life." In *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, edited by Tomas Hägg, 29–51. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.
- Clay, Diskin. "Lucian of Samosata: Four Philosophical Lives (Nigrinus, Demonax, Peregrinus, Alexander Pseudomantis)." *ANRW* 36.5:3406-50. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.5. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1992.
- Clements, Ronald E. "Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31 (1985): 95–113.

- Coats, George W. *Exodus 1-18*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Collins, Adela Yarbro. *Is Mark's Gospel a Life of Jesus? The Question of Genre*. The Père Marquette Lecture in Theology 1990. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1990.
- . *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.
- . "The Early Christian Apocalypses." Edited by John Joseph Collins. *Semeia* 14 (1979): 60–121.
- Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.
- . "The Sage in the Apocalyptic and Pseudepigraphic Literature." In *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, edited by John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue, 343–54. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . "Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and Generic Compatibility." In *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, edited by Leo G. Perdue, Bernard B. Scott, and William J. Wiseman, 165–85. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.
- Cotter, Wendy. *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook for the Study of New Testament Miracle Stories*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Crenshaw, James L. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Third edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- Dabeck, P. "'Siehe, es erschienen Moses und Elias' (Mt 17, 3)." *Biblica* 23 (1942): 175–89.
- DeVries, Simon J. *1 Kings*. Second edition. Vol. 12 of *Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.
- Dihle, Albrecht. "The Gospels and Greek Biography." In *The Gospel and the Gospels*, edited by Peter Stuhlmacher, 361–86. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Dillon, John. *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 BC to AD220*. London: Duckworth, 1977.
- Delatte, Armand. *La vie de Pythagore de Diogène Laërce*. Bruxelles: Lamertin, 1922.
- Dionisotti, A. C. "Nepos and the Generals." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988): 35–49.
- Donahue, John R., and Daniel J. Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*. Edited by Daniel J. Harrington. Vol. 2 of *Sacra Pagina*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002.
- Dormeyer, Detlev. *Evangelium als literarische und theologische Gattung*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989.
- Dowd, Sharyn E. "Reading Mark Reading Isaiah." *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 30 (1995): 133–43.
- Duff, Tim. *Plutarch's 'Lives': Exploring Virtue and Vice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

- Dzielska, Maria. *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*. Rome: L'erma di Bretschneider, 1986.
- Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Edwards, Mark. "Gospel and Genre: Some Reservations." In *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, edited by Judith Mossman and Brian McGing, 31–62. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2006.
- Ellis, E. Earle. "The Making of Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels." In *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, edited by Henry Wansbrough, 310–33. Vol 64 of *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- Evans, Craig A. "From Gospel to Gospel: The Function of Isaiah in the New Testament." In vol. 2 of *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Vetus Testamentum Supplements* (1997): 651–92.
- . *Mark 8:27–16:20*. Vol. 34B of *Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001.
- Evans, Elizabeth C. "Physiognomics in the Roman Empire." *The Classical Journal* 45 (1950): 277–82.
- Eve, Eric. *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*. Vol 231 of *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- Farrington, Scott T. "Action and Reason: Polybius and the Gap between Encomium and History." *Classical Philology* 106 (2011): 324–42.
- Feldman, Louis H. *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998.
- Fishelov, David. "Genre Theory and Family Resemblance—Revisited." *Poetics* 20 (1991): 123–38.
- Fowler, Alastair. *Kinds of Literature - An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. New edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Fowler, Robert M. *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*. New edition. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Freyne, Sean. "The Charismatic." In *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, edited by John J. Collins, 223–58, 1980.
- Frickenschmidt, Dirk. *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst*. Tübingen: Francke, 1997.
- Garland, Robert. "Miracles in the Greek and Roman World." In *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, edited by Graham H. Twelftree, 75–94. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Geeraerts, Dirk. "Cognitive Semantics." In *Theories of Lexical Semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Geiger, Joseph. *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1985.

- . “Hebdomades (Binae?).” *The Classical Quarterly (New Series)* 48 (1998): 305–9.
- Georgiadou, Aristoula. “Idealistic and Realistic Portraiture in the Lives of Plutarch.” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 33.6 (1992): 4616–23.
- . “The Lives of the Caesars.” In *A Companion to Plutarch*, edited by Mark Beck, 249–66. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2013.
- Gerhardsson, Birger. “Illuminating the Kingdom: Narrative Meshalim in the Synoptic Gospels.” In *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, edited by Henry Wansbrough, 266–309. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- Goldstein, J. *I Maccabees*. Anchor Bible. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Goulet-Cazé, Marie-Odile. “Le Livre de Diogène Laërce: Analyse de Sa Structure et Réflexions Méthodologiques.” Vol. 36.6 of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, 3880–4048. New York, NY: De Gruyter, 1992.
- Green, Joel B. “The Gospel According to Mark.” In *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels*, edited by Stephen C. Barton, 139–57. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Hägg, Tomas. *The Art of Biography in Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- . *The Novel in Antiquity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.
- Hahm, David. “Diogenes Laertius VII: On the Stoics.” *ANRW* 36.6:4076–4182. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.6. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1992.
- Hamilton, J. R., Philip Stadter and Plutarch. *Plutarch: Alexander*. New edition. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Harvey, A. E. *Jesus and the Constraints of History*. London: Duckworth, 1982.
- Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017.
- Hengel, Martin. *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock, 2003.
- . *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.
- Hobbs, T. R. *2 Kings*. Vol. 13 of *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas, TX: Word, 1998.
- Hooker, Morna D. “Isaiah in Mark’s Gospel.” In *Isaiah in the New Testament*, edited by Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, 35–49. London: T&T Clark, 2005.
- . *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*. London: Continuum, 1991.
- Horsley, Richard A. “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Mark.” In *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, edited by Leo G. Perdue, Bernard B. Scott, and William J. Wiseman, 223–44. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.
- Hurley, Donna W. “Suetonius’ Rubric Sandwich.” In *Suetonius the Biographer: Studies in Roman Lives*, edited by Tristan Power and Roy K. Gibson, 21–37. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. London: SCM Press, 2010.
- Kaster, Robert A. "Introduction and Commentary." In *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*, by Suetonius, Edited and translated by Robert A. Kaster. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Keener, Craig S., and Edward T. Wright, eds. *Biographies and Jesus: What Does It Mean for the Gospels to Be Biographies?* Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2016.
- Kenny, Anthony. *Ancient Philosophy*. Vol. 1 of *A New History of Western Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Kindstrand, Jan Fredrik. "Diogenes Laertius and the Chreia Tradition." *Elenchos* 7 (1986): 217–43.
- Kingsbury, Jack Dean. *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Klein, Ralph W. *I Samuel*. Vol. 10 of *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas, TX: Word, 1998.
- Kline, Meredith G. "The Old Testament Origins of the Gospel Genre." *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975): 1–27.
- Klink, Edward W. III, ed. *The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity*. London: Continuum, 2010.
- Kloppenborg, John S. *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987.
- Goulet-Cazé, Marie-Odile. "Introduction." In *Vies et Doctrines Des Philosophes Illustres* by Diogène Laërce edited and translated by Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé. Paris: Livre de Poche, 1999.
- Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Lavan, Myles Patrick. "Slavishness in Britain and Rome in Tacitus' Agricola." *The Classical Quarterly* 61 (2011): 294–305.
- Lefkowitz, Mary R. *The Lives of the Greek Poets*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- Leo, Friedrich. *Die Griechisch-Römische Biographie Nach Ihrer Literarischen Form*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1901.
- Lewis, R. G. "Suetonius' Caesares and Their Literary Antecedents," *ANRW* 33.5:3623–74. Part 2, *Principat*, 33.5. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1991.
- Lindblom, Johannes. "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets." In *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, edited by M. Noth and Winton D. Thomas, 192–204. Leiden: Brill, 1955.
- Long, Herbert S. Introduction to *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Translated by R. D. Hicks. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925.

- Lord, Louis E. "The Biographical Interests of Nepos." *Classical Journal* 22 (1927): 498–503.
- Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*. Edited by Helmut Koester and translated by James E. Crouch. Revised edition. Hermeneia Series. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.
- Männlein-Robert, Irmgard. "Zwischen polemik und Hagiographie: Iamblichs de vita Pythagorica im vergleich mit Porphyrios' vita Plotini," in *Bios Philosophos. Philosophy in Ancient Greek Biography*, edited by Mauro Bonazzi and Stefan Schorn, 197–220. Brepols Publishers, 2016.
- . *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*. London: T & T Clark International, 2004.
- Marcus, Joel. *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 27 of *Anchor Yale Commentaries*. London: Yale University Press, 2008.
- . *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 27A of *Anchor Yale Commentaries*. London: Yale University Press, 2009.
- . "Mark 9:11-13: 'As It Has Been Written.'" *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 80 (1989): 42–63.
- Margolis, Eric, and Stephen Laurence. *Concepts: Core Readings*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
- Mayes, Andrew D. H. "Biography in the Ancient World: The Story of the Rise of David." In *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, 1–12. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006.
- McCarty, Thomas G. "The Content of Cornelius Nepos' 'De Viris Illustribus.'" *The Classical World* 67 (1974): 383–91.
- McGing, Brian C., and Judith Mossman, editors. *The Limits of Ancient Biography*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006.
- McKnight, Scot. "Matthew as 'Gospel,'" in *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity*, edited by Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge. London: T & T Clark, 2011.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. Vol. 2. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- . *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. Vol. 5. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.
- Mejer, Jørgen. "Biography and Doxography: Four Crucial Questions Raised by Diogenes Laertius." In *Griechische Biographie in hellenistischer Zeit: Akten des Internationalen Kongresses vom 26.-29. Juli 2006 in Würzburg*, edited by Michael Erler and Stefan Schorn, 245:431–41. New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2007.
- . "Dictionnaire Des Philosophes Antiques." In *Diogène Laërce*, edited by Richard Goulet, 824–33. Paris: CNRS, 1994.
- . *Diogenes Laertius and His Hellenistic Background*. Vol. 40. *Hermes, Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie: Einzelschriften*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Steiner, 1978.

- . “Diogenes Laertius and the Transmission of Greek Philosophy.” *ANRW* 36.5:3556–3602. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.5. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1992.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians*. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987.
- . *The Development of Greek Biography*. Expanded edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Murphy, Gregory L. *The Big Book of Concepts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Newsom, Carol A. “Spying out the Land: A Report from Genology.” *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 437–50. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.
- Niegorski, Walter. *Cicero’s Skepticism and His Recovery of Political Philosophy*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Nielsburg, George W. E. *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*. Edited by Klaus Baltzer. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.
- Nikolaïdis, Anastasios. *The Unity of Plutarch’s Work: “Moralia” Themes in the “Lives,” Features of the “Lives” in the “Moralia.”* New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2008.
- Opsomer, Jan. “Plutarch’s Unphilosophical Lives: Philosophical, after All?” In *Bios Philosophos. Philosophy in Ancient Greek Biography*, edited by Mauro Bonazzi and Stefan Schorn, 101–26. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016.
- Palmer, Darryl W. “Acts and the Historical Monograph.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 43 (1992): 373–88.
- Pausanias, Dennis. “Augustus Chlamydatos. Greek Identity and the Bios Kaisaros by Nicolaus of Damascus.” In *The Struggle for Identity: Greeks and Their Past in the First Century BCE*, 143–62, 2011.
- Pelling, C. B. R. *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2002.
- . “Plutarch’s Adaptation of His Source-Material.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 100 (1980): 127–40.
- Petersen, Norman R. “Point of View.” *Mark’s Narrative. Semeia* 12 (1978): 97–121.
- Power, Tristan. “The Endings of Suetonius’ Caesars.” In *Suetonius the Biographer: Studies in Roman Lives*, edited by Tristan Power and Roy K. Gibson, 58–77. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Rhoads, David, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*. Third Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012.
- Rives, James. “Introduction.” In *The Twelve Caesars*, by Suetonius, eds., James Rives and Robert Graves. London: Penguin Classics, 2002.
- Robbins, Vernon K. *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*. New Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009.
- Robinson, Geoffrey D. “The Motif of Deafness and Blindness in Isaiah 6:9-10: A Contextual, Literary, and Theological Analysis.” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (1998): 167–86.

- Rosch, Eleanor. "Principles of Categorization." In *Concepts: Core Readings*, edited by Margolis, Eric, and Stephen Laurence, 189–206. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
- Rosch, Eleanor, and Carolyn B Mervis. "Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories." *Cognitive Psychology* 7 (1975): 573–605.
- Runia, David T. "Doxography." *Brill's New Pauly*, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e323970.
- Russell, D. A. *Plutarch*. Classical Life and Letters. London: Duckworth, 1973.
- Russell, Donald Andrew Frank Moore. "Plutarch." *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Sailor, Dylan. "The Agricola." In *A Companion to Tacitus*, edited by V. Pagán, 23–44. Edinburgh: Blackwell, 2012.
- Shields, M. A. "Prophecy and Wisdom." *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, edited by Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012.
- Shively, Elizabeth Evans. "Mark." In *Oxford Handbook of New Testament Rhetoric*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Shuler, Philip L. *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982.
- Sinding, Michael. "After Definitions: Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science." *Genre* 35 (2002): 181–219.
- . "Framing Monsters: Multiple and Mixed Genres, Cognitive Category Theory, and Gravity's Rainbow." *Poetics Today* 31 (2010): 465–505.
- Smith, Justin Marc. *Why Bíos? On the Relationship Between Gospel Genre and Implied Audience*. London: T&T Clark, 2015.
- Snodgrass, Klyne R. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Sollenberger, Michael. "The Lives of the Peripatetics: An Analysis of the Contents and Structure of Diogenes Laertius' Vitae Philosophorum Book 5". *ANRW* 36.6:3793–3879. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.6. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1992.
- Sonnabend, Holger. *Geschichte der antiken Biographie: Von Isokrates bis zur Historia Augusta*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002.
- Stadter, Philip. "Biography and History." In *Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, edited by John A. Marincola, 528–40. Malden: Blackwell, 2007.
- . *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Steidle, Wolf. *Sueton und Die Antike Biographie*. Munich: Beck, 1963.
- Stem, S. Rex. *The Political Biographies of Cornelius Nepos*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012.

- Stanton, Graham. "Jesus and Gospel." In *Jesus and Gospel*, 9–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- . *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, SNTSMS 27, CUP, 1974.
- Stuart, Duane Reed. *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*. New York, NY: Biblo & Tannen, 1928.
- Swales, John. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Talbert, Charles H. *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977.
- Tannehill, Robert C. "Introduction: The Pronouncement Story and Its Types." *Semeia* 20 (1981): 1–14.
- . "Varieties of Synoptic Pronouncement Stories." *Semeia* 20 (1981): 101–19.
- Thackeray, H. St. J. *Jewish Antiquities, Volume I: Books 1-3*. Vol. 242. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass: Loeb Classical Library, 1930.
- Theissen, Gerd. *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983.
- Tiede, David Lenz. *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker*. Missoula, MT: SBL, 1986.
- Titchener, Frances. "Cornelius Nepos and the Biographical Tradition." *Greece & Rome* 50 (2003): 85–99.
- Toher, Mark. *The "BIOS Kaisaros" of Nicolaus of Damascus: An Historiographical Analysis*. University Microfilms International [Publisher], 1985.
- Tuplin, Christopher. "Nepos and the Origins of Political Biography." *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* X, 2000, 124–61.
- Viljamaa, Toivo. "Suetonius on Roman Teachers of Grammar," *ANRW*, II 33.5: 3826–51. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1991.
- Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew. "Suetonius on the Emperor." Thesis, University of Oxford, 1980.
- . *Suetonius: The Scholar and His Caesars*. Classical Life and Letters. London: Duckworth, 1983.
- Walton, Steve. "What Are the Gospels? Richard Burridge's Impact on Scholarly Understanding of the Genre of the Gospels." *Currents in Biblical Research* 14 (2015): 81–93.
- Watts, Rikk E. "Mark." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 111–237. Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 12-36*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Williamson Jr, Robert. "Peshet: A Cognitive Model of the Genre." *Dead Sea Discoveries* 17 (2010): 336–60.
- Williamson, Lamar Jr. *Mark. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary*. Westminster: John Knox Press, 2009.

- Witherington, Ben III. *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Edited by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Fourth edition. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Woodman, A. J. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, edited by A. J. Woodman, 1–14. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992.
- Zevit, Ziony. "The Priestly Redaction and Interpretation of the Plague Narrative in Exodus." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 66 (1976): 193–211.