GENRE, SUB-GENRE AND QUESTIONS OF AUDIENCE: A PROPOSED
TYPOLOGY FOR GRECO-ROMAN BIOGRAPHY

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1. *Introduction: Genre, Sub-Genre and the Search for Meaning*

Even as the scholarly consensus has begun to turn toward the acceptance
of Greco-Roman biography as the genre of the canonical Gospels, there
is little agreement as to a biographical sub-genre to which they belong.
Wide varieties of sub-generic classifications have been offered for βίοι/
vitae, with differing degrees of acceptance and credibility. One of the
difficulties in determining a sub-genre for a given genre of literature is
the criteria by which the genre is further sub-divided. Inherently, the
genre itself has already been separated from other literary types as hav-
ing some sort of external or internal features that make it distinct, at least
in part, from other literary expressions.[1] How then are genres further
sub-divided into sub-genres? Most often sub-genres are sorted according
to 'subject matter or motifs' as well as substance, configuration, or 'the
influence of neighboring genres'.[2] Yet the questions we ask of a piece of
literature may not apply to any of these sub-categories. For instance, if
we are interested in determining the relationship between the genre and
the audience, a sub-genre based on the configuration of the material may
be of little value. It will certainly be helpful as a way to categorize the
material, but it will not be useful for advancing questions of audience.
Another classification would be necessary in order to address that spe-
cific undertaking.

1.   Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genre
and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 111-12.
2.   Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 112; Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the
Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (The Biblical Resource
Series; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 2004), p. 77.

If one aspect of determining or assigning genre classification to a literary work is the act of ascertaining its significance, then the process of establishing effective and useful sub-genres is a further aspect of understanding meaning.[3] One potentially lucrative avenue for discovering the meaning of βίοι in general, and the Gospels in particular, is the intersection of author, genre and audience.[4] What are the relationships and expectations that exist among the three? Genre, at least in part, serves to form a binding contract (to varying degrees) between the author and the audience.[5] By choosing a specific genre as the literary means through which an author intends to convey a particular message, story, or view, the author agrees to conform to the structures of the chosen genre.[6] Similarly, the audience agrees to read and understand the information presented in light of and in conjunction with the genre.[7] Thus, the genre serves as the agreed structure through which profitable communication is able to take place. Both author and audience bring certain expectations and understandings to the genre and it is the recognition of and adherence to these conventions (at least in part) that allows the author to convey meaning and the audience to understand meaning. Conversely, one can imagine the confusion that would prevail if the author purported to present the information in a particular generic form (as a comedy for instance), but actually presented the material in another genre (a tragedy perhaps). The information would essentially be the same, but the meaning and interpretive process on the part of the audience would be quite different. Both author and audience must be in some agreement as to the expectations and patterns of genre if effective communication is to be achieved.

What is of interest here is the genre that the author chooses as the form through which the message or information is transmitted. Why choose one genre over another when disclosing a particular message? More appropriate to the central question of this thesis: Why did the Gospel writers choose βίοι as the literary means to tell the Jesus story? Was there

3. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 38.

4. Todorov argues for the relationship between the institutionalized nature of genres and the 'contractual' nature of the shared expectations of authors and audiences/readers. See Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Origin of Genres', in David Duff (ed.), *Modern Genre Theory* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 193-209 (199-200).

5. Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 31.

6. Dubrow, *Genre*, p. 31.

7. Dubrow, *Genre*, p. 31.

something inherent within the genre itself that was particularly effective in disseminating the Jesus traditions? Moreover, was there a particular sub-type of βίος that was more effective in telling the story of Jesus?

In consideration of these questions, this article has three aims: (1) to present a clear and consistent theory of genre and sub-genre that takes into account the flexibility and diversity within βίοι as it developed from the fifth century BCE to the fourth century CE; (2) to present and critique current typologies for the genre of βίος; and (3) to propose a new sub-genre system for βίος based on the relationship between author, subject and the intended audience. The aim is the production of a helpful and useful typology for βίος, with a particular emphasis on the question of authorship and audience, as well as recognition of the impact that such a typology may have on further Gospel study.

2. *Genre Theory: Relational and Familial Functions of Genre and Sub-Genre*

a. *What is Genre? Some Ancient and Contemporary Approaches*
At the outset, it should be acknowledged that all texts or literary works belong to a genre or genres.[8] Framing a particular work or set of works within a generic schema enables reader and researcher alike to better extrapolate the meaning and message of the text. Without some generic comprehension, either conscious or sub-conscious, the reader is unable to unpack fully, if at all, the communicative efforts of the author. However, before one can engage the subject of genre formation and function, one has to tackle the issue of genre itself. What is a genre?

Freedman and Medway have argued that, 'traditional definitions of genre focused on textual regularities. In traditional literary studies the genres—sonnet, tragedy, ode, etc.—were defined by conventions of form and content.'[9] Thus, genres were defined rigidly according to organization and subject matter. Indeed, this desire for conformity dominates the literary discussions of Plato (*Republic* 392d), Aristotle (*Poetics* 1447a-1448a), and Cicero (*Orator* 70-75), where an adherence to 'types' is of

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8.   Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', in Duff (ed.), *Modern Genre Theory*, pp. 219-31 (230).

9.   Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway, 'Locating Genre Studies: Antecedents and Prospects', in Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway (eds.), *Genre and the New Rhetoric* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), pp. 1-20 (1).

great importance.[10] However, there are two important provisos to be considered when attempting to construct or reconstruct systems of generic theory in antiquity. First, the definition of genre itself runs the risk of being reduced to futility if all the subdivisions that the ancient commentators acknowledged are thought to be genres in and of themselves.[11] While ancient literary critics were well acquainted with genre and genre distinctions, this does not imply that these distinctions were universally followed, which brings us to the second proviso.[12] While generic and aesthetic distinctions were recognized in antiquity, neither the critics nor authors adhered to the rules of genre. Often writers, critics and authors alike, would acknowledge the principles of generic construction, and then ignore them in their own compositions. Philosophical reasons aside, the existence of texts that do not conform to the rules of *decorum* would provide an impetus for literary critics to take up the pen in defense of aesthetic sensibility.

It has been suggested that the ancient classifications of genre are unclear, especially regarding biography, and, as a result, the employment of modern literary theory may be of some use.[13] Yet it is fundamental to remember that the application of modern theory to ancient texts is done with the aim of providing a useful and helpful way of organizing and understanding the material. What is to be avoided is looking at ancient texts with anachronistic views and expectations, thus doing violence to

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10. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 26-27. In acknowledging Aristotle's desire to avoid the mixing of styles, Colie points to the connection between the aesthetic and social dimensions. She writes, 'It was in the service of this mimesis that Aristotle contributed a social dimension, or decorum, to the literary modes he canonized, narrative, dramatic, and lyric, modes then subdivided into genres—epic, tragic, comic, etc. In the imitation of reality, a high style benefits its high subject—epic or tragic; a low style a low subject, comedy or some lyric forms. Since Cicero expressed outright what is implied in Aristotle's formula, namely that styles must not be mixed (comic style is a defect in tragedy, tragic style in comedy, etc.)… The breaking of decorum, in this case, has to do with social as well as aesthetic premises' (Rosalie Colie, 'Genre-systems and the Functions of Literature', in Duff [ed.], *Modern Genre Theory*, pp. 148-66 [151]).

11. Ineke Slutier, 'The Dialectics of Genre: Some Aspects of Secondary Literature and Genre in Antiquity', in Mary Depew and Dirk Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 183-203 (203).

12. Slutier, 'The Dialectics of Genre', p. 203.

13. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 59-60; Joseph Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985), pp. 12-14.

the texts and their *Weltanschauung*. With this in mind, I would like to adopt the working definition put forth by Depew and Obbink, which defines genre as 'a conceptual orienting device that suggests to a hearer the sort of receptional conditions in which a fictive discourse might have been delivered'.[14] Communication, written or otherwise, is in effect always a discourse, actualized or fictive. As a result, genre enables the hearer/reader to understand the conditions and expectations of the discourse. This definition is advantageous for the following reasons: (1) it imagines genre as an integral part of discourse and thereby acknowledges the roles of the deliverer and receiver in this process; (2) it is not confined to literary transmission as the sole representation of generic output and, as such, it allows for a wider discussion of generic features, including orality, oral transmission and oral performance; and (3) it allows for a greater measure of flexibility, as it posits genre to be a conceptual device, and it is not an attempt to couch genre in specific structural or thematic terms.[15] This definition is broad enough to cover the development of a particular genre over a period of time, and specific enough to locate genre within a communicative matrix. Whereas in antiquity literary critics regarded a genre as a static set of rules and expectations for how literature was to be produced, with a heavy emphasis on aesthetic concerns, modern conceptualizations of genre emphasize its role in communication, apart from artistic value.

b. *How Do Genres Function? Flexibility and Familial Relationships*
Glenn W. Most, in his study of genre, has observed that there is an undeniable relationship between authors and genres: one cannot exist without the other.[16] Most has identified eight principles of genre function that he concludes are 'self-evident'.[17] While far from being self-evident, the principles he delineates are helpful for understanding how genres operate. According to Most, genres perform in the followings ways: (1) genres give voice to authors to express their experiences and

14.   Mary Depew and Dirk Obbink, 'Introduction', in Depew and Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society*, pp. 1-14 (6).

15.   This can be compared with the work of Yury Tynyanov who sees no static definition of genre. Furthermore, genres evolve and fluctuate, often at the expense of generic features (Yury Tynyanov, 'The Literary Fact', in Duff [ed.], *Modern Genre Theory*, pp. 29-49 [32]).

16.   Glenn W. Most, 'Generating Genres: The Idea of the Tragic', in Depew and Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society*, pp. 15-35 (16).

17.   Most, 'Generating Genres', p. 16.

worldview; (2) some genres allow for the perceptible role of the authors, while others do not; (3) any generic rule can be violated, and no two rules have the same weight; (4) generic roles often function at a sub-conscious level; (5) authors are able to express their individuality vis-à-vis their imitation and/or defiance of generic conventions; (6) no text is exclusive to one genre or is fully representative of an entire genre;[18] (7) new genres can only be created by transforming older ones; and (8) a text's use of genre is in reality a reflection of the genre, the text itself, and genres in general.[19] Furthermore, as genre functions as a set of expectations it allows a wide variety of participants, with differing skill levels, to participate in communicative and 'literary procedures'.[20]

The sort of flexibility that is demonstrated in Most's model is demonstrated especially well when one considers how new genres are formed. Contrary to opinions in certain strands in biblical scholarship, genres are not formed *ex nihilo* or apart from other genres.[21] On the contrary, new genres come from pre-existing ones and genres rarely completely disappear, even in the face of new generic forms, but rather, they are displaced.[22] This versatility of function can be seen in Kurylo-wicz's fourth law of analogy: 'When two forms come into competition for one function, the newer form may take over that function, and the older form may become relegated to a sub-category of its earlier function.'[23] To provide a concrete example, it may be the case that at one point, encomia were used as a means of distributing biographical information about important persons, albeit with less focus on historicity

18. This type of flexibility can be seen in another way in Burridge's assertion concerning fluid generic boundaries and the possibility for one genre to employ other generic forms. See Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 62-66.

19. Most, 'Generating Genres', p. 16.

20. Most, 'Generating Genres', pp. 17-18.

21. Cf. Rudolph Bultmann, 'The Gospels (Form)', in Jaroslav Pelikan (ed.), *Twentieth Century Theology in the Making* (trans. R.A. Wilson; London: Collins, 1969), pp. 86-92 (89); R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd edn, 1972), pp. 373-74. Robert Guelich sees the Gospels as derivative in form but unique in content (*Mark 1–8:26* [WBC, 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989], pp. xix-xxii).

22. Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Origin of Genres', in Duff (ed.), *Modern Genre Theory*, pp. 193-209 (195-97).

23. Gregory Nagy, 'Reading Bakhtin Reading the Classics: An Epic Fate for Conveyors of the Historic Past', in Bracht R. Branham (ed.), *Bakhtin and the Classics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), pp. 71-96 (73).

and with a greater concern for praise of the individual.[24] However, as biography developed and took up the function of disseminating biographical information, encomium did not disappear *per se*, but became subsumed under the new genre of biography and thus became a 'type' of biography. It may be the case then that, though the encomium genre survived, in that there were still encomia texts being written, the genre at this point no longer served a biographical purpose but one primarily of acclamation.[25]

The discussion of any genre is largely a discussion of the 'history of individual instances'.[26] Such instances cannot always be used to piece together a strict and stringent rule of generic function. This means that the use of certain types of expressions, literary or otherwise, is not due to the codification of rules and designations.[27] Furthermore, the genres that function within a given society are chosen by the society because they are the ones that conform most closely to the ideologies of the society.[28] This

24.   Ian Worthington recognizes the use of dubious historical 'facts' on the part of orators and this raises some questions as to the historicity of Isocrates' *Evagoras* as a biographical sketch. In a related discussion, Fantuzzi explores Theocritus's use of demythologized characters in his bucolic poetry and encomium. This raises further questions as to the relationship between historical fact in the biographical presentations of encomium and the nature of the innovations from encomium to biography as it relates to a more 'factual' presentation. Cf. Ian Worthington, 'History and Rhetorical Exploration', in Ian Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (New York/London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 109-29 (109); and Marco Fantuzzi, 'Theocritus and the "Demythologizing" of Poetry', in Depew and Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society*, pp. 135-51 (150-51).

25.   For some discussion on flexibility within narrative and the possibility of innovations while adhering to stock forms and traditional materials, especially within gnomai, see Christopher Carey, 'Rhetorical Means of Expression', in Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, pp. 26-68 (42); André Lardinois, 'The Wisdom and Wit of Many: The Orality of Greek Proverbial Expressions', in Janet Watson (ed.), *Speaking Volumes: Orality and Literacy in the Greek and Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 93-107 (105-106). Similarly, on the power dynamics within genres and the relationship of dominant genres to lesser genres, see John Snyder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay, and the Theory of Genre* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1991).

26.   John Snyder, *Prospects of Power*, p. 1.

27.   Benedetto Croce, 'Criticism of the Theory of Artistic and Literary Kinds', in Duff (ed.), *Modern Genre Theory*, pp. 25-28 (28).

28.   Todorov, 'The Origin of Genres', p. 200. Peter Toohey has observed the rise of literacy within the elite and as a replacement of oral expression in the writings of Apollonius of Alexandria (296–235 BCE). The rise of literacy may be connected to

is why some genres appear in certain cultures and not in others.[29] The relationship between ideology and genre may explain why there were no βίοι proper in Greece prior to the fourth century BCE, as the emphasis on the individual was not a widely accepted Greek ideology in the preceding centuries.

If the chief operating feature of genres is their flexibility and lack of formal designations, then what, if anything, can we say about how they behave as an organizing force? Genres are inherently functional as they serve to order and form how a particular piece of literature is experienced as a communicative expression.[30] They provide an organizing principle that is much 'more like that of families than classes'.[31] Alastair Fowler's work on genre theory has proven to be of great benefit to this discussion. He writes the following on generic classifications:

> In literature, the basis of resemblance lies in literary tradition. What produces generic resemblances, reflection soon shows, is tradition: a sequence of influence and imitation and inherited codes connecting works in the genre. As kinship makes a family, so literary relations of this sort form a genre. Poems are made in part from older poems: each is the child (to use Keats' metaphor) of an earlier representative of the genre and may yet be the mother of a subsequent representative. Naturally, the genetic make-up alters with slow time, so that we may find the genre's various historical states to be very different from one another. Both historically and within a single period, the family grouping allows for wide variation in the type.[32]

The process of imitation and influence, much like the practice of mimesis in ancient literature, works to unite certain individual works together in a familial framework. It is the similarities that arise from common sources and examples that unite distinct works into a common family. It is not the adherence to a static set of rules or expectations that creates one genre over and against another. On the contrary, it is the received tradition, the culmination of common source materials and literary relationships that forms a particular genre. These familial relationships are further demonstrated by the evolution and innovation that takes place with-

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'interiorization'. This raises questions as to the rise of the importance of the individual as a historical and intellectual subject and the importance of biographical literature in this enterprise. Cf. Peter Toohey, 'Epic and Rhetoric', in Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, pp. 153-75 (163-70).

29. Todorov, 'The Origin of Genres', p. 200.
30. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 38.
31. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 41.
32. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, pp. 42-43.

in a genre over time. Often these changes take place at a subconscious level, both on the part of the author and the reader. At other times, the innovations are purposeful (e.g. Plutarch, *Alexander* 1.1-3; *Nicias* 1.5; or Cornelius Nepos, *Pelopidas* 1.1). Thus, it is possible for a wide variety of literature (such as the βίοι which develop from the fourth century BCE to the fourth century CE) to fit into the same generic family.

Sub-genres have a similar function to that of genres. They are also flexible and serve a functional and descriptive role. Sub-genres are intrinsically subjective. They serve to divide generic material in any number of ways (structure, content, etc.) and the manner by which they are chosen correlates directly to the conscious or sub-conscious concerns of the one seeking to classify a given genre into sub-genres. Certainly, sub-genres bear a familial resemblance to the genres to which they belong, but sub-generic categories can take any number of forms. In the same way that no one example of literature exhausts the limits of a genre, and just as no piece of literature is confined to only one genre, so is it the case that no one typology of sub-genre is adequate to definitively sub-divide the literature of a particular genre.[33] In order to cope with the variety present within genres a number of sub-genres may be needed. It is precisely the attempts to deduce a definitive typology that have hindered the understanding of biography specifically and literature in general. Undoubtedly, the questions that the scholar wishes to ask of the text will be the basis for the typology that is produced to organize the text.

In summation: (1) Genres are flexible and they can be subsumed by other stronger genres at different periods of development. Further, genres are reflective of the ideologies of the societies in which they function. Societal ideology accounts for the differences that exist in generic expression from one culture to the next. (2) Genres function in familial relationships. They are not a static set of rules but a set of expectations on the part of the author and audience, and they are shaped and influenced by tradition, emulation, and innovation. (3) Sub-genres are similarly flexible and they are functional as they are effective in answering the questions that the reader brings to a group of texts (in a genre). Both genres and sub-genres are essentially descriptive and not prescriptive. What is of interest here are the various typologies that have been offered for βίοι and what, if anything, they tell us about Greco-Roman biography.

33. Most, 'Generating Genres', p. 16.

3. *Recent Typologies of* βίοι

a. *Friedrich Leo*

Written in 1901, Friedrich Leo's work, *Die griechish–römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form*, stands as the classic text on the history and development of Greco-Roman biography.[34] Among Leo's achievements is the typology he proposed for βίοι, which consists of two types. Leo recognizes the profound difficulty in attempting to reconstruct the history and development of ideas and literary forms that evolved over nearly eight centuries.[35] In addition, the progression of βίοι is obscured due to the forms (intermediate and otherwise) and expressions of the genre that are lost and no longer available to us.[36] Leo argues that the roots of βίοι are to be found in the Athenian interest in individuals as examples worthy of moral imitation, and in particular the Peripatetics.[37] A potential difficulty in this argument is what Momigliano sees as the antecedents to βίοι in the century before the Socratics.[38] Further, the rise of biography may be attributable to the cultural exchange between the Greeks in the west and the Persians in the east, with biographical and autobiographical expressions already in existence in Persia.[39] While the Peripatetics, as an extension of the Socratics, cannot be fully credited with the creation of Greek biography, it should be noted that the Socratics were the pioneers of the biographical endeavors of the fourth century BCE.[40]

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34. Friedrich Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901).

35. Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, p. 315.

36. Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, p. 315.

37. Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, pp. 315-16.

38. Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2nd edn, 1993), pp. 23-33. Two examples of biographical expression/experimentation from the fifth century BCE are Skylax's *Biography of Heraclides of Mylasa* and Xanthus of Lydia's *Life of Empedocles*. For a more complete presentation of the arguments concerning these two works, see Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, pp. 28-33. For what may be the most complete compilation of Greco-Roman biography from the fifth century BCE to the fourth century CE, see Klaus Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament', *ANRW* 2.25.2 (1984), pp. 1031-1432, esp. pp. 1232-36.

39. Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, pp. 33-38.

40. Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, p. 46.

Out of the historical framework of the Peripatos, under the influence of Aristotle, two distinct types of biography emerge.[41] Peripatetic biography grew out of the Peripatos, (which Leo associated with Plutarch's *Lives*, where Plutarch adapts his material to conform to an earlier established Peripatetic model). It was arranged in a chronological structure with attention to literary development, with a possible emphasis on the oral performance of these works and with the lives of generals and politicians as the preferred subjects.[42] Leo attributes the origination of the Peripatetic strand of biography to Aristoxenus of Tarentum (fourth century BCE) with his biographical presentations of Archytus, Socrates and Plato.[43] Alexandrian biography (associated with Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars*) had none of the literary ambitions of the Peripatetic type, as it was intended for private study as opposed to public performance.[44] It avoided the chronological order of the Peripatetic type and arranged the material in a systematic or itemized manner. This type of biography was associated with the grammarians at the Museum of Alexandria and was well suited for the lives of poets and artists, and in particular, this biographical arrangement can be seen in Satyrus's *Life of Euripides* (third century BCE).[45]

Few scholars continue to accept Leo's findings unequivocally. Two recent attempts have been made to reform his typology. Fritz Wehrli modified Leo's two-fold structure to include three types of biography as well as the possible inclusion of transitional forms.[46] Wehrli proposes

41.   Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, pp. 316-17.

42.   Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, pp. 316-17.

43.   Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, p. 102; Duane Reed Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), p. 130; Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament', p. 1233.

44.   Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, p. 318.

45.   Leo, *Die griechish-römische Biographie*, p. 318. For more discussion of this period of biographical development and Leo's contribution to its study, see Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, pp. 155-88, esp. 185-87; Charles H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 92-93, in which Talbert presents an interesting reading of Leo's typology; Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 6-12; David E. Aune, 'Greco-Roman Biography', in David E. Aune (ed.), *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 107-26, esp. p. 108; Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 71-72.

46.   Fritz Wehrli, 'Gnome, Anekdote und Biographie', *Museum Helveticum* 30 (1973), pp. 193-208 (193).

that Greco-Roman biography can be delineated as (1) lives of philoso-
phers and poets (with the material being chronologically arranged); (2)
encomia of generals and political leaders; and (3) lives of literary
characters.[47] Similarly, Klaus Berger has proposed the following typolo-
gy: (1) The Encomium type (Isocrates, Xenophon, Philo, Tacitus, Luci-
an); (2) the Peripatetic type, which is a chronological representation of
the moral character of a person as seen through their actions (Plutarch);
(3) the popular-novelistic type (*Life of Aesop*, *Life of Secundus the Silent
Philosopher*); and (4) the Alexandrian type, consisting of a systematic
presentation of the life events (Suetonius).[48] The two-fold typology of
Leo is not equipped to handle the diversity of literature that makes up
βίοι or biographically inclined genres.

  The clear-cut typology of Leo, based primarily on the arrangement of
the material as either chronological (Peripatetic) or as systematic
(Alexandrian), fails as it is unable to account for biographical works
where both organizational structures are included.[49] One such example is
Xenophon's *Agesilaus* which combines both chronological (1-2) and
topical (3-11) presentations of the life of the hero. Joseph Geiger has
raised serious doubts that political biography, as either a genre or type
among Peripatetic biography, existed in the Hellenistic period.[50] More-
over, Geiger argues that political biography was a creation of the Imperi-
al period and was necessary as a means to separate the biography of
political figures from historiography of similar subjects.[51] There was no
such problem with biographies of literary figures as there was no other
genre that threatened to blur the lines of literary biography in the same
way that historiography threatened biographies of political figures.[52]
Further, there is significant doubt as to whether the term Peripatetic was
used in a definitively technical sense in ancient times and there is doubt
as to the extent that 'Peripatetics' had common 'interests and methods'.[53]

  47.   Wehrli, 'Gnome, Anekdote und Biographie', p. 193.
  48.   Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament', p. 1236. Also, see
Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, pp. 157-58 for another possible
typology for ancient biography based on authorial intent and intended audience.
  49.   Aune, 'Greco-Roman Biography', p. 108; Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*,
p. 73.
  50.   Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography*, p. 32.
  51.   Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography*, pp. 22-23.
  52.   Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography*, pp. 22-23.
  53.   Stephanie West, 'Satyrus: Peripatetic or Alexandrian?', *GRBS* 15 (1974), pp.
279-97 (281).

While Leo's typology is advantageous as a means of identifying certain structural features of βίοι, and in particular, subject matter and arrangement of material, it proves to be incapable of giving a satisfactory account of βίοι. The highly nuanced nature of the material, the extensive time frame in which βίοι developed, as well as the gaps present in the literary evidence, renders it unsatisfactory. Leo's typological attempt highlights some of the unique challenges that are requisite with characterizations of literature of this sort. Significant attention needs to be given to (1) the role of sub-genre/types of literature and the methodology by which they are defined; (2) the particular history of the development of the genre of βίοι; and (3) the diversity and flexibility of the genre of βίοι and its relationship to other *genera proxima.*

b. *Charles H. Talbert*

Charles Talbert's contributions to the discussion of the relationship of the genre of the Gospels to that of Greco-Roman biography have been important and varied.[54] While Talbert's work spans a number of issues related to Gospel genre and its ancient parallels, the issue that is of particular interest here is his proposed classification for Greco-Roman biography.

In *What Is a Gospel?*, Talbert identifies four main classifications of Greco-Roman biography. In addition to the Peripatetic and Alexandrian types, Talbert distinguishes an Encomium type of ancient biography, characterized by Isocrates' *Evagoras*, *Busiris* and *Helen* as well as Xenophon's *Agesilaus* and Tacitus's *Agricola*.[55] To these three types, Talbert would add a fourth categorization or the 'romantic or popular' type such

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54.   Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke–Acts* (SBLMS, 20; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974); *idem*, 'The Concept of Immortals in Mediterranean Antiquity', *JBL* 94 (1975), pp. 419-36; *idem*, 'The Myth of a Descending–Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity', *NTS* 22 (1976), pp. 418-40; *idem*, *What Is a Gospel?*; *idem*, 'Biographies of Philosophers and Rulers as Instruments of Religious Propaganda in Mediterranean Antiquity', *ANRW* 1.16.2 (1978), pp. 1619-51; *idem*, 'Once Again: Gospel Genre', *Semeia* 43 (1988), pp. 53-73; *idem*, 'Reading Aune's Reading of Talbert', in his *Reading Luke–Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu* (NovTSup, 107; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 57-63; *idem*, 'Prophecies of Future Greatness: The Contributions of Greco-Roman Biographies to an Understanding of Luke 1:5–4:1', in *Reading Luke–Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu*, pp. 65-77.

55.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 92.

as the anonymous *Secundus the Silent Philosopher* and *The Life Aesop*.[56] Talbert argues that such classifications are based essentially on two principles: (1) the composition of formal elements; and (2) the extent to which each is historically reliable.[57] Furthermore, and perhaps more significant, Talbert asserts that any such classification is 'purely descriptive' and that classifications of this sort are only as valuable as they are viable.[58] Talbert raises the question regarding to what extent such classifications are useful for saying anything meaningful about the literature in question. Such classifications can confine as much as illuminate the discussion. As a result, Talbert suggests that it may be useful to construct new organizational patterns as a means of culling innovative insights from the material.

In light of his suggestion that a fresh classification for ancient biography may be necessary, Talbert suggests a two-fold classification that is to be used in conjunction with that of Leo as opposed to replacing it. Talbert proposes that Greco-Roman biography be categorized as either didactic or non-didactic, with didactic 'Lives' that call 'for emulation of the hero or avoidance of his example and non-didactic Lives that are unconcerned with moral example'.[59] Talbert establishes his classification 'on the basis of the criterion of the *function(s)* of the writings in their social–intellectual–spiritual milieu'.[60] Thus, ancient biography can be classified as didactic or non-didactic, with didactic lives being interested in the propagandistic enterprise of compelling an audience toward or away from the emulation of a certain person of note. The vast majority of Greco-Roman biographies would be considered didactic, with propagandistic functions (encomium, peripatetic and popular–romantic), while the 'Alexandrian or grammatical type' would be non-didactic.[61]

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56.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 92.
57.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 93.
58.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 93.
59.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 93.
60.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 93 (emphasis original). Much of Talbert's argument here stems from what is the central focus of the work in question, namely a refutation of Bultmann and the form-critical assertions that the Gospels do not belong to any ancient genre. For a treatment of Talbert's arguments against Bultmann, see David E. Aune, 'The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels: A Critique of C.H. Talbert's *What Is a Gospel?*', in R.T. France and David Wenham (eds.), *Gospel Perspectives II: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), pp. 9-60; and Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 80-81.
61.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 93.

Talbert subdivides didactic biographies into five categories or functions: (1) Type A: Biographies that function as a pattern of emulation (e.g. Lucian, *Demonax*); (2) Type B: Biographies that function to replace a false image of a teacher or figure of renown with a true representation that should then be seen as worthy of emulation (e.g. Xenophon, *Memorabilia*); (3) Type C: Biographies that function to expose a teacher or individual as false or flawed (e.g. Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*); (4) Type D: Biographies that function to record and establish the true delineation of a particular school or philosophy by documenting the succession of the students from the teacher and thus establishing orthodoxy via succession; and (5) Type E: Biographies that function to shed understanding on the behavior or teachings of a particular figure especially in instances where the behavior is peculiar, strange, or out of step with social norms (e.g. *Secundus the Silent Philosopher*).[62]

In his 1974 monograph, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke–Acts*, Talbert compares the generic features of Luke–Acts to those of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.[63] Through his analysis of the parallel structures of the two works, he is able to conclude that Luke–Acts fits most appropriately within the genre of Greco-Roman biography and that it most closely conforms to the sub-genre of biography that 'dealt with the lives of philosophers and their successors'.[64] This work proved to be important as a foundational study of the genre of the Gospels and their connections to contemporary first-century literature. However, Talbert's conclusions, in terms of both typology and the generic relatedness of Luke–Acts, have proven to be problematic as well.

David E. Aune has raised a number of criticisms of Talbert's typology. Aune has argued that while Talbert focuses his typology on the *function* of the different types of βίοι, this structure ignores other 'important generic features' and as such, it is incapable of accounting for the complexities of the biographic genre.[65] Talbert's typology offers little in

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62.   Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, pp. 94-96.
63.   Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, pp. 125-40.
64.   Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, p. 134.
65.   Aune, 'Greco-Roman Biography', p. 109. Of some interest are the comments that Aune makes concerning the Gospels as 'a subtype of Greco-Roman biography determined by content, reflecting Judeo-Christian assumptions' (David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987], p. 46). However, Aune does not expand upon his assertion to describe a potential type for Greco-Roman biography,

the way of a formalistic classification for biography.[66] Talbert does little to establish a clear differentiation between genre and type or sub-genre. The lack of consideration of genre and literary theory raises questions regarding to what extent Talbert's sub-genres of didactic and non-didactic biography can be further subdivided along his five-part structure of *function*, as well as questions as to 'how genres and "types" are determined'.[67] Furthermore, as both Burridge and Aune have suggested, the structure that Talbert proposes is problematic in and of itself. Burridge has pointed out that while Talbert seeks to differentiate the sub-genres of βίοι on the grounds of function, his classification is best understood as one of purpose.[68] Consequently, it is possible to argue that many βίοι had multiple purposes and so it is not possible to place them so neatly into Talbert's categories. Similarly, Aune has argued that even if the assertion that biography can be sub-divided along the lines of social function is accepted, it is nearly impossible to determine the exact social function of a given biography and thus Talbert's classification fails his own criteria of efficacy.[69]

Talbert's designation of Luke–Acts as belonging to the sub-genre of 'succession narratives' points to one of the more glaring difficulties in his typology or sub-categorization of biography. Talbert proposes that Mark and John are 'Type B' biographies, Matthew is a 'Type E' biography, while Luke–Acts is 'Type D'. This presents a rather confused picture of the Gospels, with the Synoptics being of completely different types. In addition, Talbert's use of the primary sources, particularly Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Philosophers*, is suspect both in terms of the proposed formal and generic connections between it and Luke–Acts and in terms of the formal designation of *Lives of Philosophers* as comprising a distinct sub-genre of 'succession narrative'.[70] Thus, Talbert's

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66. Aune, 'The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels', p. 39.

67. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 82. One of the difficulties here arises from the way that Talbert seems to use the terms 'classification' and 'type' interchangeably. While it may be possible that a 'type can be entirely represented in a single instance', as Talbert proposes with his Type D or 'Succession' Type, 'a class is usually thought of as an array of instances'. Cf. E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 50. Talbert's proposal becomes muddled, as he makes no distinction between class and type.

68. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 82.

69. Aune, 'The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels', p. 40.

70. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, p. 79.

conclusions place each of the Synoptic Gospels into a different sub-genre with Luke–Acts occupying a dubious 'type' at best.

Talbert's typology is unsuccessful for three reasons. First, he fails to give a proper account of genre theory and ignores the difficulties that are associated with how genres and types are determined. Secondly, he fails to acknowledge the historical development of βίος as a genre and places βίοι from differing historical periods side by side as though they formed a coherent and unchanging literary tradition.[71] Thirdly, the rigidity of Talbert's typology is incapable of adequately handling the fluidity of the genre of βίος as he forces sub-genre labels onto material that may not adequately support them.[72] Although his typology is flawed, Talbert should be commended for suggesting a new and inventive way to view Greco-Roman biography. Furthermore, his recognition that typologies are inherently descriptive is an important observation for future attempts to classify βίοι. Finally, Talbert should be credited with advancing the discussion of Gospel genre beyond the arguments of the form critics and he should be credited with helping to move the discussion of Gospel genre into the mainstream of biblical studies.

c. *Richard A. Burridge*

Richard A. Burridge's *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* stands as a landmark work in the field of biblical studies and serves as the definitive discussion to date on the genre of the Gospels. Burridge's work has made remarkable strides in turning the scholarly consensus toward viewing the Gospels as examples of βίοι. *What Are the Gospels?* has proven to be important for its

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71. Talbert does attempt to differentiate what is essential and what is non-essential to the genre of βίος. While this proves to be helpful in some ways, Talbert concludes that the only thing that is essential to βίος is that the work be devoted to describing the essence of a prominent person. This does little in the way of acknowledging the historical development of Greco-Roman biography. See Talbert, 'Once Again: Gospel Genre', pp. 53-73, esp. pp. 54-58. For Talbert's defense of his work, see 'Reading Aune's Reading of Talbert', pp. 57-63.

72. The use of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* and fragmentary evidence for a third century BCE *Life of Aristotle* as the sole representatives of Type D biographies presents an interesting if implausible case. The lack of evidence makes assigning a specific sub-genre to this material disputable, and further highlights the difficulty of the task of establishing a typology when much of the material in question is now lost to us. See Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, pp. 125-40 and *idem*, *What Is a Gospel?*, pp. 95-96.

contributions to the discussion of the generic features of βίοι and their relationship to the Gospels.

Burridge has shown great sensitivity to the matters of genre analysis and theory as well as sensitivity to the historical development of βίος as a genre. He devotes an entire chapter to genre criticism and literary theory (ch. 2), and is able to conclude the following: first, the Gospels are not '*unique in terms of genre*', as this is a literary impossibility.[73] Each genre has in itself the resonance of other generic forms that precede it. Literature is not created in a vacuum, and as such, any generic form is dependent on other forms even if the 'new' form presents material in an entirely innovative way.[74] Secondly, '*the gospels must be compared with literature of their own day*'.[75] The temptation to compare the Gospels with modern biography must be avoided as it will produce dubious results and subject the Gospels to literary criteria that are not suitable for correct comparison. Finally, most writers who have suggested genres for the Gospels have not properly taken into account genre theory and the appropriate literary levels that are at work in generic analysis.[76] There has been widespread confusion between modes (or literary types) and genres; thus, while one can conclude that Luke is a historiography because it contains certain historiographic modes, Luke is better understood as βίος upon a closer review of its form, content and especially its subject matter.[77]

One of Burridge's most important contributions to the discussion of Gospel genre is his recognition of the fundamentally flexible nature of βίος as a genre and its symbiotic relationship with other genres such as

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73. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 51 (emphasis original). Also see Richard A. Burridge, 'Biography', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 B.C.–A.D. 400)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 371-420; *idem*, 'The Gospels and Acts', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 B.C.–A.D. 400)*, pp. 507-32; *idem*, 'About People, by People, for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences', in Richard J. Bauckham (ed.), *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 113-46; *idem*, 'Who Writes, Why, and for Whom?', in Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner (eds.), *The Written Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 99-115.

74. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 51 (all emphases original unless noted).

75. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 51.

76. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 51-52.

77. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 52.

encomium, historiography, novel, philosophical polemic and the like.[78] This helps to explain the overlap between βίος and other literary modes present in similar genres. As Burridge has observed, any '*attempt to consider the gospels as βίοι must always take account of this wider picture of its flexible and developing nature*'.[79]

However, the accommodating literary nature of βίος should not be misunderstood, as there are distinguishable characteristics, both external and internal, that separate βίος from neighboring genres. Burridge devotes three chapters to the subject of the generic features of βίοι in theory as well as to the genre's generic development through the Hellenistic and Imperial periods (chs. 5, 6 and 7 respectively). Here he separates the generic characteristics into opening features, subject, external features and internal features.[80] Burridge further sub-divides the opening features into (1) title and (2) opening formulae/prologue/ preface.[81] He breaks down subjects into (1) an analysis of the verbs' subjects and (2) allocation of space.[82] The external features are separated into (1) mode of representation, (2) meter, (3) size and length, (4) structure or sequence, (5) scale, (6) literary units, (7) use of sources and (8) methods of characterization.[83] Finally, he allocates the internal features into (1) setting, (2) topics/τόποι/motifs, (3) style, (4) tone/mood/attitude/values, (5) quality of characterization, (6) social setting and occasion, and (7) authorial intention and purpose.[84] Burridge's study of the generic features of βίος is helpful both as a means of putting ancient biography into a complete and structured literary framework and also as a study of the formal changes and adaptations of βίος from the early Greco-Roman

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78.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 77.

79.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 77.

80.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 107. Cf. David L. Barr and Judith L. Wentling, 'The Conventions of Classical Biography and the Genre of Luke–Acts: A Preliminary Study', in Charles H. Talbert (ed.), *Luke–Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 63-88, esp. pp. 67-71, for a discussion of the conventions of classical biography. They recognize similar shared characteristics and relationship between βίος and its literary neighbors. However, the defining factor is the purpose of the work, which is, following Talbert, to relate to the reader the essence of the person in question. Also see Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 16; *idem*, 'Once Again: Gospel Genre', pp. 55-56.

81.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp.108-109.

82.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 109-13.

83.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 113-17.

84.	Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 117-22.

period to its latter stages. Thus, Burridge is able to avoid Talbert's oversight in assuming βίοι have a constant form.[85] Burridge, as previously noted, more than adequately deals with the complexities of genre theory as well as recognizing the fluidity of the genre itself. Thus, he is able to avoid many of the shortcomings of Talbert.

Where Burridge falls short is in providing a detailed and systematic typology or categorization for the sub-divisions of βίος. He mentions a number of possible sub-genres but does not propose a specific system. He states the following: 'Subgenres within βίος literature may be defined in terms of content (political vs philosophical–literary βίοι) or structure (chronological vs topical) or the influence of neighboring genres (historical vs encomiastic).'[86] Perhaps this brings the discussion back to Talbert's assertion that the questions that one asks of the text are going to determine the sorts of classifications used.[87] Consequently, if one is interested in the content of βίοι, a classification like Leo's, which is based on structure, will not suffice. To Burridge's credit, his objective is not to establish a definitive arrangement of the sub-genres of βίος, and so it is no wonder that his work excludes one. What both Burridge and Talbert point to is the flexibility with which sub-genres can be employed. As new questions arise, new designations become increasingly important. A rigid classification such as Leo's, or to a lesser extent, Talbert's, may be helpful in some contexts, but it is not always useful. Subsequently, it is necessary to offer a new typology of βίοι that is better equipped to answer questions of the text related to the relationship between the author, subject and audience.

4. *What Audience? Considering the Greco-Roman Audience*

Before we can propose a neoteric classification for the sub-genres of βίος, some attention should be paid to the issue of audience in the Greco-Roman world.[88] There are two areas of concern: (1) the function of

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85. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 98.

86. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, p. 77.

87. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, p. 93.

88. For the sake of brevity, I will focus my efforts on the second and first centuries BCE and the first century CE, as this is the literary and cultural context approximate to the Gospels. For some discussion, see William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London: Duckworth, 1985).

literacy and orality in Greco-Roman culture; and (2) the ways in which audience 'markets' functioned.[89] It is a mistake to suppose that literature functioned in the Roman Empire in the same way that it does in our current context. Similarly, the effect of literacy on the greater public will be of importance to the issues of genre and audience.

a. *Literacy and Orality*

William V. Harris has argued for an illiteracy rate in the early stages of the Roman Empire in the range of 90% or more.[90] To what extent then can literature be seen to function in a society where few can read and write effectively? Harris has further argued, 'There was no such thing as "popular literature" in the Roman Empire, if that means literature which became known to tens or hundreds of thousands of people by means of personal reading.'[91] Even in the advanced stages of the Empire, society remained highly oral.[92] The gradual shift towards the use of literature as a tool to disseminate information did not make it more common than the preexisting oral transmission of texts and ideas for both education and entertainment.[93] The elite often had texts read to them by slaves, and

89. Markets in this sense should be seen as analogous and not as 'markets' in the sense of targeted economically-empowered consumer groups. We are not referring to markets in the sense of advertising demographics, but more as interest groups.

90. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, pp. 22, 323-37, esp. p. 329. Here literacy is the ability to read and write simple sentences.

91. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 227. This assertion may cast doubts on the possibility of classifying biographies as popular, unless there was a literary innovation after the first century BCE that increased the literacy rates to the point where one can actually conceive of literature functioning on a 'popular' level. Rawson seems to contradict this assertion with the mention of a number of 'popular' literary types. However, it is unclear to what extent this sort of literature can be considered 'popular' in the wider sense, in a society where literacy was 10% or less. However, it is possible that a market niche for 'lower' literary forms existed. Cf. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, pp. 50-51.

92. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 226 and Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 51.

93. Similar conclusions can be made regarding the rise of rhetoric as a classifiable set of speech expectations and the legal contexts through which rhetoric rose. In the case of rhetoric, it overtook the utilitarian pre-rhetorical speech conventions, whereas literacy never completely overtook orality, even in the late Empire. One avenue for discussion is the connection between the rise of rhetoric and of literacy in legal contexts. See Michael Gagarin, 'Probability and Persuasion: Plato and Early Greek Rhetoric', in Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, pp. 46-68, esp. p. 59, and Carol G. Thomas and Edward Kent Webb, 'From

reading of poetry and other sorts of literature was often undertaken as part of entertainment at dinner parties and other social functions.[94] In conjunction with private readings, public readings and lectures were not uncommon.[95] Histories, poetry, oratory, philosophical explications and dramas were all performed in the public sphere.[96] While it is clear that the oral performance of texts added to the overall level of literary awareness, it is unclear to what extent this awareness permeated the lower social classes.

Elizabeth Rawson has argued that illiteracy would not have been a complete impediment to intellectual activity.[97] It was possible that even the poorly educated would have been able to acquire a measure of literacy and thus have been able to participate in the intellectual life of the Empire on some basis.[98] At the very least, the illiterate or semi-literate could engage in intellectual activities that were visually transmitted (statues or paintings).[99] Additionally, Rawson suggests that the unemployed, in both rural and urban settings, would have had spare time that could have been spent attending the theatre, which would have been available to most, as well as the opportunity of taking in the

Orality to Rhetoric: An Intellectual Transformation', in Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, pp. 3-25, esp. p. 10.

94. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 51. See also Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 226.

95. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, pp. 51-53.

96. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53. There may be some connections between genre and performance, as emoted literary pieces were intended to elicit a response/action from the audience. This would be as true of religious invocations as it would be of historical presentations or poetry. Performance was/is integral to the 'generic force' of a given piece of literature. See Joseph W. Day, 'Epigram and Reader: Generic Force as (Re-)Activation of Ritual', in Depew and Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society*, pp. 37-57 (37-38). The role of performance in the inculcation of social values and norms is also an important avenue for research. This has a connection to the subject of declamation as an educational tool for forming and re-forming norms. This use of oral performance raises some interesting questions as to the oral performance of Christian texts in the early Church. See Margaret Imber, 'Practiced Speech: Oral and Written Conventions in Roman Declamation', in Watson (ed.), *Speaking Volumes: Orality and Literacy in the Greek and Roman World*, pp. 201-12 (211-12).

97. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53.

98. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53. I am thinking here of some stock phrases or words that the illiterate would have been able to read. This may have worked with speaking languages (Latin, Greek, etc.) that were not the native tongue as well.

99. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53.

occasional public reading or lecture.[100] While this is certainly possible, it is altogether unclear how probable it was that the poor and unemployed would have filled their 'leisure' time with public readings and lectures. Nevertheless, the existence of public readings and performances presents the possibility that literature of a variety of types could have reached the 'masses' if in no other way than through oral transmission.

The oral nature of Roman society would seem to indicate that the practice of personal reading, that is, the practice of reading texts by one-self and for oneself, was relatively rare. This is not to say that it did not happen, but that the practice of personal reading occurred most often among 'scholars and writers, professional or amateur, Greek or Roman, of whom there was a larger number than is sometimes supposed'.[101] It is also likely that there were other groups that would have read the literature that was deposited in public and private collections. This wider group of readers would include scribes and bureaucrats, a number of freedmen, a limited number of women, and educated slaves.[102] This group would not have been highly educated but their reading and writing knowledge would have been functional and they would have had a greater access to texts than would the uneducated poor. What remains to be seen is what role religion and religious movements played in the literary life of the Empire and to what extent religious communities conformed to or challenged these models of literary function.

b. *Audiences as Markets*

Writers often produce literature with multiple audiences in mind. Conceptions of audience work most effectively when they take into account the notion that authors often intend their works to be read (or heard) widely and by diverse groups. This is as true now as it was in ancient times. While this may not hold true for all types of literature (certainly private correspondence and the like are not meant for multiple audiences), it certainly holds true for βίοι. While there is a justifiable temptation to suppose that ancient biographies were written with singular audiences in mind, that was rarely the case. Often literature was produced with multiple audiences in mind. Given this observation, how then do we understand the intended audiences of βίοι/*vitae*? As Richard Burridge has argued, it may be better to understand audiences of bio-

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100. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53.
101. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53.
102. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 53.

graphies in terms of 'market niches', by way of analogy, as opposed to discrete communities.[103]

When contemplating 'markets' or 'market niches' as audience models, three issues should be considered: (1) the existence of literary 'communities'; (2) primary and secondary audiences; and (3) definite and indefinite audiences/markets.

Audience as 'Community'. The notions of audiences of ancient biography as communities may function at some level (i.e. a particular philosophical school, occupation, religious tradition, etc.), however, the intended audiences of biography are rarely, if ever, confined to such determinate audience groups. On the contrary, quite often one group or individual uses a βίος as a means of directing a message to other groups.[104] As Burridge has shown, several examples emerge from the literary evidence, including the use of polemic and apology in the corpus of 'Cato literature', which emerged after the death of Cato the Younger.[105] The struggle over the collective memory of Cato as either a traitor or exemplar was carried out through the production of biographic literature. In some instances, the biographical memory was used to defame him (directed at those who revered him) and at other times, to defend him (directed at those who defamed him).[106] Similarly, Tacitus's *Agricola* was intended to defend his father-in-law against those who associated him with the depravity of Domitian's reign as well as against the jealous aspersions of Agricola's detractors.[107]

Two points emerge here: (1) biographies can be written for those outside of the 'community' that produces them;[108] and (2) the practice of biographical representation is in effect an act of legitimization and exercise of power over the memory of the subject. First, the use of polemic and apology within biographical representations points to an audience outside of the group producing the biography. Thus, the biography can function simultaneously to embolden the supporters of the

103. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', p. 143.
104. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', p. 131.
105. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', p. 132.
106. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', p. 132.
107. Cf. *Agricola* 1.4; and 42.1-4. See also Mike Bird, 'Bauckham's *The Gospels for All Christians* Revisited', *European Journal of Theology* 15.1 (2006), pp. 5-13 (6).
108. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', pp. 132-33.

subject and challenge his detractors. Accordingly, it makes little sense to speak of Cato 'communities' or 'Tacitean communities'.[109] On the contrary, these biographical works were intended for a wider audience group that encompassed those who were interested in Cato or Agricola as polarizing figures or in general.[110]

Secondly, the constructing of βίοι/*vitae* is an act of creating and exercising legitimacy over the memory and representation of an individual of note. Certainly the aim of any biography is to gather and disseminate proportedly accurate information about the subject, and thus to present an authoritative presentation of his life.[111] The creation of biographical literature is the 'codification' of the individual's life. The aims and purposes of the author are integral to the shaping and publication of the material.[112] The formulation and shaping of biographical material into a legitimate βίος takes on a wider range of meaning when the impetus for such a piece of literature can be 'identified with particular aims'.[113] In this way, biographies cease to be mere entertainment or stories and take on a greater sense of meaning. This appropriated meaning of the life of an individual could then be aimed at those who had adopted a complementary view or those who had not. The authoritative portrait of the figure would affect a number of groups (bolstering supporters' memories of the figure and challenging the portrait painted by detractors). But these groups, as polarized as they might be, would not constitute 'communities' as such, and the biographical literature produced as a result of their debates would have been read by others as well.

Primary and Secondary Audiences. The inclusion of dedicatory references in many βίοι/*vitae* can lead to the mistaken conclusion that biographies were written with singular audiences in mind. On the contrary, as Rawson has acknowledged, the Roman literary landscape was one dominated by patronage (at least in the general sense of the exchange of 'reciprocal services between individuals of equal or unequal

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109. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', p. 133.

110. Burridge, 'About People, by People, for People', p. 133.

111. Simon Swain, 'Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire', in M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 1-37 (2).

112. Swain, 'Biography and Biographic', p. 2.

113. Swain, 'Biography and Biographic', p. 2.

status').[114] The dedication of particular works to a patron did not necessaryily dictate a modification of the material to fit the needs, education or personality of the patron.[115] In some instances, the patron functioned as the primary audience of the work; in other instances, where there is no dedication, another primary audience may be envisioned.[116] However, the presence of a patron is not indicative of the patron as the sole audience.

For example, Cornelius Nepos includes a dedication to Atticus, but it is clear from the preface that Nepos intends for his work to be read by a wider (secondary) audience, one that may not be familiar with Greek customs.[117] Similarly, when Pilostratus is writing his biography of Apollonius of Tyana, his primary audience may be the literary circles of which he is a member; yet, it is clear that he intends his work to alleviate the general misunderstandings associated with his subject.[118] Philostratus may have a primary audience (literary circle/sophists) in mind as well as a secondary audience (those generally interested in Apollonius). The same can be said for Philo, who clearly has a specific audience in mind for his apologetic biography of Moses (*Moses* 1.1.1-4) and may have had a secondary audience in mind as well (a non-specific, philosophically-minded audience, as well as an interested Jewish audience) and similar arguments can be made for Plutarch's primary and secondary audiences (*Theseus* 1.1).[119] Authors often wrote biographies with multiple audi-

114. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 38.

115. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 58.

116. Here the primary audience is envisioned as the first audience (chronologically) to read the work with the secondary audience being that audience that would read it after the primary audience.

117. Cornelius Nepos, *Pref.* 1-8. Loveday Alexander has done extensive work on the topic of dedicatory prefaces and their relationship to the audience; cf. Loveday Alexander, 'Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface Writing', *NovT* 28 (1991), pp. 48-74; *idem*, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (SNTSMS, 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and *idem*, 'Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography', in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (eds.), *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), pp. 31-63.

118. Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana* 1.3.1 and 1.2.3.

119. Cf. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 44; Alan Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London: Elek Books Limited, 1974), pp. 37-48, esp. p. 45.

ences in mind and with a view that their work could and would be read widely.[120]

Definite and Indefinite Audiences/Markets. How were markets targeted and what sorts of markets were present in the Greco-Roman world?[121] Markets were often dictated by the distinctive ways in which biographies were used.[122] Markets would be different as biographies were intended to educate, entertain, provide moral example, or legitimize an individual. Thus, the 'market niche' for entertaining biographies (*Life of Aesop*) could be quite different from that of educational biographies (*Apollonius of Tyana*, *Moses*).[123] Moreover, some markets were definite while others were indefinite. Works such as *The Life of Aesop*, Lucian's *Demonax*, Tacitus's *Agricola* and Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars* were intended for indefinite audiences. Their appeal was wide and there is little or no indication that they were written with a specified audience (philosophical school, specific critics, etc.) in mind.[124] On the contrary, works such as Iamblichus's *On the Pythagorean Life*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Philo's *Moses*, Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books*, Isocrates' *Evagoras* and Xenophon's *Agesilaus* would each have targeted a specific market. Iamblichus's and Porphyry's works served as introductory material to compilations of their subjects' philosophical teachings. In these instances the definite market would be Pythagoreans and Neo-Platonists primarily, and other philosophically minded individuals secondarily. Philo and Xenophon aimed their works at those who criticized Moses and Agesilaus, respectively. Plutarch marketed his *Lives*

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120. The readership would most likely have been those among the educated and semi-educated. The oral viability of these texts may make a more expansive audience possible.

121. 'Market' is used here in the sense of an interest group or interested group. These groups could be of varying size and in multiple locations. We are not using market in the sense of economic exchange, although at points, the act of selling and re-selling texts could fit into a general economic scheme.

122. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, pp. 149-52, 185-88; *idem*, 'About People, by People, for People', pp. 134-35; Talbert, 'Once Again: Gospel Genre', pp. 57-59.

123. This is not to say that there was not some overlap in audiences.

124. There is no evidence to support the notion that biographies were written for a small, enumerated audience that the author could list by name. The size definiteness of the audience seems to be determined by the subject matter and occasion for writing.

to the philosophically educated and Isocrates marketed *Evagoras* to Evagoras's son.[125]

Definite audiences could be quite large. There is a noticeable difference between a group of undisclosed Pythagoreans and a specific Pythagorean 'community'. While Pythagoreans or those interested in Pythagoreanism represent a definite 'market niche', the niche is large enough to prohibit it being limited to individuals or groups of individuals ('communities'). Similarly, the critics that Philo addresses are specific enough to account for a definitive literary audience, but it is nearly impossible to surmise the specific critics or 'schools' about which Philo is concerned. Likewise, indefinite audiences could be quite large and could include those from the highly educated to the illiterate (who could have had access to biographies via public readings or performances).

To summarize, limited literacy in the Roman world precluded a large number of individuals partaking in personal reading for leisure. Most personal reading was undertaken by scholars or the highly educated and most often with education as the purpose. Recreational reading most often took the form of public or semi-public readings (a slave to a master, entertainment at a dinner, the reading of technical/vocational manuals, drama, etc.) and as such, literature was able to reach a semi-literate and illiterate public in some fashion. While there is little evidence to support the notion of 'popular' literature, various types of literature, biographies included, would have been marketed to any number of niches in Roman society. The 'market niches' would often be dictated by the purpose of the literature (entertainment, polemic, etc.). The markets could be definite or indefinite, and there is little indication that biographical literature was intended for small, confined audiences or communities.[126] Generally, authors wrote with a multiplicity of audiences in mind (primary and secondary) and as such, their work could be directed to more than one 'market niche'.[127]

125. Isocrates, *Evagoras* 73-81.

126. Those in a 'market niche' need not have anything in common other than a general interest in the same topic. This differs from 'communities' in the sense that communities share more than a passing interest in a particular figure or subject. A general philosophical interest does not constitute a community. The boundaries of communities can be both ideological and geographical phenomena. These boundaries are not necessarily a feature of 'market niches'.

127. Cf. Isocrates, *Evagoras* 73-75; Cornelius Nepos, *Pref.* 1-3; and Plutarch, *Theseus* 1.1-2. See Bird, 'Bauckham's *The Gospels for All Christians* Reconsidered', p. 11.

5. *A Proposed Typology for Greco-Roman Biography*

As we have seen, there have been a number of helpful and insightful typologies of βίοι/*vitae* based on a number of organizing principles (literary structure, subject, purpose, etc.). Yet I have also acknowledged that each of these typologies is insufficient in (1) addressing questions pertaining to the relationships between authors, subjects and audiences; and (2) generally, in concern for genre theory and the resulting flexibility within generic structure and development. Accordingly, I would propose a typology that takes both of these issues into account. Greco-Roman biography can be divided into four sub-types: (1) Ancient–Definite; (2) Ancient–Indefinite; (3) Contemporary–Definite; and (4) Contemporary–Indefinite.

This typology is based on the following guiding principles: (1) Ancient biographies are those for which the subject was not alive in living memory of the author.[128] (2) Conversely, contemporary biographies are those where the subject is accessible to the author via living memory. (3) Definite biographies are those that have a distinguishable audience. (4) Indefinite biographies are those that have no distinguishable audience. Admittedly, there are two potential difficulties with this typology. First, as has already been argued, the construction of audience functions on a number of levels, at least primary and secondary, and as such the secondary levels of audience tend to be less distinguishable than those of the primary levels. Secondly, it can be difficult to locate the relationship between the subject and author as either contemporary or ancient. In some contexts this differentiation is easily achieved (e.g. Plutarch's *Theseus, Romulus*; Phlostratus's *Apollonius of Tyana*; Philo's *Moses*, as ancient biographies and Isocrates' *Evagoras*, Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, Porphyry's *Plotinus* and Cornelius Nepos's *Atticus* as contemporary), while in others it is more difficult (Nepos's *Cato*; Suetonius's *Caligula*, *Claudius* and *Nero*).[129] Even with these difficulties, this typology still proves to be valuable.

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128. By living memory I mean simply that the author had access to first-hand/eyewitness accounts concerning the life of the subject. These accounts can be the author's own or those of others which are accessible to the author.

129. These stand just outside the lifetime of the author and as such may be at the borders of living memory. The Gospel of John presents similar difficulties. However, the reliance upon, or lack of, first-hand/eyewitness accounts may provide a rubric here. Those that utilize these accounts are contemporary and those that do not are best understood as ancient.

(1) Ancient–Definite biographies (Satyrus, *Life of Euripides*; Philo, *Life of Moses*; Plutarch, *Lives*; Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*; Iamblichus, *On The Pythagorean Life*; and Philostratus, *The Lives of the Sophists*) are biographical works about ancient men of importance and are aimed at a distinguishable audience (philosophical school, educational group, critics, etc.). They are less likely to utilize verifiable eyewitness accounts and they tend to be less 'historically' reliable. Myth, fiction, and the like are readily used, and without much reservation.[130]

(2) Ancient–Indefinite biographies (e.g. *The Life of Aesop*; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; Cornelius Nepos, *The Book on the Great Generals of Foreign Nations*; and Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, *Augustus* and *Tiberius*), likewise, are biographical works about ancient men of importance but are aimed at an indistinguishable audience.[131] Often this audience can be those who are generally interested in the subject, in history or in entertainment.[132]

(3) Contemporary–Definite biographies (e.g. Isocrates, *Evagoras*; Xenophon, *Agesilaus*; Tacitus, *Agricola*; Plutarch, *Lives—Galba*, *Otho*; and Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books*) are works written about a person of significant interest who lived within living memory of the author and are directed toward distinguishable audiences. Eyewitness accounts are of vital importance to these biographies and they are frequently used to refute criticisms aimed at the subject.[133] Often in this type of biography there is a personal relationship between the author and subject that transcends a conventional interest in the subject as a moral example or person of interest.

(4) Contemporary–Indefinite biographies (e.g. Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus*; *The Life of Secundus the Silent Philosopher*; Lucian, *Demonax*; and Suetonius, *Vespasian*, *Titus*, *Domitian*) are works directed toward an indistinguishable audience and written about a person of significant in-

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130. While Pelling points to Plutarch's acknowledgement of eyewitness testimony, Plutarch is chronologically removed from these accounts and he is unable to verify them with others who may have witnessed them. This differs from contemporary accounts where the eyewitness testimony is verifiable. C.B.R. Pelling, 'Truth and Fiction in Plutarch's *Lives*', in D.A. Russell (ed.), *Antonine Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 19-52, esp. pp. 24-27.

131. For some discussion of Suetonius's use of source material, see Barry Baldwin, *Suetonius* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1983), pp. 101-213.

132. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 49.

133. Cf. Isocrates, *Evagoras* 4-6; Xenophon, *Agesilaus* 3.1, 10.3; and Tacitus, *Agricola* 4.3, 24.3, 44.5.

terest who lived within the living memory of the author.[134] This type of biography tends to be geared toward education and entertainment.[135] As with other contemporary biographies, Contemporary–Indefinite biographies are dependent on eyewitness/ first-hand accounts. Again, the contemporary nature of these biographies points to a personal relationship between the author and subject, and as such, the author often has a stake in telling/re-telling the life of the subject.[136]

I have proposed a typology for βίοι that takes into account the relationships that exist between the author and the subject and the author and the audience. In some instances, authors have chosen to write about men of renown who are removed from the writers' own context but whose reputation and status render them as important subjects. Some of these biographies are written with definite audiences or audience markets in mind (Ancient–Definite) while others are written with deference to no definite audience (Ancient–Indefinite). In other instances, authors have chosen as biographical subjects persons who are closer in chronological proximity to them. Often, the authors have a personal relationship with the subject (friend, teacher, mentor, etc.) and thus have personal reasons for recording the subject's life. Similarly, these biographies can be written with a distinguishable (Contemporary–Definite) or indistinguishable (Contemporary–Indefinite) audience market in mind. This typology has the distinct advantage of being flexible enough to accommodate change, yet rigid enough to offer distinct insight into the author–genre–subject relationships that exist in Greco-Roman biography.[137] What remains to be uncovered is the categories to which the canonical Gospels belong and how this informs our reading of them.

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134. While this typology ends up separating some of the works of Plutarch, Nepos and Suetonius into different 'types' (based the relationship of the subject and the author), the separation is representative of the differing subject matter (contemporary or ancient) as opposed to structural differences or differences in purpose. See Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?,* pp. 93-98.

135. See Philostratus, *Apollonius* 1.2.3; Lucian, *Demonax* 1-2; and *Secundus* 1.1-5 as examples of an educational impetus for writing βίοι.

136. Swain, 'Biography and Biographic', p. 2.

137. For instance, if one example proves to fit better in another category, the entire typology is not undermined, unlike the situation with typologies based on literary structure.

The establishment of generic and sub-generic classification is in effect the establishment of hermeneutical rubrics. Genre provides an important literary context through which we are able to interpret and understand texts. Genres serve as agreed-upon sets of expectations for both the author and recipients and these expectations guide how texts are written and read. Genres and sub-genres are flexible and do not represent a codified set of hard and fast rules. On the contrary, they are better understood in terms of family resemblances. These resemblances can be seen in the ways in which individual examples of a genre conform to or violate generic expectations. These conformities and violations are often manifested through the similarities and dissimilarities a specific text exhibits to *genera proxima.* Genres are socially conditioned and they reflect the ethos and concerns of the societies in which they emerge. Genres and sub-genres are inherently descriptive and not prescriptive.

Many sub-generic classifications are possible but they are not always helpful. As we formulate new questions for a set of texts, often we need new classifications to address those questions adequately. Classifications that deal with literary structure are not always useful for dealing with questions related to authors, subjects and audiences. Past classifications for βίοι have dealt with either literary structure (Leo) or purpose (Talbert). None of them has dealt directly with the relationship between genre and audience. Further, these classifications have not fully considered the implications of genre theory. As a result, the classifications themselves have proven to be so rigid that they are unable to stand up to scrutiny.

While modern genre theory can be a useful tool for understanding how literature functions and evolves, it is also necessary to place βίοι in their Greco-Roman context. This is especially true when one considers the issue of literacy as determining audience. The overall lack of literacy in the empire prevented many from reading texts privately. Most recreational reading was done in a public or semi-public setting. Readings could be performed for singular individuals or groups and they could take place in private homes or public venues. The purpose of the writing (education, entertainment, polemic, apology, etc.) would often dictate the 'market niche' to which the work was directed. Given that an author could expect his work to be read or performed in a variety of settings (Isocrates, *Evagoras* 73-75), it is possible that some authors would write βίοι with multiple audiences in mind.

I have proposed a typology for Greco-Roman biography that takes the relationships between authors, subjects and audiences into account. Some authors chose to write about exemplary figures from the past, and they often relied on written sources, both fictional and historical, to shape the biography. Others wrote about contemporary figures, figures that existed within the living memory of the author. These authors, as students, disciples or friends of the subject, would often rely on first-hand accounts and reminiscences as well as written texts as a means of constructing the narrative. These biographies could be directed toward definite 'market niches' or indefinite groups. Of interest to the biblical scholar is how to classify the canonical Gospels and what those classifications convey about the intentions of the authors and their relationship to Gospel audiences.