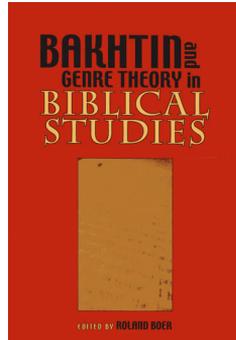


○ REVIEW OF ROLAND BOER (ED.), *BAKHTIN AND GENRE THEORY IN BIBLICAL STUDIES*

(SEMEIAST 63; ATLANTA: SCHOLARS, 2007)

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This book is an edited anthology with an introduction, eleven essays, two responses, and indices for both ancient sources and authors. In ‘Introduction: Bakhtin, Genre and Biblical Studies,’ Roland Boer defines key Bakhtinian terms. *Dialogic* narrative means texts are never *monological*: there is always an alternative voice competing with the other. *Chronotope* means ‘time space’ and refers to the ‘intricate connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.’ *Polyphony* refers to the multiplicity of voices found in any text. *Unfinalizability* means that for any character or person our knowledge is incomplete. *Heteroglossia* refers to extralinguistic features of literature such as ideology, assessment, and perspective. *Carnavalesque* refers to the phenomenon of individuals as part of a crowd becoming a different entity with subversive elements. Connected is the notion of *grotesque*: ‘eating, pissing, shitting, sex and death; in short with bodies as pulsating, heaving and living entities,’ which are related to the crowd and individuals within it. Boer notes that the purpose of the anthology is to bring together Bakhtin’s thought and form criticism.

Martin Buss, in ‘Dialogue in and among Genres,’ defines genre as ‘more or less useful ways of treating similar literary phenomena together.’ He lists three criteria for identifying genres: life situation (process), ideational content, and verbal form. The existence of any one of these could justify the identification of a genre. Regarding process, he points out that every biblical text deals with some aspect of Israelite life. As humans, we all participate in them, though some might emphasize them differently. Buss also points out that genres have a *dialogic* relationship with each other.

Carol Newsom, in ‘Spying Out the Land: A Report from Genology,’ has praise for Gunkel but is critical as well. His approach had a ‘tendency toward rigidity in its assumption that oral forms were ‘pure forms,’ with a tight connection between their life settings and their structures.’ She criticizes older versions of genre theory that were obsessed with classification. She emphasizes that genres are dynamic. Drawing on cognitive science, she recommends viewing genres as con-

ceptual categories defined by prototypical examples, with a continuum from central to peripheral classification, and more flexibility. She also explores how genres change over time and how they continue to carry echoes of their past.

Christine Mitchell describes genre as an operation that has an effect. She connects it with the Foucaultian notion of power and the creative desire of *eros*. In one of her examples, she demonstrates how the Chronicler reshapes the standard source citation formula in Kings. In Kings, it is 'Are they not written in ...?' In Chronicles, it is changed to 'Behold, they are written in ...' She shows how turning a rhetorical question into a declarative, presentative statement is an effect of power. A rhetorical question has the possibility of being answered in the negative. A declarative statement bypasses that problem of legitimization.

Barbara Green, in 'Experiential Learning: The Construction of Jonathan in the Narrative of Saul and David,' uses the concepts of *dialogism* and *utterance* to closely read the interchange between David and Jonathan and Jonathan and Saul. *Dialogism* is the notion that, as humans, we create our own identities only in relation to the other. *Utterance* connotes 'the simultaneity of what is actually said and what is assumed but not spoken.' By using these analytical tools, she argues that Jonathan's conversations with David and Saul serve to educate Jonathan about the culpability of his father's intentions.

In 'Location, Location, Location: Tamar in the Joseph Cycle,' Judy Fentress-Williams attempts to explain the seemingly interruptive character of Gen 38, by using the Bakhtinian notions of *dialogic* and the *chronotopic* (fictive world) motifs of recognition/nonrecognition and meeting. She demonstrates that the lesson of this chapter is that the fulfillment of God's promises 'is a circuitous one.' She shows how clothing and words, for Joseph and Tamar, function to reveal or conceal and that the hero/heroine is the one who 'perceives' what has been concealed and does not just 'see' it.

In 'Dialogic Form Criticism: An Intertextual Reading of Lamentations and Psalms of Lament,' Carleen Mandolfo shows how the author of book of Lamentations transforms lament psalms into another entity all together. The typical lament psalms have two voices: the supplicant's (2nd person) and a didactic one (3rd person) which serves to defend the deity's integrity. In the laments in the book of Lamentations, the didactic voice is changed into one which is subversive and questions God's fairness.

David M. Valeta, in 'Polyglossia and Parody: Language in Daniel 1–6,' shows how the use of Hebrew and Aramaic in Daniel is a subversive, intentional act and not to be explained by various source theories or the translation history of the book. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of *polyglossia* or 'multiple conflicting voices in a text,' he shows how Aramaic, the language of the royal court, is used sarcastically to humiliate the Persian king and his empire.

Michael E. Vines, in 'The Apocalyptic Chronotope,' shows how Bakhtin can help define apocalyptic. He criticizes John Collins for being overly formalistic. Vines argues that genre is an author's attempt to present a certain way to view the world. He shows that the *chronotope* of apocalyptic is temporally and spatially limitless, showing God's point of view. Apocalyptic has a pessimistic view of human ability and sees divine intervention as the only solution to a fallen, depraved world.

Christopher C. Fuller, in 'Matthew's Genealogy as Eschatological Satire: Bakhtin Meets Form Criticism,' uses the concept of *chronotope* to interpret Matt 1:1–17. He demonstrates how space

and time are conceived in Matthew's genealogy. Assuming that genealogies carry the memory of their prior use, he shows how Matthew's version contains subversive elements (like the women mentioned) and functions as parody of the genre.

Paul N. Anderson, in 'Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crisis in the Johannine Situation,' combines rhetorical criticism with Bakhtin's notion of *dialogism* to interpret the fourth gospel. He argues that Jesus, in the tradition of Socrates, dialectically corrects various groups (e. g., docetic Christians) who misunderstand his kingdom and ministry.

Bula Maddison, in 'Liberation Story or Apocalypse? Reading Biblical Allusion and Bakhtin Theory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*,' shows how the Exodus/Conquest story is subverted in the novel and shown to be a tragedy (apocalypse) rather than a story of liberation. The crossing of the Red Sea echoes the American sea crossing where 60 million slaves died en route – an American holocaust. The Bible is shown to be one genre among several that interact in the novel.

Keith Bodner, in 'Response – Beyond Formalism: Genre and the Analysis of Biblical Texts,' critiques five of the papers: Mitchell, Green, Fentress-Williams, Mandolpho, and Valeta. He lists three things these papers have in common: they appropriate the work of Bakhtin in effective ways; each intends to move beyond formalism; each employs useful examples. His critique is entirely positive. He augments each contribution with other biblical examples that further confirm his/her analysis.

Finally, Vernon K. Robbins, in 'Response – Using Bakhtin's *Lexicon Dialogicae* to Interpret Canon, Apocalyptic, New Testament, and Toni Morrison,' gives a generally positive review of Buss, Newsom, Vines, Fuller, Anderson, and Maddison. As for the anthology as a whole, he commends it for introducing over 40 terms and concepts important for understanding Bakhtin. In spite of this, he adds, 'Once readers complete the essays in this Semeia Studies volume, they still have to learn much more about Bakhtin.'

This exciting volume is important for biblical scholars interested in genre criticism or form criticism or Bakhtin. Both biblical literary critics and biblical sociologists would also find it helpful; it represents a combination of the two fields. I wish there had been more emphasis on contemporary genre theory (e.g., John Frow, *Genre* [The New Critical Idiom; Routledge, 2005] is missing from the works cited) and how Bakhtin is viewed by it. This volume will help introduce Bakhtin to biblical scholars unfamiliar with him. However, perhaps one should first consult Barbara Green's recent book (*Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* [SemeiaSt 38; Atlanta; SBL, 2000]).