

ANATOMIES OF NARRATIVE CRITICISM



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ANATOMIES OF NARRATIVE CRITICISM

The Past, Present, and Futures of
the Fourth Gospel as Literature

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The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature

Edited by

Tom Thatcher

and

Stephen D. Moore

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

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Every book ...
is
a confession of ignorance
and
an invitation to criticism.
(Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, viii)

But living
as we do
in extreme times,
the limits are sometimes approached.
(Chatman 1978, 79)

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
<i>Bsac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
Ebib	Études bibliques
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GBSNT	Guides to Biblical Scholarship New Testament Series
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KBANT	Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LD	Lectio divina
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
QD	Quaestiones disputatae
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt</i> . Edited by Theodor Kluser et al. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–.
SA	Studia anselmiana
SBLAcBib	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLGPBS	Society of Biblical Literature Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SHAW.PH	Sitzungen der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
SNTA	Studiorum Novi Testamenti Auxilia
SNTSU	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt</i>
SP	Sacra pagina
ST	<i>Studia theologica</i>
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
TEV	Today's English Version
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK.NT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare, Neue Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

ANATOMIES OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE PROBES

Tom Thatcher

In 1983, Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* introduced Johannine scholars to the methods and potential of narrative criticism. The book was remarkable in many respects, particularly for its interaction with a wide range of literary theorists and its insightful perspectives on a number of key issues in Johannine studies. Words such as "narrator," "implied reader," and "implicit commentary"—all strange and new at the time—now regularly appear on the pages of monographs and commentaries that are deeply committed to historical concerns. But the most enduring contribution of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* rose from the point where the book diverged most sharply from the mainstream of its day: the thesis that John's story is *inherently meaningful*, regardless of its sources, composition history, or historical value. At a time when scholars were deeply absorbed in speculations about literary sources, the Johannine community, and the number of revisions leading up to the present text, Culpepper boldly declared that a close reading of the Gospel of John as a unified narrative could produce striking new insights.

Now, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Anatomy's* publication, biblical narrative criticism is old enough to reflect on its own past. The essays in this book look both backward and forward, evaluating Culpepper's precedent and projecting trends in the future study of the Fourth Gospel as narrative. At the time of *Anatomy's* release, Johannine scholarship was dominated by what Hans Frei has called "the eclipse of biblical narrative," a tendency to locate the meaning of the narrative texts of the Bible outside the stories themselves (Frei 1974). Following this model, scholars sought the meaning of the Gospel of John in the historical events to which the book referred and, especially, in the circumstances in which the Fourth Gospel was written. Against this trend, Culpepper argued that the Fourth Gospel may be treated as a coherent text that is inherently meaningful in its own right, regardless of the processes

and situations that produced the story as we have it today. *Anatomy* quickly became the firstfruits of a groundswell of narrative-critical studies and provided Johannine scholars with a new vocabulary to discuss the intersection of literary and historical concerns. But over the past quarter-century, the forces that *Anatomy* unleashed have taken on a life of their own, as scholars continue to explore theoretical possibilities that Culpepper did not anticipate. While these more recent studies generally depend, explicitly or implicitly, on Culpepper's precedent, they often depart from—and sometimes rebel against—many of his foundational assumptions. The present volume, then, is a brief tour of the strange world in which *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* was born and the even stranger world to which it gave birth.

THE ECLIPSE OF JOHANNINE NARRATIVE

In 1974, Hans Frei observed that the biblical narratives were in a state of “eclipse.” Specifically, scholars were no longer interested in the biblical narratives per se but instead focused their attention on the historical events that the Bible claimed to discuss and/or on the composition history of the books themselves. Books such as Genesis and the Gospel of Mark were thus “eclipsed” by the events behind them, hidden in the shadow of their own past and largely ignored. In the case of New Testament studies, this focus on history was institutionalized by the interpretive principles of form, source, and redaction criticism, which essentially treated the Gospel narratives as dirty windows onto an uncertain past—either past events from Jesus' life or the historical situations in which Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John composed their books. Frei was struck by this hermeneutical development because it represented such a significant shift from earlier methods of interpretation. He proceeded to trace the roots of this trend and to call for a serious reconsideration of the biblical stories as “realistic narratives.”¹

According to Frei, during the “precritical” period before the rise of historical criticism, Western readings of the Bible were “usually strongly realistic.” Under this paradigm, the biblical stories were viewed not only as devotional texts but also as literal descriptions of what actually happened in the past (Frei

1. In Frei's model, a “realistic” narrative is one whose meaning lies in the holistic interaction of the elements of the story, including the characters, events, and settings. Whether the story has a reference point in the actual past or not, a realistic narrative's meaning lies in the *Gestalt* of its internal elements, not in factors outside the text itself. Frei understood most of the biblical narratives, including the Gospels, to be “realistic” in the sense that their literary structure cannot be distinguished from their literal meaning (1974, 13–14).

1974, 1). Each individual narrative was treated as a chapter in the larger story-arc of salvation history, an epic that extended beyond the pages of the Bible and into the life of every subsequent reader. Following this logic, precritical methods of interpretation sought to integrate “extra-biblical thought, experience, and reality into the one real world detailed and made accessible by the biblical story—not the reverse” (Frei 1974, 3).² In other words, the books of the Bible were seen as the framework of ultimate truth: all things, events, and ideas were thought to derive meaning from their place in the cosmic narrative of Scripture. Arguments that the world must be flat, that the sun revolves around the earth, and that monarchs should exercise unlimited power could not be challenged so long as they were somehow grounded in the Bible, regardless of any data that might point to contrary conclusions.

While this precritical approach dominated the interpretation of the Bible through the medieval, early Renaissance, and Reformation periods, its key presuppositions began to break down in the seventeenth century. The initial challenge came, innocently enough, from scholars such as Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669) and Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752), who associated biblical prophecies with recent and future events. While such readings assumed the verity and authority of the Scriptures, they substantially departed from earlier approaches by suggesting that “the real events of history constitute an autonomous temporal framework of their own under God’s providential design” (Frei 1974, 4). In Frei’s view, the emergence of historical criticism was rooted in the notion that the biblical narratives and “history” are not necessarily unified entities. Liberated from the doctrine that all of reality must be located within an overarching biblical story, commentators began to focus on individual biblical texts and the historical events to which they seemed to refer, guided by the premise that “the *meaning* of the stories was finally something different from the stories or depictions themselves” (Frei 1974, 11). As the focus shifted from text to history, the biblical narratives were effectively stripped of any inherent “meaning” and the Gospels were viewed as wrappers—ultimately, disposable wrappers—for the meaningful historical/theological realities that lay behind them (Frei 1974, 16).

While many theologians today would reject Frei’s appeal for a return to the precritical model of biblical realism, one can scarcely dispute the accuracy of his portrait of the hermeneutical evolution of modern biblical studies. Although *Eclipse* focused on intellectual developments in the seventeenth and

2. “[S]ince the world truly rendered by combining biblical narratives into one was indeed the one and only real world, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader” (Frei 1974, 3).

eighteenth centuries, Frei closed his introductory chapter by suggesting that, “were we to pursue our theme into the biblical hermeneutics of the twentieth century ... we would find that with regard to the recognition of the distinctiveness of realistic biblical narrative and its implications for interpretation ... the story has remained much the same” (1974, 16).³

Two major examples will suffice to illustrate the manifestation of the eclipse in Johannine studies in the decades just before *Anatomy*’s release: the source- and redaction-critical approaches, advocated most notably by Rudolf Bultmann and Robert Fortna; and, the “developmental approach” to the Fourth Gospel’s composition, an extension of J. Louis Martyn’s attempt to reconstruct the history of the Johannine community. These interpretive models, which dominated the landscape of Johannine studies in the 1960s and 1970s, illustrate the extent to which the Gospel of John had come to be viewed less as a meaningful story than as a database of information for reconstructions of the history behind the text. Culpepper’s most notable achievements come into sharp focus when viewed against this backdrop.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SOURCES

It would be difficult to overestimate Rudolf Bultmann’s influence on contemporary Johannine scholarship. His monumental commentary on the Gospel of John, still a standard reference tool, was first published in German in 1941 and underwent numerous revisions before its appearance in English in the early 1970s. Despite its length (more than 700 pages), the commentary lacks a methodological introduction, and Bultmann stressed early on that “*it goes without saying that the exegesis must expound the complete text*, and the critical analysis is the servant of this exposition” (Bultmann 1971, 17, emphasis original). This claim, alongside Bultmann’s interest in existential philosophy and his belief that the Fourth Gospel is not a reliable source for the historical Jesus, might lead one to expect that he would locate the meaning of John’s story primarily in the reader’s interaction with the narrative as it stands.⁴ But a cursory review of the commentary’s copious footnotes quickly reveals that Bultmann’s exegesis was built on a complex source-critical analysis, one that

3. Frei returned to this theme at the end of the book: “The realistic narrative reading of biblical stories, the gospels in particular, went into eclipse through the [modern] period. Whether anything has changed in this respect since the days of Schleiermacher and Hegel is a question for another day” (1974, 324).

4. On the potential historical value of the Fourth Gospel, note Bultmann’s famous dictum, “the Gospel of John cannot be taken into account at all as a source for the teaching of Jesus” (Bultmann 1958, 12).

ultimately situated the meaning of the Fourth Gospel in the shadowy interplay between hypothetical sources and the theological preferences of the people who produced the document. Through the consistent application of linguistic, literary, and theological criteria, Bultmann identified at least three sources and two major stages of composition behind the current text, an approach that allowed him to analyze passages in the Fourth Gospel in terms of the author's/editor's appropriation and development of these earlier documents.⁵ Specifically, John's own literary and theological tendencies are evident at the points where his perspective seems to diverge from that of his sources.

While Bultmann's reading of the Gospel of John moved freely and frequently between text, sources, and editors, he did not outline any specific source in detail, making it impossible for him to offer a full blown redaction-critical analysis.⁶ This task was accomplished by Robert Fortna, whose *The Gospel of Signs* (1970a) offered a detailed reconstruction of a proposed source for John's narratives. Fortna detected two layers of material in the Gospel of John, "*basic document* and *redaction*," and argued that the Fourth Evangelist developed his story by expanding an earlier work that included accounts of Jesus' miracles and death (1970a, 2–8, here 4). Fortna called John's source document "the Signs Gospel" because it portrayed Jesus' miracles and death as "signs" of his unique identity, "a missionary tract with a single end, to show [Jews] ... that Jesus is the Messiah" (1970a, 225–29, here 225). In Fortna's view, this Signs Gospel was highly regarded by members of the Johannine community, so much so that John incorporated the entire text into his own book, quoting the source verbatim and simply adding extra material (primarily sayings of Jesus) that promoted his own theological vision (see Fortna 1970a, 223; 1970b, 155; 1974–75, 504).⁷ The Signs Gospel, for example, included an

5. In Bultmann's model, the Fourth Gospel's miracle stories were derived from a "signs source," the discourses originated in the *Offenbarungsreden* (a collection of "revelation discourses"), and the trial and crucifixion scenes came from an independent "passion source." Along with these literary sources, both the Fourth Evangelist and the redactor who produced the current text utilized a local oral tradition that may have overlapped with the Synoptic tradition (see Bultmann 1971, 85, 393 n. 2, 420). On Bultmann's complex source-critical method, see Smith 1965 and, more recently, Thatcher 2000, 18–23.

6. Bultmann occasionally expressed doubt that the Fourth Gospel's proposed sources can be reconstructed definitively; see 1971, 179, 324 n. 1, 348 n. 2, 500 n. 4, 501 n. 1, 548.

7. Fortna's early reconstructions of the Signs Gospel depended primarily on literary and theological aporias in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. Over time, however, he came to associate John's interpretive additions with the theological perspective of the discourses, allowing one to distinguish source from redaction by determining whether a given verse or passage reflects the theological perspective of the narrative (source) or the sayings (Evangelist). See especially here Fortna 1988, 1–7.

account of Jesus' feeding of five thousand people; John copied this story (6:1–13) and composed the lengthy "bread of life" discourse at 6:26–51 to explain the christological significance of the miracle. Fortna's isolation of the Signs Gospel and precise reconstruction of that text made true redaction-critical analysis of the Gospel of John possible by allowing scholars to compare the original source document with John's revisions and expansions.⁸

While Bultmann, Fortna, and other source critics offered many valuable insights on the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel and the development of Johannine theology, their exegetical method necessarily promoted—indeed, was predicated upon—the eclipse of John's narrative. Source- and redaction-critical approaches locate the meaning of a text in the tension between its putative sources and the editorial work of the individual(s) who produced it. Viewed from this angle, the meaning of the Gospel of John can be determined only when the present narrative is dissected into its constituent parts, allowing comparison of the earlier and later theological perspectives. Any meaning inherent in the story itself lies in the dark shadow of this source history.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE COMMUNITY

In 1968, J. Louis Martyn changed the face of Johannine Studies with the release of *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. Martyn proposed that John's account of the man born blind (John 9:1–38), who is chastised by the Pharisees when he fails to condemn Jesus for healing him on the Sabbath (9:34), can be read at two levels. At first glance, this passage tells of an incident involving Jesus, a blind man, and the Jewish authorities, a scenario that Martyn found historically implausible; below the surface, however, the story reflects "experiences in the dramatic interaction between the synagogue and the Johannine church" (Martyn 2003, 46). Martyn's reading highlighted the note that the blind man's parents feared to speak in his defense because "the Jews" had already agreed to excommunicate any person who confessed Jesus as the Christ (9:22). Read at the level of the experiences of the Johannine Christians, this verse suggests that "the formal separation between church

8. For Fortna's complete reconstruction of the Greek text of the Signs Gospel, see 1970a, 235–45. A similar, though much more cautious, source-critical model informed Rudolf Schnackenburg's influential commentary. While the Fourth Gospel evidences a "great uniformity of style," Schnackenburg accepted Bultmann's basic thesis that John drew much of his narrative material from "a source which gave straightforward miracle-stories with no pretensions to deep theological significance, and certainly more numerous than the seven [signs] recounted in John." At the same time, Schnackenburg insisted that "a logia or discourse source must be rejected" (Schnackenburg 1987, 1:64–67).

and synagogue has been accomplished in John's milieu" (Martyn 2003, 56). Further evidence for this conclusion appears at John 16:2–4, where Jesus tells the disciples that they will be hated and excommunicated by people who "do not know the Father," a prophecy that must have been fulfilled sometime in the late 80s, before John wrote his book. In Martyn's view, the Johannine Jesus tradition and, consequently, the Fourth Gospel's presentation were substantially influenced by these painful experiences (Martyn 2003, 49–66).

While Martyn's study focused on the experiences of the Johannine community, it is fair to say that his theory laid the groundwork for almost all subsequent discussion of the composition history of the Gospel of John. Following the principle that "theological developments are often precipitated by social crises" (Culpepper 1998, 58), Martyn's model allowed scholars to associate moments in the evolution of the Johannine tradition with major events in the reconstructed history of Johannine Christianity. Within this paradigm, narrative inconsistencies or apparent theological tensions in John's story could be explained as the result of a series of revisions, as the Johannine Christians continually edited and expanded the text of the Fourth Gospel so that Jesus could speak to new situations. Scholars who adopted this perspective sought to distinguish these various editorial layers in order to chart the theological evolution of Johannine thought, and individual passages in the Fourth Gospel were interpreted as responses to specific problems that confronted the Johannine community. Robert Kysar labeled this interpretive method "the developmental approach" because it treats the current text of the Fourth Gospel as the end product of this series of revisions and developments (Kysar 1975).

The developmental approach gained substantial credibility in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s through its promotion by several of the most influential Johannine scholars of that era, including Raymond Brown and John Painter. In Brown's view, the Gospel of John began as a body of "traditional [oral] material pertaining to the words and works of Jesus" that reflected the theological perspective of the Jewish Christians who made up the early Johannine community (1966–70, 1:xxxiv). These Jewish believers were eventually excommunicated from the synagogue because of their faith in Jesus, and a number of converted Samaritans, "Jews of peculiar anti-Temple views" (Brown 1979, 38), and Gentiles eventually joined their ranks. These dramatic events naturally led to a substantial shift in the community's theological perspective and several reconfigurations of its Jesus tradition, including, ultimately, at least three distinct revisions of the Fourth Gospel by two different editors (Brown 1966–70, 1:xxxiv–xxxvii; 1979, 25–47). This model explained, for Brown, the strange unevenness of the Fourth Gospel's presentation: if, for example, two passages appear to reflect differing Christologies, the tension may be

explained by assigning them to different stages in the development of Johannine thought (see Brown 1979, 25; Kysar 2005b, 45–51). John Painter also argued that the Fourth Gospel's theological tensions are clues to the editorial history of the text. Painter's work is notable for the thesis that the Fourth Evangelist extended and reinterpreted the Johannine tradition by turning "the traditional stories into quest stories because he [John] perceived the turmoil of human life as a quest and Jesus as the fulfillment of the quest" (Painter 1993, 212). Painter focused particularly on the Johannine discourses, which were, in his view, gradually expanded to reflect the quest motif and the Evangelist's evolving theological interests.

Martyn, Brown, Painter, and other developmental theorists produced substantial exegetical insights and forced biblical scholars to think seriously about the circumstances in which the Gospel of John was produced. In terms of the present study, however, it is relevant to note that developmental approaches—including the more recent models based on the principles of *relecture* and *réécriture*, the idea that subsequent expansions of the original text reflect either the original author's own revisions or, at least, sympathetic dialogue with its contents—locate the meaning of the Fourth Gospel in hypothetical historical developments that lie entirely outside the narrative.⁹ As Kysar observes, "In each case, community experience was understood to be the key that unlocked the puzzles of the gospel [of John]—both its theological themes and the language it uses to tell its story of Jesus" (2005b, 70). Once again, the meaning of John's story lay in the dark shadow of its developmental history.

COMING INTO THE LIGHT: PRECURSORS TO *ANATOMY*

With the jury weighted so heavily against John's story as a meaningful text in its own right, studies of the Fourth Gospel's narrative dynamics were few and cautious in the decades immediately preceding *Anatomy's* release, and research on Johannine theology tended to focus on evolutionary developments behind the story rather than the progression of themes within the text. Three notable exceptions to this trend, all published within fifteen years of *Anatomy's* appearance, illustrate early efforts to shine a light into the eclipse of John's narrative: Herbert Leroy's *Rätsel und Missverständnis* ("Riddle and Misunderstanding"; 1968), David Wead's *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (1970), and Marinus de Jonge's collection of essays, *Jesus: Stranger from*

9. On *relecture* as a model for understanding the composition history of the Fourth Gospel, see especially Zumstein 1996; 2003; 2004; and his essay in the present volume.

Heaven and Son of God (1977). While these studies focused on the literary and theological dynamics of the Fourth Gospel's narrative, the conclusions of each were limited, in varying degrees, by the consensus of the day.

HERBERT LEROY: RIDDLES AND COMMUNITY

Herbert Leroy's *Rätsel und Missverständnis* (1968) is one of the earliest—and, still to date, one of the most impressive—applications of folkloristics to a problem in biblical interpretation. For quite some time, scholars had noticed that “misunderstanding” is a major motif in the Gospel of John (see Leroy 1968, 3–9). Almost without exception, the words of the Johannine Jesus generate confusion on the part of friends, enemies, and casual onlookers, especially when he speaks about his identity and mission. Thus Nicodemus cannot fathom how a grown man could be “born again” (John 3:3–4); “the Jews” do not understand how Jesus could offer his flesh for food (6:51–52); the disciples are befuddled when Jesus tells them that he is going to a place where they cannot come (13:33–37). Building on Bultmann's observations, Leroy noted that the Johannine misunderstandings normally arise from Jesus' use of words with double meanings.¹⁰ One may therefore apply folklore models for riddle performance—a speech genre that exploits double meaning and ambiguity—to the Fourth Gospel's instances of misunderstanding in order to determine exactly how these passages function. As riddles, Jesus' words can be understood only by those who know his true identity as God's Son, so that the ability to answer “reveals at the same time [not only the resolution of the ambiguity, but also] one's worthiness to be included within this [Johannine] circle of knowledge” (Leroy 1968, 44, my translation). The secret community knowledge required to unlock Jesus' ambiguous statements is provided to the

10. Leroy defined a Johannine “misunderstanding” as “Stellen also, die eine Fehlinterpretation des Jesuswortes durch die Gesprächspartner wiedergeben” (“a situation/passage in which a wrong interpretation of Jesus' words is given in reply by a dialogue partner”; 1968, 1–2, here 1). Following this definition, Leroy identified eleven pure instances of misunderstanding in the Gospel of John: 2:19–22 (the Jews misunderstand Jesus' comment about the destruction of the temple); 3:3–5 (Nicodemus misunderstands rebirth through water and Spirit); 4:10–15 (the Samaritan woman misunderstands “living water”); 4:31–34 (the disciples misunderstand the nature of Jesus' “food”); 6:32–35, 41ff. (the Jews misunderstand Jesus' origin); 6:51–53 (“das eucharistische Missverständnis”); 7:33–36 and 8:21ff., which Leroy treated as two distinct instances (the Jews misunderstand Jesus' statement about his departure); 8:31–33 (the believing Jews misunderstand Jesus' statement about “freedom”); 8:51–53 (the Jews misunderstand Jesus' claim that those who believe in him will not die); 8:56–58 (the Jews do not understand how Abraham could have heard Jesus' words).

reader in the course of the narrative. Thus the Prologue (John 1:1–18) clarifies what Nicodemus and the befuddled Jews cannot know, and 13:1–3 unlocks Jesus' mysterious comments in the Farewell Discourse about his impending departure. Viewed as riddles, then, John's familiar "misunderstandings" play on the tension between the normal meaning and special Johannine meaning of key words.¹¹

Leroy's ingenious application of this interdisciplinary model may be illustrated by a brief review of his discussion of the well-known riddle/misunderstanding at John 8:31–33: "the truth will set you free." Leroy began his analysis by identifying ambiguous terms in the text and specifying their meaning in John's vocabulary. For example, the word "truth" refers here to the divine reality that comes to light in the teachings and deeds of Jesus, the "true son" who can grant believers a place in his Father's house. In the Johannine lexicon, then, to be "truly free" means to accept the revelation that Jesus embodies (8:36; Leroy 1968, 69–70). However, "the Jews" who debate with Jesus understand "freedom" as a status they enjoy on the basis of their descent from Abraham, regardless of their actual political circumstances. The tension between the Jews' definition of "freedom" and Jesus' definition is the source of the misunderstanding in this passage. In John's idiom, "true freedom" comes solely through belief in Jesus; the Jews remain "slaves" because they refuse to accept Jesus' sonship (8:34–35; Leroy 1968, 72–73).¹² Ultimately, the Jews' misunderstanding is a byproduct of their failure to accept Jesus' self-revelation and their subsequent inability to detect the double meaning of his words.

In many respects, Leroy's interdisciplinary approach countered the eclipse of Johannine narrative by focusing on special language, ambiguity, and tensions within the text itself. Culpepper, who dedicated thirteen pages of *Anatomy* to discussion of misunderstanding as a literary device, noted

11. Part 3 of *Rätsel* includes a helpful chart that compares the normal meaning and special Johannine meaning of each of the ambiguous terms in the Fourth Gospel's eleven riddles. For example, the phrase "living water" at 4:10 and 7:38 normally means "running water," but in the Johannine *Sondersprache* it means "the revelation of Jesus in Spirit"; "bread from heaven/of life" at 6:32–35 normally means "the manna in the wilderness," but in John's vocabulary it refers to "the revelation of God in Jesus, who gives life"; "death" at 8:51 normally means "the end of natural life," but John understands it to be "the condition of people outside the eschatological salvation that Jesus offers" (Leroy 1968, 159, my translations).

12. "Deswegen können die Juden das Wort Jesu nicht verstehen. Der Bereich der ἀλήθεια ist empirisch nicht fassbar" ("For this reason, the Jews cannot understand Jesus' words. The domain of ἀλήθεια [as Jesus defines that word] is not empirically comprehensible"; Leroy 1968, 73).

that “Leroy significantly advanced the study of the Johannine misunderstandings and placed future studies in his debt” (1983, 152–65, here 152–53). But while “misunderstanding” has become a stock theme in narrative-critical studies, Leroy ultimately located the meaning of the Fourth Gospel in historical realities outside the text itself, as evident from the subtitle of his book, *A Study of the Form-History of the Gospel of John*.¹³ Leroy’s analysis of John 8:31–38 is again illustrative. While it is now regrettably difficult to trace the development of the Johannine definition of “freedom,” John’s claim that the Jews cannot experience “true freedom” through descent from Abraham must have originated in a conflict between the Johannine community and the synagogue (Leroy 1968, 74, 171–72, 191–93).¹⁴ Indeed, John 8:31–36 is, in Leroy’s view, an allegory for the spiritual pilgrimage of the Johannine Christians, and the key terms in the pericope were likely defined for new believers during their catechetical training to help them comprehend their new religious experience (1968, 71–72). Thus, the “Jews who had believed” (τοὺς πεπιστευκότας) at 8:31 represent recent converts to Christianity from Judaism; the future verbs γνώσεσθε and ἐλευθερώσει (“will know” the truth; “will be set free”) allude to the gradual development of their faith and knowledge; Jesus’ exhortation to “remain in my teaching” urges these fledgling Christians to be faithful as their understanding grows.¹⁵ Ultimately, in Leroy’s reading the meaning of the Fourth Gospel’s special language does

13. Leroy’s form-critical approach was ironically undermined by his accurate observation that the riddle cannot be defined as a speech genre on the basis of formal characteristics. Indeed, formal diversity—both across cultures and even within a single culture—is itself an essential feature of riddling, so that the structural elements of the genre may vary from case to case. This principle, widely acknowledged in ethnographic studies of the riddle, was in fact foundational to Leroy’s study, inasmuch as it allowed him to argue that John’s misunderstandings need not resemble other specimens of the genre in order to be classified as “riddles” (see Leroy 1968, 43–46). One wonders, however, how a speech genre that cannot be defined on the basis of “form” can be adequately treated through form-critical analysis.

14. Reflecting on the difficulty of tracing the development of John’s special definition of “freedom,” Leroy lamented that “Die Begriffe und Aussagen ruhen in sich selbst und haben alle Brücken nach rückwärts abgebrochen, die den Weg zur Herkunft dieser Theologie weisen könnten” (“The ideas and assertions [in this passage] rest solely on themselves, and all the bridges have been burned that could lead the way back to the origin of this theology”; 1968, 71, my translation).

15. Obviously, this reading is complicated by Jesus’ subsequent assertion that these “Jews who had believed” desire to murder him (John 8:37), a sentiment that would appear to be uncharacteristic of catechumens. Pondering this problem, Leroy concluded that, while there is strong thematic unity in the narrative, one must postulate a break between 8:36 and 8:37 in order to correlate John’s story to community history (1968, 71–72).

not arise from factors within the narrative but rather from hypothetical historical factors outside the text. As such, his substantial insights into misunderstanding as a Johannine literary technique remained burdened by the eclipse of biblical narrative.

DAVID WEAD: LITERARY DEVICES AND AUTHORIAL INTENTIONS

David Wead's *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (1970), based on his Basel dissertation under Bo Reicke and Oscar Cullmann, was the first sustained attempt to analyze the narrative dynamics of the Fourth Gospel using models adapted from secular literary theory. Although Wead's groundbreaking study lacks much of today's familiar jargon—terms such as “narrator,” “characterization,” “focalization,” and “implied author” are rarely, if ever, used—the main topics of his analysis have featured largely in almost all subsequent discussion of the Fourth Gospel as narrative: point of view, double entendre, irony, and metaphor. Wead's seminal research, caught between innovative narrative theory and the overriding historical concerns of the biblical scholarship of its day, illustrates the depth of the eclipse of Johannine narrative particularly well.

Wead's discussion was grounded in a number of insightful observations about the Fourth Gospel's literary “point of view.” Following the theories of Henry James, Percy Lubbock, and Francis Connolly, Wead explained that narrative “point of view shows the position where the author stands in relation to the events he is relating to his readers.” Three questions are relevant in determining a narrative's point of view: Who is telling the story? What is the physical “angle of narration” from which that person sees the events? What mood is projected? In an important move away from the eclipse, Wead stated that the first of these questions—Who is telling the story?—is not especially relevant to an analysis of the Fourth Gospel as narrative, a premise that allowed him to bypass questions of authorship and composition history (1970, 1–2). On “angle of narration” or “physical point of view,” Wead observed that the Fourth Gospel uses a third-person narrator (one who speaks as a detached observer), a technique that allows the reader to receive information that transcends the limited perspectives of characters in the story. Wead's most significant insights relate to the Fourth Gospel's “mood” or “mental point of view.” John's third-person narrator situates himself beyond the end of the story, allowing the reader to evaluate the significance of the events under consideration from the perspective of their ultimate outcome (1970, 1–2, 6–7). As a result, the Fourth Gospel's narrative presentation is characterized by a dual interpretation of each situation,

“that of those who participated in the events and that of the apostles following the resurrection” (1970, vi).¹⁶

In Wead’s view, John’s postresurrection perspective is critical to his narrative art. “The literary devices John uses often rely on our ability as readers of the gospel to know more than those who participated in the events”—specifically, on our ability to evaluate what is happening at any given moment in view of what we know about Jesus’ true identity and his ultimate destiny (Wead 1970, vi). Wead closed his introductory chapter by noting that the specific literary devices to be discussed in the remainder of the book—signs, double entendre, irony, and metaphor—all depend on the Johannine narrator’s postresurrection point of view (1970, 11). A brief review of Wead’s analysis of irony, now widely recognized as a key feature of the Fourth Gospel’s rhetoric and a major topic of discussion in *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, will illustrate the extent to which this approach allowed him to sidestep the eclipse of Johannine narrative by focusing on the literary dynamics of the text.

Wead defined “irony” as a literary device that plays on the “disparity between the understanding of the character in the play and the meaning the audience perceives.” Someone in the story says or does something that appears reasonable in the immediate situation, but the reader “understands it in relation to the total context of the drama.” In the case of the Fourth Gospel, John invites the reader to evaluate the discrepancy between the narrator’s postresurrection perspective on Christ and the limited insights of the characters (Wead 1970, 48). Instances of Johannine irony may be subcategorized on the basis of the means by which the reader receives this privileged information. Sometimes, for example, John enlightens the reader with a “wink,” “a device wherein the author takes pains to step aside and explain the irony which he puts into the text” by specifically stating that something is amiss. A notable example appears at John 11:50–52, where the high priest Caiaphas says that it would be better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish. While Caiaphas “meant this statement to have political connotations alone,” the narrator “gives us the ‘wink’” by immediately telling the reader the ultimate significance of these words in view of Jesus’ impending fate (1970, 53–54). In other cases John simply “depends upon the knowledge he has given the audience in other places to show them the contrast between appearance and reality” (1970, 54). For example, at John 7:48 the Pharisees disparage Jesus by asking the temple guards whether any of the religious leaders have

16. While Wead did not explore John’s techniques of characterization, he noted that John’s characters consistently betray an inadequate view of Jesus that is inconsistent with the narrator’s postresurrection perspective (1970, 6–7).

believed his claims. While the narrator does not comment directly on their remarks, the reader recalls that John has already depicted Nicodemus—who speaks in Jesus’ defense at 7:50–51—as a representative of such belief (3:1–2). Wead’s approach resisted the eclipse of John’s narrative by locating the keys to Johannine irony in “the total meaning of the plot,” which offers the reader a growing database of information against which the limited perspectives of individual characters may be judged (1970, 49).

Wead’s study was ahead of its time in many respects and is certainly the most obvious methodological precursor to *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. In *Literary Devices*, Wead interacted seriously with literary theory and attempted to understand John’s narrative without reference to hypothetical sources or revisions of the text. Yet viewed from the hindsight of today, Wead’s conclusions might have been more dramatic if his analysis were supported by a more precise discussion of John’s reader, the consumer of the narrative rhetoric of the Fourth Gospel. While Wead broke from the consensus of the day by refusing to speculate about hypothetical communities and historical developments behind the text, he clearly continued to think of the reader of the Fourth Gospel in primarily historical terms. As a result, *Literary Devices* often marries sophisticated narrative-critical observations to historical-critical understandings of the text’s original audience. For example, Wead argued that Johannine irony sometimes “presupposes a knowledge of the other gospel traditions and other earlier works of the New Testament” (1970, 54; see also 67–68). Thus, when the Jews ask, “Don’t the Scriptures say that the Christ will come from the seed of David, and Bethlehem, the city of David?” (John 7:42), John assumes “that his [first-century] readers, either through contact with the Synoptics or through other traditions of the Christ would have knowledge to supply the answers to the questions” (1970, 60). This observation is reasonable but is clearly derived from historical approaches to the first-century audience of the Fourth Gospel and the interface between the Johannine and Synoptic traditions, not from the theoretical models on which Wead’s study was based.¹⁷ Despite these limitations, however, Wead paved the way for Culpepper’s more thorough application of literary theory.

17. Wead’s historical-critical orientation is evident even in the name of his book, *The Literary Devices in John’s Gospel*. In the introduction, Wead says that he struggled to find a title that would “most aptly describe the work being done.” The word “hermeneutics” seemed applicable, yet “the existential thrust of our present generation has enlarged this term so that the ontology of the individuals involved in the presentation also has become a basic element in the interpretation.” Ultimately, because “our [Wead’s] attempt will be written from the point of view of the author [John] and not that of the present discussion of hermeneutics we have deemed ‘literary device’ the more expressive term” (1970, vii).

MARINUS DE JONGE: AN ASSUMED UNITY

While source criticism and the developmental approach dominated Johannine scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s, Marinus de Jonge represents a number of prominent scholars who rejected the notion that the Fourth Gospel can only be understood when dissolved into its constituent parts. De Jonge acknowledged that “literary sources were used and non-literary traditions left their traces in the Gospel [of John]” and also allowed that “a long literary process with different stages of redaction may lie behind the present [Fourth] Gospel” (1977, vii–viii). But he also asserted that these sources and developmental processes are of little consequence to interpretation, because (1) they cannot be reconstructed with any degree of certainty, and (2) the Fourth Evangelist, who produced the text as it now stands, was “as composer in his own right,” whose narrative reflects his peculiar theology and literary art.¹⁸ Building on the premise that “the first task of an exegete should be to interpret the documents as they lie before him,” de Jonge introduced a 1977 collection of essays with the note that “behind [all] the present studies lies the assumption that the Fourth Gospel is a meaningful whole, highly complicated in structure, with many paradoxes and many tensions in thought and syntax, but yet asking to be taken seriously as a (more or less finished) literary product in which consistent lines of thought can be detected” (1977, viii). While de Jonge made no attempt to ground this presupposition in literary theory, his consistent emphasis on the unity of the Fourth Gospel—notable in an era when most Johannine scholarship was predicated on the eclipse of biblical narrative—in many respects anticipated Culpepper’s work.

A convenient illustration of de Jonge’s approach to Johannine Christology may be taken from his analysis of Nicodemus, the prominent Jewish leader who is told that he must be “born again” in order to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:1–10).¹⁹ After his initial encounter with Jesus, Nicodemus

18. “The present author [de Jonge] is very skeptical about the possibility of delineating the literary sources in the Fourth Gospel and does not share the optimism displayed by some of his colleagues when they try to distinguish between sources and redaction” (1977, viii). In any case, de Jonge would treat both the redactional and traditional elements of the text “as integral parts of a new literary entity, which has to be studied on its own, because it [originally] functioned as a whole among people who did *not* take its prehistory into account” (1977, 198).

19. Marinus de Jonge, “Nicodemus and Jesus: Some Observations on Misunderstanding and Understanding in the Fourth Gospel.” An earlier version of this essay, now chapter 2 of *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven*, was delivered as a lecture at the University of Manchester in 1970 and subsequently appeared in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (1971).

appears twice more in the Fourth Gospel: at 7:51 he questions whether Jesus should be condemned before receiving a fair trial; at 19:39–42 he joins Joseph of Arimathea for the preparation and burial of Jesus' body. De Jonge's analysis of these episodes was predicated on the principle that "every passage in the Fourth Gospel, or group of closely connected passages ... can only be analyzed fully if the whole Gospel is taken into account" (1977, 42). Building on the premise of a unified text, de Jonge analyzed John's presentation of Nicodemus in terms of this character's development throughout the narrative.

De Jonge agreed with those who conclude that "Nicodemus is not pictured as an individual person, but as a representative of a larger group"; this observation, however, begs the question of precisely which group of people Nicodemus represents (1977, 30). Many scholars have argued that Nicodemus represents secret disciples whose faith gradually grows to a point where they are willing to publicly associate themselves with Christ. In de Jonge's view, such readings are too hopeful; in fact, in each of the three passages in question, Nicodemus fails to distinguish himself from the masses who do not adequately grasp Jesus' identity and ultimate destiny. In his first appearance, Nicodemus addresses Jesus as a "teacher come from God" on the basis of the "signs" that he does (3:2). While this assessment is accurate in one sense, de Jonge noted that Jesus proceeds to correct Nicodemus's nascent belief by stressing that he "came down from heaven" and is, in fact, "the Son," not just another teacher (1977, 38).²⁰ Nicodemus's two subsequent appearances do not suggest any improvement in his comprehension. While Nicodemus makes gestures to defend Jesus at 7:50–52, he appeals only to the legal need for a formal hearing and makes no direct attempt to defend Jesus' deeds or teaching. Perhaps for this reason, John refers to Nicodemus as "one of them" (the hostile Pharisees) and reminds the reader of his earlier ambiguous encounter with Jesus in chapter 3, comments that are scarcely calculated to enhance the reader's confidence (de Jonge 1977, 36).²¹ The same may be

20. De Jonge noted the difficulty in distinguishing Jesus' voice from that of the narrator as the episode unfolds. While some scholars offer a source-critical solution to the problem, de Jonge rejected this approach because "it is clear that it does not contribute towards the explanation of the text as we have it before us" (1977, 37).

21. De Jonge contended that the entire chapter (John 7) projects a spirit of Jewish hostility toward Jesus, beginning with the reference to the Jews' desire to kill him in 7:1 and ending with their attempt to arrest him; John does little to distinguish Nicodemus from this general sentiment. These observations forced de Jonge to conclude, "I do not think that the [Fourth] Gospel wants to suggest that Nicodemus in fact has come to believe in Jesus and is, as such, an exception to the general rule [that none of the leaders have believed] laid down by his fellow-Pharisees in vs. 48" (1977, 35–36, here 36).

said of Nicodemus's final appearance in the burial scene at 19:38–42. While John emphasizes the public nature of the act and the quantity and expense of the embalming materials, it is also quite clear that Nicodemus "regard[s] the burial as definitive" and is unable "to look further than the tomb in the garden." This perspective sharply differs from that of the Evangelist, who sees in Jesus' death the beginning of "a new era in God's dealings with mankind" (1977, 33–34). Thus, Nicodemus's generosity does not exonerate him from John's generally low view of secret faith based on signs.

Based on these instances, de Jonge concluded that Nicodemus does not represent the journey from uncertain faith to bold witness. Rather, Nicodemus represents "believing sympathizers among the ordinary people and the leading classes," people who ultimately "live on the wrong side of the dividing line between the true believers who live in communion with him whom God sent to the world and the unbelieving world" (de Jonge 1977, 32). Thus, "the evangelist wants to make clear in what respects the faith of the group represented by Nicodemus fell short of the true Christian faith and why their understanding was in fact misunderstanding, putting them outside the community of the true believers of Jesus Christ" (1977, 39). At a secondary level, Nicodemus, like Joseph of Arimathea, functions in the narrative to remind the reader that there are "differences of opinion" among the Jewish leaders, some of whom were secret disciples. The existence of such people adds some credibility to Jesus' claims, but John can only conclude that they "loved the praise of men more than that of God" (12:42–43; de Jonge 1977, 30–31).

While his reading of the Fourth Gospel did not depend on linguistic models or literary theory, and while he acknowledged the possibility of sources and revisions behind the text, de Jonge's work in many respects anticipated *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* in its commitment to the principle that John's theological presentation is coherent and meaningful as it stands. Returning to the example above, de Jonge's reading of the Nicodemus passages closely resembles, both in its approach and in its conclusions, Culpepper's discussion of Nicodemus in a chapter of *Anatomy* dedicated to John's techniques of characterization (Culpepper 1983, 134–36).²² Scholars such as de Jonge resisted the eclipse of Johannine narrative simply by focusing on the text as a unified whole, without appeal to interdisciplinary models.

22. Citing de Jonge's study (among others), Culpepper concluded that "Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea represent those who believe but refuse to confess lest they be put out of the synagogue," leaving them outside the circle of the children of God (1983, 136).

STORY AND DISCOURSE AND THE REDISCOVERY OF JOHANNINE NARRATIVE

As noted above, studies of the Gospel of John in the decades immediately preceding the release of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* were generally driven by the assumption that the meaning of John's story lies outside the story itself. This was ultimately true even of those studies that utilized interdisciplinary models to highlight John's notable literary features, as illustrated by the groundbreaking works of Herbert Leroy and David Wead. Against this trend, scholars such as Marinus de Jonge acknowledged the contributions of source criticism and developmental approaches but insisted that the Fourth Gospel must be studied as a unified text. This line of research, however, simply rejected the eclipse of Johannine narrative as a matter of principle, with no real attempt to demonstrate the unity or inherent meaningfulness of the text on theoretical grounds. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* overcame the limitations of these earlier studies by providing a strong theoretical rationale for the premise that John's narrative is inherently meaningful regardless of its historicity or the circumstances of its composition.

How did Culpepper engineer this dramatic reversal of the eclipse of Johannine narrative? The answer lies in Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*, which was released in 1978 and came to the attention of biblical scholars in the early 1980s. While Chatman showed no particular interest in the Bible, *Story and Discourse* marks a great divide in recent study of the Gospels and was arguably one of the most important books for twentieth-century biblical scholarship. Early in the introduction to *Anatomy*, Culpepper revealed that "the theoretical model employed here is derived from Seymour Chatman" and proceeded to outline the remainder of his study on the framework of Chatman's paradigm (1983, 6–8).²³ Two dimensions of Chatman's theory were particularly important to Culpepper's work and to subsequent narrative-critical studies of the Gospels: the notion that narratives are unified semiotic structures whose meaning emerges from the relationship of the parts to the whole, not from factors outside the text itself; and Chatman's sophisticated model for analyzing the ways that authors and readers communicate through stories.

STORY, DISCOURSE, MEANING

The title of Chatman's book, *Story and Discourse*, is a convenient summary of his essential thesis on the nature of narratives. "Every narrative—so this

23. Culpepper reemphasized his dependence on Chatman's model in the closing chapter of *Anatomy*: "The diagram in the introductory chapter graphically depicts the model of literary analysis we have followed" (1983, 231).

theory goes—is a structure with a content plane (called ‘story’) and an expression plane (called ‘discourse’)” (1978, 176). In other words, every narrative is a structured act of communication with two layers: a “story” layer and a “discourse” layer. The “story” layer of a narrative includes “the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting),” all conceived as abstract concepts with no inherent meaning (1978, 19).²⁴ The “discourse,” by contrast, is “the expression, the means by which the content is communicated” in a given medium—the actual presentation of things and events from the story world to the reader of a book, the viewer of a film, the audience of a play, and so forth. “In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*.”²⁵ Because the story world behind every discourse is a hypothetical construct, Chatman’s model applies equally well to both historical and fictional narratives. For example, while William Shirer’s *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1990) makes historical claims quite different from those of the fairytale “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” Chatman would argue that both of these narratives may be analyzed in terms of the way that the discourse—the text presented to the reader—selects, orders, and presents events from the total number of things that “must have happened” (1978, 28). Following Chatman’s model, every narrative may be analyzed in terms of the relationships between the abstract level of the story and the concrete representation of that story in the discourse.

Chatman’s story and discourse model is obviously helpful for analyzing the ways that authors present events and characters to their audiences, but at a deeper level his approach raises substantial philosophical questions about the ways that narratives generate meaning. Specifically, for Chatman the “meaning” of a narrative lies in the interplay between the abstract story world and its concrete expression in the discourse, *not* in any relationship between the narrative and real world events or entities. Thus, every autobiography, film,

24. “Story, in my technical sense of the word, exists only at an abstract level; any manifestation already entails the selection and arrangement performed by the discourse as actualized by a given medium” (Chatman 1978, 37).

25. Ultimately, “discourse” is also an abstract entity that comes to concrete expression only through a specific medium of presentation (oral storytelling, print, film, dance, etc.). Chatman noted that the “discourse” element of a narrative encompasses two points of consideration, “the narrative form itself—the structure of narrative transmission—and its manifestation—its appearance in a specific materializing medium” (Chatman 1978, 22, 25–26). This distinction allowed Chatman to acknowledge that the medium through which a discourse is expressed may influence the manner in which the story is represented: i.e., films can tell stories in ways that books cannot and vice versa.

and Broadway musical is a freestanding, coherent linguistic structure that is “independently meaningful” in the sense that it “conveys a meaning in and of itself, separately from the story it tells” and separately from the circumstances of its composition (Chatman 1978, 22). Returning to the example above, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* describes a great many events and people from the actual past, but the account is not “meaningful” on the basis of its connection to these persons or events. Rather, the meaning of Shirer’s book lies in the interplay between all the abstract events, people, and places that inhabit its story world and the ways in which these things are presented (or not presented) to the reader. Because Culpepper’s narrative-critical analysis of the Gospel of John was built on the logic of this thesis, the rationale for Chatman’s premise will be briefly outlined here.

Chatman argued that all narratives possess three qualities that make them inherently coherent and meaningful: wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation. Narratives are “whole” in that their structure reflects “a discernible organization” rather than simply “a random agglomerate of events.” At the conceptual level, the events and actors depicted in any book or play are discrete and disconnected entities, but within the narrative discourse they are united in a holistic fashion so that their meaning becomes “mutually entailing.” Narratives exhibit “self-regulation” in the sense that “the structure maintains and closes itself”: a narrative can preserve its meaning even when events or characters are added or subtracted. Hypothetically, one could tell the story of Goldilocks with four bears rather than three, but the essential point would remain the same. Because narratives are self-regulating, “only certain possibilities can occur” in the transformation of the story elements into the discourse. As the author decides what events and people to present and how to present them, her choices are limited by what the story provides and what the discourse can manage (Chatman 1978, 20–22). It is important to stress that, in Chatman’s view, wholeness, self-regulation, and controlled transformation are inherent properties of narrative texts, not aspects of the ways that authors write or readers read. The elements of a narrative are inherently intertwined and are internally self-regulating; these regulations set the boundaries for the author’s presentation of the story and the reader’s interpretation of it. Thus, a narrative exists as a coherent act of communication apart from the author’s artistic effort, and its meaning does not depend on the reader’s interpretive genius.

In Chatman’s model, narratives are not only coherent linguistic structures; they are also *inherently meaningful* linguistic structures, texts that possess a meaning distinct from any meaning implicit in the events that they describe. In semiotic terms, narratives are meaningful because they contain within themselves both signifiers and signifieds: the signifiers are the

elements of the discourse, the words that the reader reads; the signifieds to which those words refer are the events, characters, and details of setting that exist within the story world behind the text (Chatman 1978, 24–25). Even when discourses describe the actual past, they do not refer to events and persons in the real world but rather always and only to events and persons that exist in the abstract realm of the story world. Thus, a biography of Winston Churchill never actually refers to Winston Churchill the man; rather, it refers always and only to the conceptual entity “Winston Churchill” that exists in the story world behind the text, just as the name “Goldilocks” never refers to any real person but always and only to a representative figure.

Applied to the texts of Scripture, Chatman’s model radically undermines the eclipse of biblical narrative by arguing that narratives can and do communicate in an inherently meaningful way. In terms of the present study, Chatman would argue that the “meaning” of the Gospel of John does not lie in its composition history or in the relationship between this narrative and the historical Jesus but rather in the interplay between the text that the reader encounters and the hypothetical story world that must lie behind it.

Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel was grounded in Chatman’s claim that narratives are inherently meaningful linguistic structures. Culpepper opened his discussion by noting that the Gospel of John has generally been treated as a window into the past, “a source for evidence of the process by which it was composed, the theology of the evangelist, or the character and circumstances of the Johannine community.” While this approach had produced many valuable insights, “little attention has been given to the integrity of the whole [Gospel], the way its component parts interrelate, its effects upon the reader, or the way it achieves its effects.” By contrast, Culpepper’s analysis would be based on the premise that “meaning is produced in the experience of reading the text as a whole and making the mental moves the text calls for its reader to make, quite apart from questions concerning its sources and origin.” *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* was, then, a sustained attempt to grapple with the notion that the Gospel of John is a coherent story with an inherent meaning: “Our aim is to contribute to understanding the gospel as a narrative text, what it is, and how it works” (Culpepper 1983, 3–5). The words “narrative text” in the preceding quote stress that Culpepper would focus on the Gospel of John as it exists today, with no reflection on sources or compositional processes.²⁶ The phrase “how it works” refers to “questions regarding how the narrative

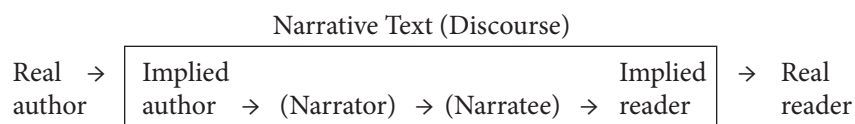
26. Culpepper’s commitment to this principle is illustrated by his remarkable insistence that John 21 must be treated as “the necessary ending” of the narrative even though this chapter “is an epilogue, apparently added shortly after the gospel was completed” (1983, 96).

components of the gospel interact with each other and involve and affect the reader.” By approaching the Gospel of John as a self-contained, inherently meaningful narrative, “we may be in a better position to understand what the gospel requires of its readers, how it directs the production of its meaning, and what happens when someone reads it” (1983, 6).

NARRATIVE AS COMMUNICATION

Chatman’s *Story and Discourse*, then, laid the theoretical foundation for Culpepper’s premise that the Gospel of John is an inherently meaningful narrative. But Chatman also provided Culpepper with a conceptual model for analyzing narrative texts as complex acts of communication between authors and readers. As noted above, Chatman referred to the visible text of a narrative as the “discourse,” a term that stressed his belief that “a narrative is a communication” (1978, 28). Like all other acts of communication—all other discourses—every narrative presupposes a sender (the author of a book, director of a film, writer of a play, composer of a ballet) and a receiver (the reader, viewer, audience). Narrative texts, however, are particularly sophisticated forms of communication in which the sender of the message speaks to the receiver indirectly.

To accommodate the broadest possible range of narratives in a variety of physical media (e.g., print, film, drama), Chatman described six distinct personages or roles in the communicative act: real author; implied author; narrator; narratee; implied audience; and real audience (1978, 28, 147–51).



As indicated in the diagram above, four of the six participants in narrative communication—the implied author, narrator, narratee, and implied audience—are internal elements of the discourse itself, with no connection to real world authors and audiences. They represent, rather, choices that the author makes about how to tell the story, choices that are embedded in, and observable from, the presentation. Because *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* directly appropriated Chatman’s model, the discussion here will focus on Culpepper’s application of this communication paradigm to the interpretation of the Gospel of John.

Culpepper’s discussion of Chatman’s communication diagram immediately betrayed his intention to undermine the eclipse of Johannine narrative. In the case of the Fourth Gospel, the “real author” would be that person or

group of people who produced the text as we have it today.²⁷ Of course, there has been considerable debate about this individual's (or these individuals') identity, experiences, and circumstances. Culpepper's analysis, however, would not be burdened by such concerns, simply because the real author(s) of a narrative exists outside the text and the goal of *Anatomy* was "to understand the gospel itself more clearly" on its own terms (1983, 15).²⁸ Of much greater importance is the "implied author" of the Fourth Gospel, a personification of "the sum of the choices made by the real author in writing the narrative" (1983, 16).²⁹ The implied author is, essentially, the persona that the real author adopts for purposes of telling the story, including the total set of ideological values and literary preferences that are reflected in the book. In Culpepper's discussion, the name "John" generally refers to this implied author, not to the historical individual(s) who produced the text. On the other end of the communication spectrum, "the implied reader is defined by the text as the one who performs all the mental moves required to enter into the narrative world and respond to it as the implied author intends" (Culpepper 1983, 7). The implied reader of the Gospel of John is, essentially, the audience that the narrative envisions, that individual or group of individuals whom the implied author seeks to persuade that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). The theoretical distinction between this implied audience and any given "real reader" of the Gospel of John is critical simply because many modern readers do not resemble the kind of audience that the text originally anticipated (1983, 207).³⁰

27. Excluding the apparent interpolation of John 7:53–8:11 (a passage that *Anatomy* does not discuss) at some point in the history of the scribal transmission of the book.

28. Culpepper's emphasis here was consistent with Chatman's dictum that "only the implied author and implied reader are immanent to a narrative" (1978, 151). Hence, references to "the author" or "John" throughout Culpepper's study "do not exclude the possibility, even the probability, that the gospel is the product of several writers" (Culpepper 1983, 15–16, here 15; see also Chatman 1978, 149).

29. Chatman referred to this construct as the "*implied* author" because its existence is "reconstructed by the reader from the narrative." The implied author never communicates to the reader; its presence and influence are observable only indirectly, in the overall composition of the narrative (Chatman 1978, 148).

30. Because the Gospel of John is an ancient narrative with a lengthy reception history, Culpepper expanded Chatman's diagram to include four distinct "audiences": the actual audience (any person who happens to read the text today); the "authorial audience," the real historical audience that the real author, "John," had in mind as he wrote the book; the "narrative audience" (Chatman's implied audience); and "the ideal narrative audience," a hypothetical reader who would understand and accept all the claims of the story without question (Culpepper 1983, 206–8).

The “narrator” — “the voice that tells the story and speaks to the reader” — is perhaps the most significant of Chatman’s six participants in a narrative communication. In some cases the narrator may appear as a character in the story and may even speak about events in the first person. John’s narrator, however, “is undramatized and serves as the voice of the implied author” (Culpepper 1983, 16).³¹ In fact, “there is no reason to suspect any difference in the ideological, spatial, temporal, or phraseological points of view of the narrator, the implied author, and the [real] author”; the reader may assume, in other words, that John is essentially speaking directly to her and attempting to persuade her to accept his perspective on Jesus (1983, 17, 43, here 43).³² The narrator of the Fourth Gospel is “intrusive” in the sense that the narrator often makes interpretive comments that interrupt the flow of the story. For example, when Jesus, standing in the courts of the Jerusalem temple, invites a group of unbelieving Jews to “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” the narrator immediately breaks in to clarify that Jesus was actually referring to his impending resurrection (2:19–22). The narrator is critical to the overall rhetorical effect of the Fourth Gospel simply because the narrator provides all the information and tells the reader how to interpret this data. Further, John’s narrator was critical to Culpepper’s reading because the narrator essentially replaced redactors, editors, and real-world authors as the sole arbiter of the text’s meaning.

“PLOT” AND “CHARACTER” IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

After summarizing Chatman’s model for narrative communication, Culpepper assured his own readers that a literary-critical approach would reveal “fresh insights and an enhanced appreciation for the way the gospel [of John] shapes the reader’s production of its message” (1983, 8). The validity of this claim may be verified by the fact that *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* has remained in print for twenty-five years and has recently been translated into Korean and Japanese. Culpepper’s discussion of the Fourth Gospel’s plot and techniques of characterization will be briefly summarized here to illustrate the ingenuity of his conclusions. Plot and characterization are explicitly

31. Chatman defined the “narrator” as the “person or presence ... actually telling the story to an audience, no matter how minimally evoked his voice or the audience’s listening ear” (1978, 33–34).

32. Culpepper supported this claim by arguing, primarily on the basis of John 21:23–25, that the implied author of the Gospel of John is the Beloved Disciple and that the narrator “is presented as a member of the group (‘we’) which knows that the testimony of the Beloved Disciple is true” (1983, 43–48, here 47).

intertwined in Culpepper's analysis, reflecting both the lasting influence of Henry James's famous dictum, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" and also "the interdependence of plot and characterization" in the Fourth Gospel itself (James 1970, 392; Culpepper 1983, 148). Certainly in the case of the Gospel of John, plot and characterization work together in service of the Evangelist's rhetorical purposes.

Culpepper's discussion of the Fourth Gospel's plot began with the observation that early Christian tradition presented the Evangelists with a large database of actors and events, some of which may have been organized into rudimentary storylines. To convert this amorphous mass into a coherent portrait of Jesus, each writer "had to impose a meaning on the events and convince the reader that this meaning was implicit in the events all along" (Culpepper 1983, 84). Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John achieved this persuasion by presenting Jesus' deeds and teachings in a linear sequence with "a certain progression and causality." The "plot" of a narrative Gospel is thus "the evangelist's interpretation of the story," the remainder after all the individual episodes are subtracted from the text and the framework that gives Jesus a distinct identity (1983, 85).

John promotes his interpretation of Jesus less by the causal sequence of the events he describes than by the repetition of key themes. The Gospel of John is, in fact, a series of relatively isolated incidents held together by the overriding motifs of Jesus' self-revelation and the dual responses of faith in, or rejection of, this disclosure. The stories of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11), Nicodemus (3:1–15), the Samaritan woman at the well (4:4–42), and the trial before Pilate (18:28–19:15) are all self-contained and coherent in their own right, but John's larger story-arc unites them by exploring the ways that different characters struggle to understand Jesus.³³ John's plot achieves its rhetorical effect as the implied reader, who is informed of Jesus' true identity in the opening verses of the book (1:1–18), observes and evaluates the adequacy of these various responses.³⁴ It is important to stress that, for Culpepper, emplotment is a meaningful dimension of John's narrative as it stands, regardless of the real author's intentions or the Fourth Gospel's composition history. "Together these [literary] features point unmistakably to the careful crafting of a unified sequence and the logic of causality which is developed

33. "[P]lot development in John ... is a matter of how Jesus' identity comes to be recognized and how it fails to be recognized" (Culpepper 1983, 88–89, 97, here 97).

34. John's plot is thus "ironic" in that the characters are continually striving to learn what the reader already knows (Culpepper 1983, 89).

through the repetition of scenes and dialogues in the gospel,” the sources and circumstances behind the text notwithstanding (1983, 87).

Having established the rhetorical structure of John’s plot, Culpepper turned to the Fourth Gospel’s techniques of characterization. Contemporary theories of characterization fall into two camps: those that view narrative actors “as autonomous beings with traits and even personalities”; and those that view characters only as “plot functionaries with certain commissions or tasks to be fulfilled.” Departing significantly from Chatman, Culpepper concluded that the former model does not apply to the Fourth Gospel simply because almost all of John’s characters are “flat,” stereotypes who represent a single dimension of the struggle to believe.³⁵ Specifically, individual characters in the Fourth Gospel—the Jews, the disciples, Peter, the lame man at Bethesda—are defined by their (in)ability to grasp the narrator’s perspective on Jesus, whose figure completely dominates the landscape of the narrative. Taken together, these characters represent a spectrum of potential responses to Jesus and a number of typical misconceptions about him (Culpepper 1983, 232–33). In this respect, Jesus is the “protagonist” of the Fourth Gospel—the person who centralizes the major interests of the narrative—while the remaining characters are “ficelles” who function simply to clarify Jesus’ identity through their interactions with him (1983, 103–4, 145–46).³⁶ Plot and character thus intertwine in the larger scheme of John’s rhetorical purposes. “Through characterization, ... various responses to Jesus, and indeed to the gospel itself, are held up for the reader’s scrutiny while his or her judgment is gently swayed toward the evangelist’s perspective” (1983, 146).

A convenient example of the interface between plot and character in the Fourth Gospel may be taken from Culpepper’s reading of Mary Magdalene. Mary appears only twice in the Gospel of John, but each occasion is a critical moment in the plot: she witnesses Jesus’ death and resurrection and

35. “[O]ne is almost forced to consider the [Fourth Gospel’s] characters in terms of their commissions, plot functions, and representational value” (Culpepper 1983, 102). See the contrasting view of narrative characters in Chatman 1978, 107–119. The term “flat” is derived from E. M. Forster, who described a “flat character” as one “constructed round a single idea or quality.” A flat character can be characterized by a simple sentence with a single verb: “Nicodemus is afraid to reveal his faith” (Forster 1954, 103–18, here 103–4; see Culpepper 1983, 102–3).

36. Taken as a group, the characters in the Fourth Gospel present a taxonomy of possible responses to Jesus: “rejection” (the Jews); “acceptance without open commitment” (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea); “acceptance of Jesus as a worker of signs and wonders”; belief in Jesus’ words, which leads to an authentic faith not dependent on signs; “commitment in spite of misunderstandings” (the disciples); “paradigmatic discipleship” (the Beloved Disciple); and “defection” (Judas; Culpepper 1983, 146–48).

then becomes the first person to proclaim Christ as the risen Lord (19:25; 20:1–18). Mary's most significant scene is set at the empty tomb, where she confuses Jesus with a gardener and then, after recognizing her master, is told that she must not cling to him because "I [Jesus] have not yet returned to the Father" (20:17). In Culpepper's view, John uses Mary Magdalene to clarify "the relationship of the risen Lord to the earthly Jesus" and, consequently, to clarify the disciples' pre- and post-Easter experiences of Christ. At first, Mary's "understanding is limited entirely to her relationship to Jesus as her earthly friend and teacher," as evident from the facts that she calls him "Rabboni" and attempts to embrace him (20:16–17). But once Jesus tells her that he is going to the Father, Mary perceives that there will be a new relationship on the basis of Christ's glorification, an understanding evident in her testimony to the disciples at 20:18. Mary Magdalene thus represents those individuals among John's implied audience who either "did not understand Jesus' death as glorification or the potential for relationship to the risen Lord" or who "did not realize that the words of Jesus were more important than the historical data, and abiding in the risen Lord more important than assent to historical witnesses." Mary's initial misunderstanding and subsequent change of perception thus function to help the reader grasp the existential implications of Jesus' glorification (Culpepper 1983, 143–44). In this respect, Mary Magdalene illustrates John's tendency to clarify Jesus' identity by refracting Christ's glory through minor characters who represent particular responses to his self-revelation.

While the preceding discussion of plot and character oversimplifies the elegance and theoretical sophistication of *Anatomy's* argument, it illustrates the extent to which Chatman's paradigm allowed Culpepper to approach central questions in the interpretation of the Gospel of John without reference to the history of the text's composition. Culpepper's reading dramatically reversed the eclipse of Johannine narrative by building on the premise that the Gospel of John is an inherently meaningful text with sophisticated internal communication patterns. This theoretical foundation allowed *Anatomy* to depart radically from the consensus view of its day.

WIDENING THE GAPS: TEXTS AND THEIR REAL READERS

Viewed against the backdrop of mid-twentieth-century Johannine scholarship, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* was a stunning achievement. Culpepper's effective appropriation of a wide range of literary theories allowed him to bypass the limitations of much previous research by treating the Gospel of John as an inherently meaningful text. The present essay could not begin to review even a fraction of the many articles, monographs, and commentaries

that have built on *Anatomy's* precedent. At the same time, however, narrative criticism has substantially evolved since 1983, incorporating new theories and methods. Many scholars who embrace these perspectives contend that the “meaning” of the Fourth Gospel lies neither in the history behind the text nor in its structural elements but rather in *every reader's encounter with John's story*. As a result of this shift from text to reader as locus of meaning, much contemporary research on the Fourth Gospel as narrative differs from Culpepper's seminal study in foundational ways. Because many of the essays in the current volume will reflect these differences, the remainder of this introduction will briefly outline the theoretical foundations of the emerging focus on the social locations of John's real-world readers and will review how *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* anticipated these developments.

Ironically, the rationale for reader-centered approaches to the Gospel of John may be traced, at least in part, through *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* back to Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*. While Chatman contended that narratives are inherently meaningful semiotic structures, one can easily exploit his paradigm to argue that texts actually mean nothing at all until individual readers interact with them. In fact, the real reader's authority over a text's meaning is explicitly assumed in at least three key points of Chatman's model: the ways that readers populate the story world behind a discourse; the problem of “gaps” in a narrative and how readers fill them; and the notion of open characters.

THE GENESIS OF STORY WORLD

The genius of Chatman's analysis lies in his distinction between the abstract story world behind a narrative and the presentation of that world to the audience, a concept he developed from the insights of Russian formalism and French structuralism. As noted earlier, the “story” behind a discourse represents “the continuum of events presupposing the total set of all conceivable details,” only some of which are actually revealed; the story world, in other words, is infinitely larger than what the reader actually sees. Chatman proceeded to clarify, however, that the story behind any discourse “is only that continuum [of events] and that set [of details] *actually inferred by a reader*, and there is room for difference in interpretation” (1978, 28, emphasis added). Each reader imagines everything that must have happened in the story world, in what way and in what sequence; the text of the discourse points to this information but does not provide it directly. This being the case, one could reasonably argue that the “meaning” of a narrative actually depends on the ways that specific readers envision the larger story world from which the discourse has been drawn. Put another way, if Chatman is correct that the

meaning of a narrative lies in the interplay between its story and discourse levels, and if he is also correct that the story level must be inferred by individual readers from information provided in the discourse, then one may conclude that the meaning of any narrative is actually a product of the reader's creativity. If, for example, John's story of the healing at Bethesda is meaningful on the basis of the interplay between the text itself and the story world behind that text, and if I as a reader must imagine that story world and all the things within it, then the "meaning" of John 5:1–10 ultimately lies in my own imagination and not in anything on the pages of my Bible.

The tension between closed, meaningful texts and the reader's creative license is particularly evident in Chatman's discussion of "indexing," a term that describes the process by which readers infer the existence of events and people in the story world from information provided by the discourse. "Events [in the discourse] may imply or *index* existents [in the story world]; and, vice versa, existents may *project* events" (Chatman 1978, 33–34, *emphasis original*).³⁷ For example, the statement "The cop shot the burglar" would lead most readers to infer the existence of two actors, a police officer and a thief, and would also suggest that the police officer had a gun—all these things must exist in the story world behind this sentence in order for the described action to occur. Further, the mention of a "burglar" suggests that a crime was committed before the time of the shooting, even though such an event is never actually presented to the reader. Readers can even infer the existence of events and people from descriptive statements that do not include action verbs (1978, 37–38). Thus the sentence "The car had a dent in the door" would suggest to most readers that some person or object who is not specifically mentioned must have done something that damaged the vehicle. In such cases, the people, things, and events mentioned in the discourse function as "indexes" for a larger set of realities in the story world behind the text.

While indexing appears to be an obvious element of narrative communication, Chatman's discussion of this phenomenon underscores the extent to which the meaning of a text is actually the product of every reader's imagination. Specifically, each reader will populate the story world behind a discourse by transporting indexed items from her own experience into that story world, a move that will, in turn, dramatically impact the meaning of the narrative. Returning to the example above, a reader of the sentence "The cop shot the burglar" will import her own understanding of police officers—

37. Chatman supported these claims by noting that "one cannot account for events without recognizing the existence of things causing or being affected by those events" (1978, 34).

based on personal experiences with and beliefs about real-world police officers—into the story world behind the text. This move will, in turn, influence how she responds to the presentation of that world in the discourse. If a certain reader is generally suspicious of police officers and feels that they are prone to use violent force in an oppressive fashion, she will populate the story world with “bad cops” who shoot suspects with little provocation and perhaps for unjust reasons, regardless of the views of the implied author. This imaginative move will, in turn, obviously impact how she interprets the meaning of the sentence. Further, if later plot developments seem to conflict with the story world that this reader has imagined—for example, if police officers are glamorized in subsequent scenes—she may become suspicious of or angry with the narrator, or perhaps will conclude that the story does not make sense. Similarly, the sentence about the dent in the car door might lead some readers to envision a ruthless hit-and-run driver, perhaps a member of another race who bears certain physical traits typical of such criminal persons; later on, however, the narrator may clarify that the dent was actually caused by a shopping cart blown by the wind. In this instance, the reader has populated the story world with events and people that do not actually exist in that world, at least as the implied author would construct it—the author never meant to imply that some evil person damaged the vehicle but cannot stop the reader from jumping to that conclusion. If Chatman is correct to argue that the meaning of a narrative lies in the interplay between story and discourse, it must be noted that the story world is each reader’s creation.

FILLING THE GAPS

As noted above, any given discourse—the level of a narrative that is actually presented to the audience—can mention only a small percentage of the people, things, and events that must exist in the total story world behind it. For this reason, “a narrative [discourse], as the product of a fixed number of statements, can never be totally ‘complete’ ... since the number of plausible intermediate actions or properties is virtually infinite” (Chatman 1978, 29). Jesus, for instance, must have blown his nose from time to time, yet the Gospels do not bring these episodes to our attention; in fact, John feels free to pass over the first thirty years of Jesus’ life without comment, although something must have been going on during that time period. Narrative theorists refer to such omissions as “gaps” and note that every reader of a text must fill these holes in an adequate way in order to make sense of the story. In Chatman’s view, “the drawing of narrative inferences by the reader [= filling gaps] is a low-level kind of interpretation. Perhaps it doesn’t even deserve the

name.” In most cases, “the audience is content to accept the main lines and to fill in the interstices with knowledge it has acquired through ordinary living” (1978, 30–31).

But even if gap-filling is a “low-level” interpretive move, it is clear that different readers will fill the holes in a narrative in different ways and that this process will generate diverse readings. Further, one can easily imagine any number of instances where the gaps in a narrative are so many and so large that the majority of the total content of a discourse is actually supplied by the reader. Fortunately, “the audience’s capacity to supply plausible details is virtually limitless” (Chatman 1978, 29)—John’s readers can easily imagine, on the basis of their own knowledge and experience, what Jesus was doing in the decades before his ministry began. But what of those readers whose perspective is quite different from that of the implied author of a given text? How, for example, would a victim of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima fill the gaps in an American documentary about World War II, and how would this person’s reading differ from that of an American whose father perished in the attack on Pearl Harbor? Chatman’s observation that each reader will “fill in the interstices with knowledge it has acquired through ordinary living” begs the question, Ordinary to whom?

This problem is particularly acute in instances where the real reader’s values and experiences differ substantially from those of the implied author of a text, a problem that faces many contemporary readers of the Gospel of John. For example, most modern Western readers, living within a generation of the Holocaust, feel a bit uncomfortable with John’s harsh treatment of “the Jews,” epitomized by Jesus’ blanket condemnation at 8:44: “You [Jews] are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires.” All readers, as Chatman observes, must fill the gaps in the Fourth Gospel, but no two readers will do this in exactly the same way, and many will not give John the benefit of the doubt.

OPEN CHARACTERS

Even by the standards of its own day, *Story and Discourse* was notable for Chatman’s striking departure from prevailing structuralist theories of characterization. Much previous research had treated narrative characters simply as plot functionaries, necessary agents for the completion of tasks (see Chatman 1978, 108–13). Chatman rejected this approach on the grounds that it fails to distinguish between a character’s full-fledged existence in the story world and the representation of that character in the discourse. Regardless of the presentation to the audience, every character in the story world behind a narrative has a distinct history and identity and exhibits a distinct set of traits (1978,

117–18). Many of these traits are open-ended and only “suggest themselves in later readings”; very often, “one is able to call up increasingly accurate descriptive adjectives [for a character] the deeper one gets into the narrative” (1978, 130). While the term “accurate” in the preceding quote would theoretically mean “consistent with the views of the implied author,” the notion of “going deeper” into a narrative seems to refer to developing impressions based on sustained reflection on the presentation, and perhaps on multiple readings. Indeed, “implication and inference belong to the interpretation of character,” a claim readily verified by the fact that people often think of literary characters in the same ways that they think about real-world people (1978, 117–18, here 117). Going well beyond the boundaries of structuralist theory, Chatman argued that his approach to characterization simply acknowledges what actually happens when real audiences encounter narratives. “It [my theory] assigns the decision-making function of character interpretation exactly to that party in the narrative transaction who makes it,” that is, to the individual reader (1978, 125).

Here, then, Chatman overtly suggested that at least one dimension of a narrative—the identity and depth of the characters—may mean more to some readers than what the text actually says. Yet his discomfort with this conclusion—perhaps more accurately, his sense that this approach to characterization conflicted with his claim that narratives are closed systems—is evident from his immediate insistence that “there are limits” to what a reader may reasonably do with the characters in a story. Chatman argued, for example, that speculations about the lives of characters should be general rather than specific and should be “enriched by [the reader’s] experience in life and art, not by self-indulgent flights of fancy.” These experiences in life might include research into the historical circumstances of the composition of the text; Chatman recommended that one may gain a better understanding of the characters in James Joyce’s *Dubliners* after visiting Ireland and meeting the people who live there. Readers who cannot make it to Dublin should at least submit to common sense. “Narrative evokes a world, and since it is no more than an evocation, we are left free to enrich it with whatever real or fictive experience we acquire. Yet somehow,” Chatman hopes, “we know when to stop speculating” (Chatman 1978, 119–20).

The tension in Chatman’s argument between open characters and closed narratives illustrates the limits of his interpretive model particularly well. It is everywhere apparent that Chatman’s model seeks a sympathetic “real reader,” one who will submit to the implied author’s intentions and imagine only what the narrator asks her to imagine. Such a reader, through the adoption of a neutral posture, would allow the narrative to produce meaning on its own terms, in the interplay between the story and discourse and the internal com-

munications between the implied author, narrator, and implied audience. Obviously, few such readers exist in the real world, a fact that explains why conflicting interpretations are a universal phenomenon.

BEYOND THE HORIZON: READING JOHN'S READERS

As the brief review above has indicated, structuralist literary theorists such as Seymour Chatman focused on the interplay of elements within narratives but ultimately could not isolate the meaning of a story from the real-world audience's interaction with it. Chatman forcefully demonstrated the value of reading narratives synchronically, as coherent acts of communication and not just as products of the historical circumstances that produced them, but Chatman's ingenious treatment also revealed that narratives cannot be hermetically sealed off from the social situations in which audiences encounter them. The affective meaning of any text—"affective" in the sense that it actually impacts the thoughts and lives of a specific audience at a specific moment in time—is organically related to the immediate context of its reception, to the life situations in which books are read and films are viewed. This fact has been highlighted by a number of reading strategies that have emerged in the twenty-five years since Culpepper published *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, strategies that exploit gaps in the text in ways that John could not have anticipated, shifting the locus of "meaning" from the ancient book to the modern reader. As will be seen, many of the essays in this volume follow this interpretive trajectory.

Writing in 1983, Culpepper could not have fully anticipated these developments, but he did go beyond Chatman by acknowledging that individual readers are largely responsible for the meanings they derive from the Gospel of John. In this respect, Culpepper's work has been foundational even to those studies that have moved far beyond *Anatomy's* horizon. While *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* relied heavily and explicitly on literary theories that treat narratives as closed systems of meaning, Culpepper's research was also informed by the emergence of reader-response criticism in the early 1980s. Following Wolfgang Iser, Culpepper noted that one must consider not only the identity of John's implied reader but also what the Fourth Gospel "makes its actual reader do." This is the case because, in Culpepper's view, the latent meanings of the text are actualized only as individual readers follow the plot of John's story, filling gaps where necessary. When accepted values are countered and challenged, the reader must take an active role in formulating what the narrative could mean; in the process, the Fourth Gospel forces every reader to reflect on her own beliefs and explore possible alternatives (Culpepper 1983, 209–10). "When the gospel [of John] is viewed as a mirror ...

its meaning can be found on this side of it, that is, between text and reader, in the experience of reading the text, and belief in the gospel can mean openness to the ways it calls readers to interact with it, with life, and with their own world" (1983, 237).

Culpepper's seminal interaction with reader-response theories laid the groundwork for subsequent studies of the Fourth Gospel that have focused on the phenomenology of reading, ways that readers from different backgrounds generate meaning from the text. Notably, *Anatomy* laid the burden of responsibility on modern audiences, who must often defer to the narrative's opinions. "For the contemporary reader, reading the gospel may become an exercise in pretense, pretending to know and think what the evangelist assumed his first-century readers knew and thought and pretending to believe that water could be changed to wine" (Culpepper 1983, 207). As the preceding quote suggests, Culpepper was concerned primarily with the fact that many readers today do not share John's view that Jesus was able to perform miracles. Modern Western readers sharply distinguish between empirical and fictional stories, forcing us to ask whether John's claims can be "true" even if we cannot accept the historicity of his presentation (1983, 236). Regardless of how one answers that question, Culpepper prescribed that modern readers must empathize with John's implied audience in order to interpret his Gospel correctly.

Viewed in the light of subsequent research, Culpepper's insightful recognition of the tension between John's narrative and the beliefs of many modern audiences is notable in two respects. First, while Culpepper's focus on ancient versus modern approaches to "miracle" remains relevant, his discussion touched on only one aspect—and, indeed, only on the most obvious aspect—of the dilemma of reading. Many subsequent critics have found themselves unable to accept not only John's presentation of Jesus' "signs" but also, and in many cases more particularly, John's presentation of certain characters in his story—most notably, women and Jews. Second, many recent studies would reject Culpepper's claim that the modern reader is ultimately responsible to close the gap between John and herself. These scholars feel no need to read under pretense, preferring instead to expose the ways that John's story attempts to create and sustain relations of power and domination.

What, then, will be the future of the study of the Fourth Gospel as narrative? As Culpepper himself has noted, "nothing invites contradiction so much as an attempt to predict the future of Johannine scholarship" (2006, 207). This warning is particularly relevant to any attempt to anticipate the evolution of literary studies, a field of research driven by interdisciplinary interests and shifting social concerns and in which monographs are sometimes methodologically obsolete by the time they come to press. The remainder of this

volume will offer a snapshot of the current state of the field, illustrating the many (r)evolutions of narrative criticism since the publication of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* in 1983. As will be seen, some contributors continue to follow in Culpepper's footsteps, focusing on the structure of John's narrative and speculating at times on the interface between synchronic and diachronic approaches, that is, between literary and historical concerns. Others illustrate a growing sensitivity to the social location of readers and the impact of experience and identity on one's interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Because the contributors to this volume represent a wide range of backgrounds and interests, and because they are leading figures in contemporary Johannine studies, it seems safe to suggest that the scope of issues reflected in this book will likely carry on into the next decades of research.

PART 1
HERMENEUTICAL REFLECTIONS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
AFTER CULPEPPER'S *ANATOMY*

SYMBOLISM AND HISTORY IN JOHN'S ACCOUNT OF JESUS' DEATH

R. Alan Culpepper

Before taking up the topic of this essay, I must say how much I appreciate Tom Thatcher, Stephen Moore, and each of the contributors to this fine collection of papers for marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. Their work has moved the field of Johannine studies well beyond *Anatomy's* limitations and has opened areas that will continue to occupy others for another twenty-five years. The dynamism of modern scholarship is such that it is constantly changing. Technology makes even international communication easy and almost instant, so the circle of conversation has broadened and the pace at which new ideas are exchanged and evaluated has quickened dramatically. For example, John Painter and I have carried on discussions by e-mail between Australia and the United States, sometimes with several exchanges in a single day. To each one with whom I have shared this journey, I am profoundly grateful. The exchange of ideas is stimulating, but the friendships that have developed over the years have enriched the vocation of scholarship in ways that are seldom reflected in our publications.

Books really do have a life of their own, both in their genesis and in their influence. As one writes, a book begins to take on its own character, scope, and argument. It is published in a context the author may interpret but cannot control, and it is read, cited, and commented on by autonomous readers. Writing *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* was exciting because I knew there were not many others who were thinking about John in terms of contemporary literary theory, so I was exploring unmapped territory. The response to the book has been gratifying. It appeared at a time when others were questioning the value and hegemony of historical criticism, and friends in Markan scholarship were experimenting with what we came to call "narrative criticism" in order to distinguish it from the older forms of "literary criticism." The conversation *Anatomy* sparked has led others to refine and extend the lines it tentatively laid down and to advance our understandings of the areas

surveyed in its chapters. Once the horizons of Gospels studies were pushed back, others moved on to other readings of John, so Johannine studies have continued to thrive, embracing new approaches while revisiting traditional concerns with new perspectives.

One of the interesting refrains of the essays in this volume is the call for dialogue between historical and narrative criticism and for a reconsideration of questions of historicity, composition history, and the Johannine community. I wrote *Anatomy* after having completed a doctoral dissertation that explored the nature of the Johannine community: *The Johannine School* (1975; repr., 2007). Then-current scholarship in literary theory interested me because I was uneasy with the ways we were using the Gospel of John to (re)construct the world behind it. Literary theory offered a new conceptual apparatus with which to explore the Gospel. The enterprise broke fresh ground and dealt with what, at the time seemed to be more tangible, objective, and less-speculative issues. I thought it important to explore the functions of the various narrative elements of the Gospel, while suspending questions of historicity and composition history. On the other hand, I have never thought that those questions could simply be abandoned. Because the Gospel was written in a particular historical setting about a historical figure who altered the course of human history, Gospels studies will never be able to dismiss historical concerns. In the introduction to *Anatomy*, I wrote, “our effort to set aside interest in the Johannine community or the historical Jesus should not be interpreted as a denial of any historical core or matrix of the gospel. Once the effort has been made to understand the narrative character of the gospels, some rapprochement with the traditional, historical issues will be necessary” (Culpepper 1983, 11). The John, Jesus, and History Group in the Society of Biblical Literature, in which many of the contributors to this volume have been active, and the essays in this and other recent volumes confirm that the conversation about the implications of narrative criticism (and other recent approaches) for historical studies is well underway.

PRE-ANATOMY INTERPRETATIONS OF JOHN 19:26–27

Anatomy was not as successful in establishing the scope and consistency of John’s symbolism as it was in establishing the underlying design of the Gospel’s plot and characterization. In this essay I propose to examine briefly the ways in which leading Johannine scholars have interpreted the symbolism in John 19:26–27, the scene involving Jesus’ mother and the Beloved Disciple as Jesus is dying. I am not attempting to offer a new interpretation of this passage but to read the course of Johannine scholarship, especially over the last twenty-five years, by reviewing the interpretation of this scene. Based on these

observations, I will attempt to contribute to the conversation about narrative and history in John. In the process we will see how narrative criticism of this scene has affected a historical-critical understanding of the Fourth Gospel. In order to facilitate comparison, the following survey is divided into two sections. The first will survey the interpretation of John 19:26–27 in the work of five giants in the field between 1941 and 1983: Bultmann, Dodd, Barrett, Brown, and Schnackenburg. The second section will review the post-*Anatomy* research of three scholars whose work has been informed by narrative criticism: Mark Stibbe, Jean Zumstein, and Mary Coloe.

Rudolf Bultmann assumed that the Fourth Evangelist was working with a passion narrative source similar to the Synoptics, which included a reference to the women near the end of the account. He surmised, therefore, that the Evangelist brought that reference forward to 19:25 in order to create a context for 19:26–27, which is the Evangelist's own creation. The scene therefore has no historical credibility but is to be read symbolically and theologically. Bultmann found the symbolic significance of the scene in the representative role of each of the figures at the cross: Jesus' mother representing Jewish Christianity; the Beloved Disciple representing Gentile Christianity. Through Jesus' proclamation, the two become one, extending the emphasis on oneness in John 17 (Bultmann 1971, 666, 673). In Bultmann's judgment, the scene came not from the passion source, nor from the Ecclesiastical Redactor, but from the Evangelist. We may underline this point by citing Moody Smith's observation: "Bultmann does not think every reference to the Beloved Disciple must be ascribed to the ecclesiastical redactor. Indeed, he believes that the figure of the Beloved Disciple is an important creation of the Evangelist" (Smith 1965, 220). For Bultmann, the scene's symbolism resides primarily in the two characters, but he did not show that the division between Jewish and Gentile Christianity is a concern elsewhere in the Gospel. Bultmann merely assumed that it is, presumably on the basis of the significance of that issue elsewhere in the New Testament, especially as it was interpreted by the Tübingen school, which exerted great influence in German scholarship.

In the first edition of his classic commentary on John, *C. K. Barrett* also assigned the scene at the cross to the Evangelist but concluded that he was using "traditional material." John's passion narrative "is probably based on Mark's," but either the Evangelist modified Mark considerably or the material came to the Evangelist in an already modified form (Barrett 1955, 455). Barrett regarded the scene as "a crux in the Johannine problem" (1955, 455). Although one might assume that the scene is the historical reminiscence of the Beloved Disciple himself, the following considerations tell against its historical credibility: Jesus' brothers would have had a legal claim; it is unlikely

that Jesus' friends would have been allowed near the cross; and in Acts 1:14 Jesus' mother is still in the company of his brothers (1955, 455, 459). On the other hand, "the theological interest of the incident is too slight to make it seem plausible that the whole matter was created for this purpose" (1955, 455). Still, the theological potential of the scene may explain why it was included in the Gospel. Barrett related it to "the indivisible *χιτών* of Jesus" (19:23–25), "a symbol of the unity of the church gathered together by his death." He cautioned, however, that "it will be wise ... not to go beyond the recognition of an allusion to the new family, the church, and of the sovereign power of Jesus" (1955, 459).

By contrast, *C. H. Dodd* dismissed the suggestion that there is any theological or symbolic significance in the scene. "Whatever its motive, it does not seem to be dictated by the Johannine theology" (Dodd 1953, 428).¹ In a later study, Dodd observed that this scene and the Matthean expansions are the only breaks in the unities of time and place in the passion narrative, and both show an interest in the future of subordinate characters. Therefore, John 19:25–27 was not a part of the passion narrative that reached the Evangelist in the oral tradition but must have been an independent element in the Ephesian tradition. Regardless of the scene's origin, Dodd's judgment on its symbolic significance remained unchanged: "it serves no obvious theological interest, and the attempts to give it a profound symbolical purport are unconvincing" (Dodd 1963, 128). Without referring to Bultmann directly, Dodd judged Bultmann's interpretation "all very far-fetched, and with no demonstrable relation to Johannine thought" (1963, 128 n. 1).

In another of the most influential commentaries of the twentieth century, *Raymond Brown* found that the passion story (19:16–42) is composed of seven scenes in a chiasmic arrangement (Brown 1966–70, 2:910–11). John 19:25–27 forms the fourth scene and is therefore the centerpiece of this structure. Brown concluded that "Mary was specifically mentioned in the tradition that came to the evangelist, as seen in vs. 25, but that the reference to the Beloved Disciple, here as elsewhere, is a supplement to the tradition." Nevertheless, because of the Beloved Disciple's role as an eyewitness and guarantor of the tradition, even if "the Beloved Disciple is added by the evangelist to a traditional scene in which he was not mentioned, that addition is not necessarily unhistorical" (1966–70, 2:922). After a characteristically thorough review of the options, Brown affirmed that the scene has a

1. "Attempts to give a symbolic meaning are in general singularly unconvincing. If a 'tendency' is present it seems more likely to have something to do with claims made in the Church at Ephesus for the enigmatic 'Beloved Disciple' than with theology" (Dodd 1953, 428).

symbolic significance drawn not primarily from other passages in John but from the Old Testament. "The Johannine picture of Jesus' mother becoming the mother of the Beloved Disciple seems to evoke the OT themes of Lady Zion's giving birth to a new people in the messianic age, and of Eve and her offspring" (1966–70, 2:926; see also 1994, 2:1024–25). In support of this interpretation, Brown drew connections to John 16:21, where the words "woman" and "hour" are also used (see also 2:4), and John's comment in 19:28 that suggests that this scene at the cross is "the completion of the work that the Father has given Jesus to do, in the context of the fulfillment of Scripture" (Brown 1966–70, 2:926).

The fifth major Johannine commentator of the mid-twentieth century to be reviewed here, *Rudolf Schnackenburg*, agreed that the scene was not in the Evangelist's source but was "produced entirely by his hand" (1975, 3:277). Schnackenburg found significance both in the individual characters and in their union. The mother of Jesus represents "that part of Israel which is receptive to messianic salvation" (1975, 3:278). Her role, therefore, is "to remind the Christian community of the mother from whom both Jesus and the Church originated." The Beloved Disciple, on the other hand, is, for the Johannine church, "the mediator and interpreter of Jesus' message, his revelation of himself, and his revelation of salvation for mankind" (1975, 3:279). Since Jesus' mother is given to the Beloved Disciple, "he is to take care of and adopt into his circle the one seeking salvation." In respect to the historicity of the scene, Schnackenburg nuanced the question: even if one agrees that it is a symbolic account intended "to bring to the fore its meaning for the Church," it is, "in the evangelist's view of history, not to be rejected out of hand." Nevertheless, "the largely theological concern of the evangelist in the shaping of this scene cannot be denied" (1975, 3:281–82). Schnackenburg also addressed the issue of whether the references to the Beloved Disciple were inserted by the Evangelist or the redactor(s). Although he allowed that it was possible that these references originated with the redactor(s), he was inclined to think that they are the work of the Evangelist, and he saw clearly the implications of this conclusion.

Admittedly, with these considerations, the hypothesis that the passages in the body of the gospel in which the beloved disciple appears have only been inserted by the editors, may also be consonant. But it is scarcely verifiable, at least not for the main passage, 13:23–26. But also 19:26f and 20:2–10 can be more easily explained if it is assumed that the evangelist used an account of the passion and Easter and himself brought in the scenes with the beloved disciple (cf. the commentary). Then, it is true, the evangelist cannot be identified with the beloved disciple. (1975, 3:380)

This brief survey of the views of five towering figures in Johannine scholarship in the mid-twentieth century yields interesting points of agreement and also differences. First, all agreed that the scene was written by the Evangelist. It was not in his (written) sources (although Barrett, Brown, and Dodd allowed that it may have been in his tradition), nor was it inserted by the redactor or editors, in spite of its symbolic significance for the church. Second, the five differed sharply over the nature of the Evangelist's source(s): a passion narrative with contacts with Synoptic tradition (Bultmann); oral tradition (Dodd); the Gospel of Mark or a passion narrative based on Mark (Barrett); the Beloved Disciple's teachings (Brown); a pre-Johannine passion narrative that can only tentatively be identified (Schnackenburg). Third, Dodd differed from the other four in refusing to ascribe any symbolic significance to the scene.² Bultmann, Barrett, Brown, and Schnackenburg all identified the scene as having significance for the nature of the church, but with differences among them regarding whether the symbolism lies primarily in the identities of the two characters (mother and Beloved Disciple), in their juxtaposition, or both. Interpretations of the symbolism, however, were limited to the representational value of the mother and Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel, the union effected by Jesus' pronouncement, and an occasional reference to Jesus' seamless garment in the previous verses. Fourth, Schnackenburg drew the inference that, if the references to the Beloved Disciple were the work of the Evangelist, then the Evangelist could not have been the Beloved Disciple.

Other source-critical theories from the same era (pre-1983) reached differing conclusions. Howard M. Teeple found that John 19:26–27 was the work of the editor who created the Gospel from earlier sources (1974, 240). Sydney Temple assigned John 19:26–27 to the "Narrative-Discourse Source on which the core of the Fourth Gospel is generally based" (1975, 245). Robert Fortna identified it as the work of the Evangelist rather than material from the Signs Gospel (1988, 185). Urban von Wahlde, who identified four editions of the Fourth Gospel, assigned the scene to the third edition (1989, 148).

POST-ANATOMY INTERPRETATIONS OF JOHN 19:26–27

Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel added little to our appreciation of the significance of John 19:26–27, either through interpreting its symbolism or discerning the implications of its significance for understanding the Gospel's

2. Ernst Haenchen agreed with Dodd's assessment, commenting in response to Bultmann, "But there is nothing in the story that points to such symbolism for these figures" (1984, 193).

composition history. I maintained, in response to Dodd, that the passage does have symbolic overtones because of its relationship to the scene with Jesus' mother at the wedding at Cana. "The wedding at Cana with its exhausted supply of wine, its water pots, and its new wine, and the cross with its seamless robe, thirst, water and blood, expiration, piercing, and unbroken bones have been the most frequently quarried sources of Johannine symbolism" (Culpepper 1983, 133). I also noted incidentally that here "there is the beginning of a new family for the children of God" (1983, 134; see also 122). Fortunately, since that time other scholars have further explored the potential of narrative criticism for the interpretation of this scene, including Mark W. G. Stibbe (1992), Jean Zumstein (1997; 1999), and Mary L. Coloe (2001; 2007). In each of these interpretations we can see a deepening of the symbolic significance of the scene by relating it to thematic patterns in the rest of the Gospel.

In the first part of *John as Storyteller* (1992), Mark Stibbe developed the method of narrative criticism, devoting the fourth section of this part of the book to a description of "the narrative-historical approach to John's story." In the second part Stibbe applied the method to John 18–19, giving particular attention to 19:25–27. Noting the ecclesial imagery of John's passion narrative, Stibbe focused attention on "the way the language in John 18–19 operates as an index of the community's value-system" (1992, 150). In this regard, the Johannine language of family relationships is especially important, and Stibbe observed that "most commentators are agreed upon the centrality of the familistic [a term drawn from Kenneth Burke] picture in John 19:25–27, since the BD is seen by many as the founding figure of the Johannine community. Most of the commentaries and a number of articles agree that this narrative pericope has a place of key importance within the passion narrative and indeed the gospel as a whole" (1992, 151). Discussions of the significance assigned to Jesus' mother and Jesus' final act of "filial piety" have long concerned Johannine scholars but do not get to the primary significance of the scene for John. The new role assigned to the Beloved Disciple has been analyzed in terms of both succession and adoption. Stibbe found that Jesus' words, "here is your son," do not match any known adoption formula and that the Evangelist understands them as "a metaphor for spiritual adoption rather than as a literal adoption process" (1992, 153). The parallel between Jesus' relation to the Father in John 1:18 and the Beloved Disciple's position in 13:23 (reclining on Jesus' bosom) suggests the Beloved Disciple's role as Jesus' successor. Therefore, in the scene at the cross, "Jesus creates a new family of faith by adopting the BD as his true successor on earth" (1992, 153). Underscoring the significance of the scene for John, Stibbe agrees with Schnackenburg that "the narrator's comment, directly after this adoption, about Jesus knowing that his work was now finished (19:28) suggests

that 'Jesus' words to his mother and to the disciple which are a single whole, have something to do with the completion of his work'" (1992, 153, citing Schnackenburg 1982, 278). Taking the argument a step further, Stibbe contended that "the μετὰ τοῦτο in 19.28 indicates that the adoption of the BD into his mother's family really constitutes the climactic work in his ministry. John 19.25–27 is therefore a crucial narrative episode in the Johannine passion account" (1992, 153–54).

Stibbe turned next to identifying the source and tradition that lies behind this scene and its function in the Johannine redaction. Stibbe believes that the Evangelist drew upon "reliable eye-witness testimony" (1992, 154). Following Oscar Cullmann's lead, Stibbe concluded that the BD was a Judean disciple, not one of the Twelve, and that Lazarus "fits this description perfectly" (1992, 155). In an effort to determine the reasons for the Evangelist's incorporation of this scene into his passion account, Stibbe gathered familial images elsewhere in the Gospel that resonate with these verses. John 1:11 states that Jesus came to "his own home" and "his own people," but they did not "receive" him. In contrast, the Beloved Disciple "received" Jesus' mother and took her to "his own" home/people (1992, 159). In John 1–12 Jesus is rejected by his religious family and by his immediate family (see 7:5), "isolated from all natural and earthly familial relationship by his insistence on his own unique familial relationship with God the Father (10:30)." To those who receive him, however, he promises a new status, "a new family and a new home" (1992, 159; see also John 1:12; 14:1). Therefore, Jesus promises his followers that he will not leave them ὀρφανοί (John 14:18). Paradoxically, Jesus' coming leads both to the disruption of families and to the construction of a new family of faith. This new family is born out of suffering at the cross, just as childbirth involves suffering, but the suffering is soon replaced with joy (16:21). In the parable of the woman in labor, the child represents "the new family which emerges from Jesus' quasi-maternal sacrifice" (1992, 160). Through the apostasy of the Jewish leaders in 19:15, "the Jews" ironically relinquish their claim to be the children of God and thus clear the way for a new family, the true Israel, which was created at the cross, and a new home, the οἰκία τοῦ πατρὸς (1992, 160–61).

Stibbe set the sociological function of the creation of a new family in the context described by sociological studies of early Christianity. Martin Hengel's *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (1981) described the social dislocation created by the demands of discipleship that is reflected in sayings such as "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt 8:21//Luke 9:59). Clearly, "Jesus demanded freedom from family ties" (Stibbe 1992, 161). Gerd Theissen (1978) had extended Hengel's earlier work (1968), showing that "Jesus did not primarily found local churches but rather called into being a movement

of wandering prophets who lived a homeless, nomadic existence" (Stibbe 1992, 162). Howard Kee (1977) again extended the argument by showing that "homelessness and loss of family were hallmarks of the community as well as its charismatic leaders" (Stibbe 1992, 162), and therefore the Christian communities needed "a new concept of the true family" (Kee 1977, 89), which Mark described as an eschatological family. J. H. Elliott (1981) then described the phenomenon of homelessness through a sociological analysis of 1 Peter. As "resident aliens," homeless Christians founded sects whose group cohesion was strengthened by the persecution they suffered (Stibbe 1992, 162). The author of 1 Peter therefore offered the image of the church as the household of God in order to encourage the persecuted Christians of Asia Minor. These four writers, Stibbe observed, describe "the effect on family and home which primitive Christianity caused" (1992, 163). Barrett had referred to Jesus' promise in Mark 10:29–30 that "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life" (Barrett 1955, 459). Stibbe, drawing from this understanding of the social dislocation of early Christians, contended that the adoption scene at the cross in John 19:26–27 "provided a forceful legitimation of the Johannine Christians' present existence and an effective consolation for the loss of family and home which they themselves had faced" (Stibbe 1992, 164). Confession of faith in Jesus resulted in alienation from family and community, which can be seen from the response to the man born blind in John 9. Alienated believers who identified with the experience of the man born blind could also identify with the creation of the new family of faith in John 19:26–27 (1992, 164).

As Stibbe understands it, then, John 19:25–27 is rooted in the witness of the Beloved Disciple himself and was placed at this climactic point in Jesus' life by the Evangelist because it has theological and social functions that are established by its place in the familial images in the Gospel. This powerful reading of the Gospel results from the undergirding of narrative criticism with insights drawn from the study of the sociology of early Christianity. Stibbe summed up his analysis by proposing that "the Johannine act of storytelling in John 19.25f. would have resulted in a sense of homecoming in the Johannine community. As I have argued throughout this book, the gospel's narrative form cannot therefore be separated from its social function" (1992, 167).

In a 1997 article that was reprinted in the collection *Kreative Erinnerung* (1999), Jean Zumstein explored the challenges of John 19:25–27, noting first that the literal sense of these verses poses no great difficulties. On the other hand, on closer analysis, one perceives numerous problems: its historical plausibility is debated; the Johannine passion narrative resists a simple

reading; in the immediate context, Jesus' other pronouncements have christological significance; and, finally, Jesus' mission throughout the Gospel has little connection with his physical family. The observant reader therefore will not be satisfied with the superficial sense of the text but will seek a deeper meaning. Asking what it means to read John 19:26–27 symbolically, Zumstein employed Paul Ricoeur's definition of a "symbol."

A symbol exists, I shall say, where linguistic expression lends itself by its double or multiple meanings to a work of interpretation. What gives rise to this work is an intentional structure which consists not in the relation of meaning [*Sinn*] to thing [*Sache*] but in an architecture of meaning, in a relation of meaning to meaning, of second meaning to first meaning, regardless of whether that relation be one of analogy or not, or whether the first meaning disguises or reveals the second meaning. (Ricoeur 1970, 18)³

Zumstein makes four observations about the relevance of Ricoeur's definition of "symbol." First, the second sense arises only through the first, so in the case of John the semantic field and symbolic world of the text must be respected. Second, in this case the first sense of the immediate context does not lead to the second sense; one must read the passage in the context of the entire Gospel. Third, the movement from the first to the second sense will be constructed through a reading of the text that defines a direction and boundaries rather than a sharply defined hypothesis. Fourth, the reading will assume a reader or audience that recognizes the intention of the narrator and the nuances of the narrative.

On the basis of this analysis of the task confronting the interpreter of John 19:26–27, Zumstein proposed first to sketch a diachronic analysis of the text, then to explore its narrative logic. The third section of his study is devoted to reading John 19:26–27 within the context of the symbolic language of 19:16b–42. The fourth section analyzes the intertextual processes that 19:26–27 sets in motion.

As a starting point for considering how the Johannine school recontextualized the tradition it received, Zumstein recognized that the Evangelist took over the motif of the women at the cross and introduced the new scene with Jesus' mother and the Beloved Disciple. Four observations support the view that this scene is the work of the Evangelist rather than the final

3. Parenthetically, it is significant that Zumstein not only recognized the challenge of determining the symbolic significance of the passage but also turned to an eminent philosopher of language and literary theorist for guidance rather than assuming that the symbolic meaning would be readily apparent.

redactor of the Gospel: (1) the mother of Jesus plays a significant role earlier in the Gospel at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11); (2) the scene is fully integrated into John’s passion narrative; (3) the role of the Beloved Disciple in this scene is consistent with his role throughout John 13–20; and (4) the theological concern of the scene (as will be shown) is the post-Easter future of the revelation, just as it is in the Farewell Discourse (esp. 13:31–14:31; Zumstein 1999, 162).

The narrative logic of the scene is indicated first by the anonymity of the two figures, Jesus’ mother and the Beloved Disciple, who are never named. The two represent those closest to Jesus, so their anonymity suggests that the scene, which expresses the last will of the crucified one, looks toward the future of the community around Jesus. On the cross Jesus gives his mother to the Beloved Disciple, thereby creating a new family for the post-Easter period and assigning a special role to the Beloved Disciple. John 19:26–27 therefore connects the Gospel’s Christology to its ecclesiology: “The hour of the exaltation is the hour of the birth of the Church” (Zumstein 1999, 165). The symbolic significance of the scene, moreover, is not found in the individual figures but in the dramatic significance of the scene.

Zumstein’s next step is to see whether the narrative context of the scene supports such a symbolic reading, more precisely whether its symbolism also addresses the connection between Christology and ecclesiology. Accepting Raymond Brown’s chiasmic division of John’s passion narrative into five scenes with an introduction and a conclusion and his claim that John 19:26–27 lies at its center, Zumstein argued that each of the five scenes in 19:19–37 has a second (symbolic) sense that is grounded in its first (literal) sense. For the sake of brevity, Zumstein’s reading of these two senses of the text is summarized in the following table.

Scene	Literal Sense	Symbolic Sense
The <i>titulus</i> (19:19–22)	The conflict between Pilate and the Jews over the formulation of the <i>titulus</i> , which is rooted in the trial and Jesus’ paradoxical kingship	The proclamation of Jesus’ universal kingship
The parting of the garments (19:23–24)	The fulfillment of Scripture (Ps 22:18)	The seamless tunic is connected with the motif of oneness in John and symbolizes the unity of the church.

Scene (<i>cont.</i>)	Literal Sense (<i>cont.</i>)	Symbolic Sense (<i>cont.</i>)
The death of Jesus (19:28–30)	The fulfillment of Scripture (Pss 22:16; 69:22) and the completion of Jesus' work through his death	The reference to the hyssop is a signal to the reader confirming that Jesus is the Pascal lamb. Handing over his spirit (19:30) resonates with 7:37–39 and suggests that Jesus leaves the Spirit to guide the church.
The removal of Jesus from the cross (19:31–37)	Underscores the reality of Jesus' death.	Jesus dies as the Pascal lamb; the water and blood are connected with baptism and the Eucharist (John 3; 6); the true witness (the Beloved Disciple) begins to exercise the role assigned to him in 19:26–27.

Zumstein astutely observed that at his death Jesus hands over his tunic (19:24), his mother (19:26), his spirit (19:30), and his blood and water (19:34) and that each of these has a symbolic significance for the church in the Fourth Gospel (1999, 168). John's passion narrative draws out the ecclesiological implications of Jesus' death through its symbolic overtones, and its symbolism is established by reading each scene in the context of the Gospel as a whole. The narrative context of 19:26–27, therefore, suggests that it too should be read as a symbolic narrative, that its symbolism is ecclesiological, and that its symbolism can be discerned by tracing the scene's connections with other parts of the Gospel (1999, 172).

In the last section before the conclusion, Zumstein turned to the role of intertextuality in John 19:25–27. Following the lead of Jürgen Becker (1991, 699), Zumstein observed that the role of the Beloved Disciple in this scene can only be understood when one considers his role in the other references to him in John 13–20, where the Beloved Disciple is introduced as the one who has the same role in relation to Jesus that Jesus has in relation to God (cf. 1:18 with 13:23). The Beloved Disciple is Jesus' authorized interpreter, and throughout he is the mediator between Jesus and Peter (Zumstein 1999, 173). Jesus' mother, similarly, is connected to her earlier role in the wedding at Cana by four elements: designation as "the mother of Jesus"; Jesus' address to her as "woman"; the theme of Jesus' "hour" (see also 2:4); and her position of nearness to and intimacy with Jesus. Her presence thus signals the ἀρχή and τέλος of Jesus'

mission as the Revealer (1999, 174). The reference to “from that hour” in 19:27 opens the post-Easter future. Jesus’ mother is a figure who represents belief, but she is not to be identified as the personification of either Israel (contra Bultmann) or the church (contra Mariological interpretation). The narrative logic of 19:26–27 indicates that the Crucified One constitutes a new family of faith and grants authority over it to the Beloved Disciple (1999, 176).

In sum, Zumstein’s contribution to the interpretation of John 19:25–27 is developed by a methodologically rigorous reading that grounds the symbolism of the scene in Ricoeur’s definition of a symbol, respects the boundaries of symbolic meaning that are established by the Gospel, and reads each of the elements of the passion narrative in this context.

Mary Coloe enriches our understanding of this scene by reading it in relation to two other themes in John’s Gospel: the temple and the household of God. In her first book, *God Dwells with Us* (2001), Coloe demonstrated that temple symbolism plays a significant role in John’s Christology. Written in the period following the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as “the royal and sacerdotal Temple builder, the ‘Nazarene’ (19:19), fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah (6:11–12)” (Coloe 2001, 210). As he dies, Jesus’ words to his mother and the Beloved Disciple extend Mary’s role as mother and constitute an act of “divine filiation” through which the Beloved Disciple is drawn into Jesus’ own sonship and his disciples become his “brothers” (20:17), “children of God” (1:12), and “the new Temple/Household of God, a new *locus* wherein the Spirit may continue to dwell” (2001, 187–88). This act of building a new temple as the soldiers are destroying the temple of his body (see 2:19) “brings the mission of Jesus to its completion (v. 28)” (2001, 187). Through this new household of God, “which can rightly be depicted as the new Temple” (2001, 190), the two functions of Israel’s temple are transferred to the Christian community: (1) God has a new dwelling place, the new temple/household of God, the Johannine community; and (2) sacrifices are no longer needed to achieve cultic purity because Jesus’ death achieved the taking away of sin (2001, 210).

Coloe’s more recent *Dwelling in the Household of God* (2007) takes up Jesus’ command in John 15:4, “Make your home in me, as I make mine in you,” as it relates to John’s ecclesiology. From this vantage point, 19:26–27 “hold the key to the Johannine interpretation of the cross. They are the climax of the passion and the resolution of so many puzzles that the reader has encountered in the narrative to this point” (2007, 55).

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NARRATIVE CRITICISM

The preceding survey is admittedly highly selective, covering only five com-

mentators between 1941 and 1983 and three narrative critics between 1984 and 2007. In the process of selecting these eight scholars for consideration, I consulted a number of others and was at times surprised by the absence of attention to this scene where one might have expected it. Four examples will suffice here.

First, Martin de Boer (1996), who was critical of the legitimacy of narrative criticism, traces the development of John's passion narrative in relation to the experience of the Johannine community through a series of three crises and four stages of composition but makes only passing references to 19:26–27 and does not locate these verses in the four-stage composition history he postulates.

Second, Troy W. Martin concludes from a study of references to mothers in ancient literature that the anonymity of Jesus' mother suggests that she was well known to the intended readers (1998, 73). Consequently, the anonymity of Jesus' mother in the Gospel of John does not support a symbolic interpretation of her narrative role. We may note, however, that Martin's work does not necessarily call into question the narrative-critical interpretations summarized above, which are based on the new roles assigned to Jesus' mother and the Beloved Disciple, not (or only secondarily) on their anonymity.

Third, Judith M. Lieu observes that Jesus' mother appears at the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry, marking "the boundaries of the drama" (Lieu 1998, 69). Therefore, she cautions that interpreters "should treat with extreme skepticism interpretations that see 19:25–27 as establishing a new relationship between Jesus and his mother," referring in particular to Mariological interpretations and "interpretations that see here the new family for the children of God" (1998, 69). In the Fourth Gospel "only Jesus represents the new ... while the children are not a new humanity born from Eve but are born of God (1:13)" (1998, 75). Although we may wish to follow the lines of interpretation advanced by Stibbe, Zumstein, and Coloe, Lieu's critique and her analysis of the relationship between this scene and other mother and son references in John, especially the parable in 16:21, should not be overlooked.

In a similar vein, Jan van der Watt's exploration of the metaphorical language of family takes relatively little notice of the significance of John 19:25–27. Van der Watt notes Stibbe's discussion of the scene at the cross (van der Watt 2000, 266) but, unfortunately, does not cite Zumstein. When he discusses the various interpretations of the mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple, van der Watt judges that the view that this scene "points to the start of the new family of God, the cross ... might be possible, but is not convincing" (2000, 335). Although van der Watt does not accept that the scene at the cross is the culmination of the family imagery in John, his treatment of this

theme in John's metaphorical system demonstrates how it unifies the Gospel's various themes, including the function of education in the family. He is certainly correct, therefore, when he asserts that "the family imagery is the constitutive and most essential imagery in this Gospel; this is not the only, but indeed the most pervasive imagery in this Gospel" (2000, 397).

Comparing the interpretations of John 19:26–27 by Johannine scholars in the middle and latter part of the twentieth century allows us to make a number of observations about the contributions of narrative criticism. First, whereas in the earlier era Johannine symbols were interpreted individually and at times in isolation (e.g., seeking the symbolism of Jesus' mother and the Beloved Disciple as individuals), narrative criticism introduced the more promising approach of finding the symbolism in this scene's relationship to Johannine themes and the role of these two figures elsewhere in the Gospel. Second, the significance of the scene, as it constitutes the culmination of Jesus' work in the founding of a new community of faith interpreted through the language and metaphor of kinship, has become increasingly evident. Third, the significance of this scene for the connection between John's Christology and ecclesiology has become more apparent. It claims that the founding of the church, and the Johannine community in particular, was the climax of Jesus' work (see Culpepper 1997; 2005).

Narrative-critical interpretation of this climactic scene also has important implications for historical-critical interpretation of the Gospel. First, if this scene is the climax of Jesus' work in creating a new temple/household of God/new family for the children of God, and if this theme is deeply rooted in connections with other parts of the Gospel, as recent narrative studies have shown, then it must be the work of the Evangelist. It was not in the sources known to the Synoptics, and it was not a secondary addition by the final redactor. It may derive from a particular tradition known to the Evangelist through the Beloved Disciple, as Brown and Stibbe suggested, but that cannot be verified. Therefore, both the role of the Beloved Disciple and the motif of the new family for the children of God are the work of the Evangelist.

Second, if the meaning of the scene is to be found not in its literal or superficial sense but in its symbolic or metaphorical sense as a reference to the identity of the Johannine community and the Beloved Disciple's role as the authorized interpreter of Jesus, then the Evangelist can hardly have been the Beloved Disciple himself. Of course, this insight did not arise from narrative criticism; Schnackenburg in particular saw the implications of attributing the scene to the Evangelist. But the increased appreciation for the significance of the scene in the Gospel's narrative design confirms that the Evangelist was not the Beloved Disciple but rather referred to the latter as an earlier authority for the community and its tradition.

Third, the reference to the truthfulness of the “witness” in John 19:35, which is generally understood as a reference to the Beloved Disciple, is likewise not a later insertion because it extends the role attributed to the Beloved Disciple in 19:26–27 by showing that “from that hour” the Beloved Disciple began to give true testimony for the community. Furthermore, although scholars are still divided on the issue of whether John 21 is a secondary addition to the Gospel (see Culpepper 2006b), if 19:26–27 is to be read symbolically in the context of the Johannine themes that culminate in these verses, and if 19:35 is a reference to the Beloved Disciple’s new role in relation to Jesus and the community, then the reference to the Beloved Disciple in 21:24 is consistent with the role given the Beloved Disciple in 19:26–27 and 19:35 (see Culpepper 2009). In both John 19:35 and 21:24 the Beloved Disciple functions as the authorized interpreter of Jesus who bore a true witness. The new element is the attribution of authorship. Whereas the Evangelist portrays the Beloved Disciple as the authorized interpreter who bore a true witness, the final editor who added 21:24–25 attributed the authorship of the Gospel to the Beloved Disciple, whether out of ignorance of the history of its composition, historical accuracy in reporting that the Beloved Disciple had a role in the Gospel’s authorship, or adherence to the convention of honoring the founder of a school and its tradition.

Our survey of the interpretations advanced by Stibbe, Zumstein, and Coloe shows that the growing influence of narrative-critical readings of John 19:26–27 is changing our understanding of the Fourth Gospel’s core themes. The recognition that 19:26–27 reports the completion of Jesus’ work in the constitution of a new community of faith, and that this theme is deeply rooted in the Gospel, has important consequences for our understanding of the Johannine passion narrative and the Evangelist’s creative work throughout the Gospel. The symbolic reading of the scene with Jesus’ mother and the Beloved Disciple therefore also calls for a reconsideration of the roles of the Beloved Disciple, the Evangelist, and the final editor in the composition of the Gospel. Consequently, while it is not the function of narrative criticism to answer historical questions, it may nevertheless cast new light on them.

BUILDING SKYSCRAPERS ON TOOTHPICKS: THE LITERARY- CRITICAL CHALLENGE TO HISTORICAL CRITICISM

Adele Reinhartz

Recently, mundane circumstances—the relocation of my office—prompted me to go through the contents of several old filing drawers. The challenge, as always, was to decide which documents to retain and which to discard. In this case, all the files fed the recycling bin, with one exception: the yellowed typewritten manuscript of a talk entitled “A Critical Analysis of R. A. Culpepper’s *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*,” which I had prepared for the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies in 1986.

The typescript took me back to my graduate studies and early teaching years. At that time we were pondering the merits and flaws of Robert Fortna’s source theory over against Rudolf Bultmann’s model and debating the history of religions background of the Fourth Gospel—Hellenistic Judaism, Gnosticism, proto-rabbinic Judaism, or perhaps all of the above (see Fortna 1970a; Bultmann 1971; Dodd 1953). We were also beginning to think seriously about the possibility that the Gospel was the product of a distinct community that also constituted its audience. Along with J. Louis Martyn, we followed the course of the community’s painful expulsion from the synagogue (see Martyn 1968; 1979; 2003). With Wayne Meeks we imagined this community to be isolated both from Judaism and from other groups of Christ-believers on account of its unique understanding of Jesus as the “man from heaven” (Meeks 1972). With Raymond Brown we reconstructed the history and demography of that community and the central role of the mysterious figure of the Beloved Disciple (Brown 1979). Then, in 1983, along came Alan Culpepper to remind us that we are all—theologians and historical critics alike—first and foremost readers of the Gospel of John, each of us attempting to make meaning of this fascinating and mystifying narrative.

The question of what to retain and what to discard arises not only with respect to aging documents but also with regard to the scholarly questions and theoretical models that we acquired in our youth and continue to carry

with us unexamined until circumstances force us to reconsider. In my own case, literary criticism, to which I was introduced by Culpepper's book, has proven to be my constant companion. I have also kept historical criticism but have long left source criticism behind while assimilating *Religionsgeschichte* into my literary and historical investigations. Looking back at Culpepper's book and my review thereof, however, has prompted me to reflect on a question that I have tried, mostly successfully, to ignore since my first reading of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*: Does adopting a literary-critical perspective require us to discard the historical-critical lenses through which our field has most often viewed John's Gospel?

The answer implicit in Culpepper's *Anatomy* is negative. His "Study in Literary Design" introduced a new vocabulary, the language of literary criticism—more specifically, reader-response or audience criticism—and a new idea: that understanding how the Gospel narrative worked *qua* narrative would help us read the Gospel more perceptively (Culpepper 1983, 5). Culpepper proposed that we consider the Gospel as it stands, not in terms of its sources or its anterior versions, and that we view its meaning as residing not "behind" or "through the window" of the text—in the intention of the author or the experience of the Johannine community—but rather in front of the text, in the interaction between the Gospel and its readers.

Culpepper took care to explain that his book "is not intended as a challenge to historical criticism but as an alternative by means of which new data may be collected and readers may be helped to read the gospel more perceptively" (1983, 5). He did not advocate discarding source, *religionsgeschichtliche*, and historical criticism. Rather, he promoted literary criticism as an additional tool to be employed alongside these other methods for understanding the Gospel and how its narrative works.

For this reason, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* does not dismiss historical criticism, but neither does the book address it extensively. Culpepper occasionally does, however, point to the intersection between historical and literary criticism. He notes, for example, that "a characterization of the narratee in the gospel could be used in the debate over the actual historical audience," but "only on the assumptions that the narratee accurately represents the intended audience and that the author's judgments about his audience were also accurate" (1983, 212). His analysis of what the narrator does and does not explain can provide some information about the intended audience, suggesting, for example, that John's reader is a non-Jewish believer in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and that he or she has "extensive knowledge of the Old Testament and a general understanding of Jewish groups and beliefs" as well as of many traditions about Jesus, but no knowledge of Hebrew or of Jewish practice (1983, 218, 222, here 222).

Twenty-five years later, we may ask the question that Culpepper did not: What is the impact of literary theory and methodology on historical criticism? Does it simply rest alongside historical criticism in an ample toolbox? Does it interact with and complement the historical-critical enterprise? Or, does it render historical criticism obsolete?

Logically, there would seem to be no inherent contradiction between literary and historical criticism. As *Anatomy* explained, these two approaches can exist alongside one another because they ask different sets of questions that are not mutually exclusive. An inquiry into the ways that the narrative functions with respect to the reader does not contradict the fact that the narrative was produced in particular historical circumstances that may well have left their mark on the narrative as such. Further, the fact that these two approaches ask different questions is not to say that they are unrelated. Culpepper's book implicitly recognizes that all scholars, including historical critics, are first of all readers of the Gospel; hence, their use of historical-critical and other analytical tools is fundamentally and inevitably based upon their responses to, and judgments about, numerous aspects of the text's literary design even if they do not self-consciously apply literary-critical theories and methodologies. A few brief examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

LITERARY CRITICISM AS AN IMPLICIT FOUNDATION FOR HISTORICAL CRITICISM

As noted above, the commentators who shaped Johannine scholarship in the period before *Anatomy* was published did not employ the methods of literary criticism. They were, however, skilled and sensitive readers of the Gospel narrative, and their insights and hypotheses reflect their attentiveness to the nuances of plot, language, character, and other literary elements of the Johannine narrative.

Bultmann's theories about the history of religions background to the Fourth Gospel and the history of its composition were based on a very close reading of the text. While many of his readings were intended to clarify the source-critical levels of the Gospel, their content does not differ substantially from the sorts of close readings advocated by the so-called New Criticism (compare Perry and Sternberg 1986). Bultmann's analysis of John 9, for example, goes through the story sequentially and in great detail, indicating how the narrative proceeds and what response may be created in the reader by each new detail or plot element (1971, 332–42).

Similarly, Fortna's source-critical theory took as its starting point the "fundamental literary phenomenon, and one which, in degree at least, distinguishes that gospel [the Gospel of John] from the other three, namely the

presence of the so-called *aporias*—the many inconsistencies, disjunctures and hard connections, even contradictions—which the text shows, notably in the narrative portions, and which cannot be accounted for by textual criticism” (Fortna 1970a, 2). Fortna’s analysis uncovers three literary strata that are distinguished according to certain ideological, stylistic, and contextual criteria (1970a, 15). As with Bultmann, Fortna’s actual analysis of the Gospel narrative could easily have been undertaken using the approach that Culpepper describes, but his study responded to a completely different set of questions: the literary strata of the Gospel and its history of composition.

Like Bultmann and Fortna, Martyn did not engage directly with literary criticism or theory. His historical-critical theory regarding the expulsion of Johannine Christians from the synagogue, however, was explicitly based on a two-level reading strategy whereby the Gospel was viewed not only as the story of Jesus but also as a narrative of the Johannine community. This reading strategy allowed Martyn to argue that the three Johannine passages that refer to believers becoming ἀποσυνάγωγος (i.e., ousted from the synagogue; John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) reflect the Johannine Christians’ historical experience of expulsion from the synagogue on account of their confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God (for further discussion, see Reinhartz 1998a; 1998c; 2001a).

Meeks’s important article “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism” (1972) is perhaps the most explicit about the literary features of the Fourth Gospel, particularly the role of symbol and allusion within the narrative, and about the connection between the Gospel’s literary presentation and the nature and social location of the Johannine community. Furthermore, Meeks considered the role that the Gospel would have had in the life of the community: “*The book functions for its readers in precisely the same way that the epiphany of its hero functions within its narratives and dialogues*” (Meeks 1972, 69, emphasis original). Meeks argued that the story describes the progressive alienation of Jesus from the Jews. Those who respond positively to Jesus are drawn into intense intimacy with him and therefore with God, to the point that they, like him, are not “of this world”; the believers’ detachment from the world also entails detachment from Judaism. Meeks accepted Martyn’s theory with regard to the expulsion from the synagogue but insisted that “something more is to be seen: coming to faith in Jesus is for the Johannine group a change in social location.” Thus Meeks’s literary analysis of the narrative, its symbolism and its rhetoric led him to the historical-critical conclusion that the Gospel reflects directly the experience of a distinctive community that lived within a particular symbolic universe (Meeks 1972, 70–71, here 70).

Raymond Brown’s examination of the Johannine community began by describing the Fourth Gospel as a narrative written for a specific audience.

Like Bultmann, Brown engages in a sequential analysis of the narrative, but, unlike Bultmann, draws a direct line from this sequence, not to the putative sources behind the text, but rather to the history and demography of the Johannine community. Thus, the call of the disciples (John 1:35–51) indicates that the Johannine community began among Jews who came to Jesus (Brown 1979, 27). John 4 points to the inclusion of Samaritans in the Johannine community (1979, 35). John 5–12 describes the growing conflict between the Johannine community and the Jews, and John 12 alludes to the inclusion of Gentile believers at some later point in the community's development (1979, 40). Although he does not admit to doing so, Brown in effect adopts Martyn's two-level reading perspective in that he sees the sequence of events in the Gospel's story of Jesus as representing the sequence of events in the life of the community.

These major works, which count among those that shaped Johannine scholarship from the middle of the twentieth century onwards, showed their authors' sensitivity to the workings of narrative, language, and symbolism. None of them, however, betrays any direct knowledge of literary theory and criticism.¹

LITERARY THEORY AS A TOOL FOR HISTORICAL CRITICISM

If Culpepper was not the first Johannine scholar to be attentive to the Gospel narrative, he did lead the way in explicitly using narrative theory to explicate the text. For many scholars, including myself, *Anatomy* played a key role in that it provided an approach and a vocabulary that were fruitful for our own work on the Gospel narrative. The communications model that Culpepper proposed, based on Seymour Chatman's work (1978), described the complex relationship between reader and text in a way that rang true for many serious readers of John's Gospel. The distinctions between the narrator, the implied author, and the real author, as well as between the ideal, real, and implied readers, permitted a greater degree of precision in thinking about and articulating our own position vis-à-vis the text and beckoned us to consider where we positioned ourselves as readers.² At the same time, as we have seen, Culpepper's book was not by any means a polemic against historical criticism. Indeed, it is possible that his commitment to the peaceful coexistence between literary and historical criticism was a factor in the widespread

1. Francis Moloney's introduction to the revised edition of the introduction to Brown's commentary contains an excursus on narrative approaches to the Fourth Gospel, an interest absent from Brown's earlier work on John. See Brown and Moloney 2003, 30–39.

2. For my own attempts in this direction, see Reinhartz 1998b; 2001a.

and relatively rapid acceptance of literary-critical approaches in Johannine studies.

The growing recognition of the dependence of all exegesis, including historical criticism, upon readings of and responses to the Gospel as a literary document raised the possibility that literary-critical methodology, far from undermining historical criticism, might in fact be of benefit and might lead to more convincing, less controversial results. This optimism is often implicit, but it is nevertheless apparent in numerous studies of the Gospel of John, even those that do not employ the specific vocabulary of literary criticism. In some cases, the optimism seems justified. A brief comparison of two relatively recent studies of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel will illustrate this point.

In a recent study, Craig Blomberg sets out to argue in favor of Westcott's identification of the Fourth Evangelist as John son of Zebedee, against the current consensus that John is not the Gospel's author (Blomberg 2001, 27–41). In reviewing each of Westcott's arguments, Blomberg relies heavily on internal evidence to discern the knowledge base of the implied author. He transposes that knowledge base from the implied author to the real author. On this basis he can identify that author's religious and ethnic identity. While Blomberg does not explicitly use the categories of literary criticism, his approach here is similar to that outlined by Culpepper in *Anatomy*. Blomberg describes the author of the Fourth Gospel as someone who understands Jewish customs, is steeped in the Old Testament, is aware of the distinctions among pre-70 Jewish sects, considers Jesus to be the true fulfilment of the law and of numerous Jewish institutions and rituals, and is aware of Palestinian geography and topography (2001, 27). Therefore, he argues, the author is likely to have been Jewish, from Palestine, and an eyewitness to Jesus. Furthermore, the description of the Beloved Disciple as an intimate of Jesus strongly suggests that we must think of one of Jesus' key apostles. All of these points, argues Blomberg, support Westcott's identification of the Evangelist as John son of Zebedee. Even the Gospel's omission of any reference whatsoever to John son of Zebedee points directly to the likelihood that the implied (for Blomberg, the real) audience knew the apostle and also knew that he was the one who wrote this Gospel (2001, 29–30). Blomberg concludes that, while traditions may well have been altered in the years between Jesus' ministry and the final production of the Gospel, and while "aged apostles could also have had faulty memories," the "strong influence of memorization of oral tradition in ancient Judaism" supports the idea that accurate information has been preserved (2001, 40).

The second study is Culpepper's own 1994 book, *John, Son of Zebedee*. In *Anatomy*, Culpepper had directly addressed the relationship between the implied author, that is, the author as inferred from the narrative (Culpepper

1983, 16), and the historical author and concluded that it is not possible to identify the author from the inferences we might make about the implied author. Yet ultimately it is the Gospel itself and not its historical authorship that is most important: “although the wizard has refused to give his name, we have heard his whisper (1983, 49).

In *John, Son of Zebedee*, Culpepper looks in more detail at the historical question of authorship. This study, like Blomberg’s 2001 book, draws primarily on internal—that is, literary—details from the text. Here Culpepper refrains from using the vocabulary that he had introduced in *Anatomy*, perhaps because the discussion in *John, Son of Zebedee* is addressed to a more general audience. Yet Culpepper’s sensitivity to the literary dimensions of the Gospel, the role of the reader in making meaning, and the ways in which readers’ prior assumptions can affect their interpretations and conclusions makes for a far more nuanced, sophisticated, and convincing discussion of the historical question of authorship.

Despite Blomberg’s claim that Westcott’s views on Johannine authorship have not been refuted, the identification of John son of Zebedee as the Evangelist has been discussed extensively in the literature. This identification in itself, Culpepper suggests, requires a literary move on the part of the exegete: the harmonization of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptics. Given the major differences between John and the Synoptics, however, Culpepper argues that “the Fourth Gospel should be left free to tell its own story without our attempting to impose any prior assumptions” (Culpepper 1994, 59).

Culpepper agrees that the Fourth Gospel points to the Beloved Disciple as its author, or at least as the authority to whom the Gospel appeals. Like Blomberg, Culpepper looks at what the implied author knows and posits an identification between the implied author and the real author. On this basis, the real author is likely to have been a Judean who knew the geography of Judea and Jerusalem; he may have had a house in Jerusalem, and he may have been known to the high priest (1994, 84). But Culpepper does not gloss over the uncertainties or ambiguities in the story. Noting that the Gospel does not indicate whether the Beloved Disciple shared with Jesus the knowledge that Judas was the betrayer, Culpepper suggests that this gap may exist precisely because there is no satisfying answer. Further, if the Beloved Disciple did not understand, “then his characterization as one who was close to Jesus and who was a reliable mediator of the tradition about Jesus would be undermined” (1994, 60).

In addition, Culpepper considers the possibility that the Fourth Evangelist was not only a storyteller in his own right but also a reader of or listener to the Synoptic Gospels or their antecedent traditions. If so, some of the narrative’s details may reflect not the world outside the text but the Evangelist’s

attempts to respond to problems or to fill gaps in the Synoptic or other prior traditions. One example can be found in John 18:15–16: “Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in.” It is not impossible that John son of Zebedee was this “other disciple” and, despite his being a Galilean, was known by the high priest. But it is also possible that the main point of the passage is not so much to describe a historical personage who may also be the Evangelist as to fill a narrative gap that appears in the Synoptic parallels to this story. “How did [Peter] the most vocal of the apostles get into the High Priest’s courtyard? It may have been felt that a Galilean fisherman obviously would not have an entrée to the high priest’s house. The Fourth Gospel fills this gap in the story by introducing another disciple, presumably a Judean, who secured Peter’s entrance into the courtyard” (Culpepper 1994, 62). Furthermore, the Fourth Gospel’s first-person references do not necessarily imply that the author was a historical eyewitness but rather that the Gospel is directed to a community that attested to the truth of the Beloved Disciple’s witness and, by implication, to the truth of the Gospel (1994, 71). Culpepper concludes that the figure of Beloved Disciple is both individual and representative: he was likely a historical figure who has been given an idealized role in the crucial scenes of the Farewell Discourse, trial, death, and resurrection.

In Culpepper’s view, then, there is little to suggest the identification of the Beloved Disciple with John son of Zebedee. It is better—that is, more historically responsible—to conclude that the Beloved Disciple was an otherwise unknown disciple, an eyewitness, but one about whom nothing is known except through the Fourth Gospel. His importance lies not in his absolute identity, which cannot be known, but rather in his role as the one who legitimates and authorizes the distinctive teaching of the Johannine community in the face of the rising authority of Peter in other traditions (1994, 84–85).

Both Blomberg and Culpepper rely primarily on internal, literary evidence, which is then evaluated in light of what is plausible historically. The differences between their two discussions of the Gospel’s authorship lie in the relationship between Evangelist and history that each discussion presupposes. Whereas Blomberg appears to view the Evangelist as concerned primarily with telling the story of Jesus as accurately as possible, Culpepper views the Evangelist as reflecting not only on the events of Jesus’ life as they were known to him directly or indirectly but also on other stories of Jesus. While he may have been motivated by a desire simply to convey these stories, it is more

likely that uppermost in his mind was the impact that he hoped or intended his story of Jesus to have on his audience.

Perhaps the true identity of the Fourth Evangelist—whether he or she is identified as the witness behind the Gospel's narrative or as the author of the Gospel in its final form—will be known in the fullness of time. In the meantime, however, Culpepper's historical conclusions, while more negative than those proposed by Blomberg, also seem more convincing. This is due precisely to the fact that they are informed by a literary-critical sensibility that acknowledges that the Gospel was written in order to have a particular impact on its audience, as its conclusion and statement of purpose explicitly states (20:30–31).

One may also suggest, very tentatively, that the differences between these two discussions reflect not only different methodological approaches but also varying degrees of commitment to the outcome of this historical investigation. Underlying Blomberg's discussion, one may sense a prior commitment to the position that John son of Zebedee authored the Fourth Gospel, although it must be said that Blomberg does not state his position in this regard. Culpepper's discussion, on the other hand, implies a higher degree of comfort with uncertainty on this point. Here, admittedly, I am engaging in the same literary-critical move that these two authors have themselves made: assuming a degree of correspondence between the implied authors (as I have constructed them) and their "real" views and opinions. The results may be similarly difficult to support from the historical record.

In the example we have just looked at, a literary (reader-oriented) criticism leads to a more complex, if less certain, and, in my view, more plausible historical theory. But there are also many instances where a literary perspective does not help to clarify a historical issue. One example pertains to the question of the Fourth Gospel's intended audience. "Audience" is one of the standard introductory issues that scholars of the Fourth Gospel have addressed. Since J. Louis Martyn's work in the late 1960s, the consensus has been that the Gospel was written in the first instance for a particular group of people: "the Johannine community." In recent years, however, Richard Bauckham has posted an influential challenge to the consensus by arguing that all four canonical Gospels were written for the broad collectivity of believers in Christ and not to specific enclaves.

In his article "John for Readers of Mark," Bauckham claims that the Gospel of John, far from being addressed to a specific and perhaps isolated community, as had been argued by Martyn and Meeks, was written for broad circulation within the church (1998, 147–73). The Fourth Gospel presumes the implied readers' knowledge of the Gospel of Mark, which must have been widely known by the time the final version of John was completed (1998, 148).

This is not to say that the Gospel of John is dependent on the Gospel of Mark in a literary sense but rather that the Fourth Evangelist had in mind an audience for whom Mark was common knowledge. If so, argues Bauckham, John's audience could not have been isolated from the mainstream of Jesus believers, as Meeks and others have suggested.

Bauckham's analysis is circular in that he appears to assume his conclusion (that the Gospel was written for a broad audience) and then to interpret the Gospel as evidence that the readers had prior knowledge of Mark but not the specifically Johannine traditions. "If we find evidence that the Gospel is designed to accommodate such readers [readers familiar with the Gospel of Mark], while not excluding others, and if there is no similar evidence that a readership already familiar with specifically Johannine Gospel traditions is in view, this will be a significant confirmation of the argument that John was written, not for the 'Johannine community,' but to circulate generally among the churches" (1998, 149). Bauckham's approach, like others noted earlier, makes use of literary-critical considerations to reconstruct the body of knowledge that the implied author imputes to the implied audience and then draws a straight line from this implied reader to the historical audience of the Gospel.

In a review of Bauckham's work, Wendy Sproston North (2003) challenges both his assumptions and his conclusions. North points out that Bauckham's argument does not by any means prove that John's target readership—whether or not they knew Mark—were not part of a "Johannine community." While Bauckham asserts that the audience had no prior knowledge of Johannine traditions, this point is in fact extremely difficult to support from the Gospel.

North's critique focuses on John 11:1–2, which is one of the main examples that Bauckham uses to support his argument. These verses, which introduce John's account of the raising of Lazarus, read as follows: "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill." This passage implies that the audience has not yet encountered the figure of Lazarus but that Mary is familiar to them as the one who anointed Jesus with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. Because the Johannine story of the anointing does not occur until the next chapter (12:3), Bauckham concludes that the writer is reminding the audience of the anointing story in Mark 14:3: "While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head" (Bauckham 1998, 164). North argues, however, that John 11:2 does not necessarily direct the audience forward but rather repeats information already known to the reader (2003, 455).

She compares this passage with John 18:14, which uses a similar formulation but explicitly directs the reader back to the Caiaphas prophecy in 11:49–53. The new information being introduced in 11:2 does not pertain to Mary but to Lazarus (2003, 461). North also remarks on contradictions between the Johannine and Markan versions of the anointing story that would have been puzzling to a reader of Mark (2003, 464–65). John, for example, twice refers to the fact that Mary wipes Jesus' feet with her hair, a detail that does not appear at all in Mark.

Both Bauckham and North explicitly make use of the concept of the implied reader in arguing for their respective positions. The fact that they disagree on the identity of the Gospel's real audience goes to show that, in this case, the application of a literary approach does not in itself solve the conundrum of Gospel audience. But one may infer from their respective analyses, as from those of Blomberg and Culpepper, that literary-critical sensibilities, whether with or without the technical vocabulary of reader-response criticism or other approaches, have helped each of them to justify their position with regard to the historical-critical problem at hand.

LITERARY CRITICISM AS UNDERMINING HISTORICAL CRITICISM

Literary criticism may not always "improve" historical criticism, that is, lead to unassailable, concrete results, but, as noted above, it increases awareness of the literary dimensions of the Fourth Gospel—that is, of the Gospel *qua* narrative—and of its audiences as readers or hearers. This awareness may add depth to historical-critical work.

The advent of literary-critical theories and methodologies, including reader-response criticism, as well as related approaches such as feminist criticism and postcolonial criticism, has not resulted in the collapse of historical criticism. Every year sees interesting additions to the Johannine bookshelf in both literary and historical criticism, supporting Culpepper's view that many critical approaches will exist side by side, with intersections here and there, now and into the foreseeable future. Not all scholars, however, accept this as a desideratum.

One scholar who has strongly challenged the ongoing validity of the historical-critical enterprise is Robert Kysar, himself a former practitioner of historical criticism. Initially tentative, Kysar has argued with increasing certainty that literary criticism has revealed fatal flaws in historical-critical methods. These flaws, he argues, will eventually render historical criticism, including Martyn's theory of expulsion from the synagogue, obsolete (see Kysar 2005b; 2005c; 2007). Kysar's arguments are complex, but we will look at two related aspects: the role of ideology in interpretation and the impos-

sibility of historical certainty. Both of these issues were evident in our earlier discussion of the Fourth Gospel's authorship and audience.

IDEOLOGY AND HISTORICAL CRITICISM

Literary-critical approaches, particularly those that highlight the reader's social location, emphasize the impossibility of objective scholarship: historical-critical arguments inevitably reflect the ideology of the interpreter, to a point where ideology undermines the historical argument altogether. The observation that real readers, including scholars, import their own concerns, theologies, and viewpoints into their conclusions was noted a century ago by Schweitzer, who commented on the uncanny resemblance between various historical Jesuses and those who constructed them.

Many recent scholars have commented on the role of ideology in contemporary Johannine studies. In "The Production of the Johannine Community: A New Historicist Perspective," Colleen Conway suggests that the ways in which contemporary commentators have constructed the Johannine community reflect the scholars' own identities and ideologies (Conway 2002).

The arguments of Kimelman and Reinhartz are alternative productions driven by different ideological motivations [than those that drove Martyn]. If one were to cast the Johannine community drama with either Kimelman or Reinhartz in the director's chair, one would get a decidedly different impression from the play. In this case, the Jews would be cast no longer as villains but instead as a more tolerant, welcoming group that is being actively rejected by leading figures in an offshoot religion. (2002, 491)

Not only do alternative productions of the Johannine community reflect varying scholarly ideologies, but they also potentially have different ideological effects on their audiences as well. Conway continues:

It is not possible to speak of personal motivations for such productions, any more than one can speak of Martyn's personal motivations for his production. One can speak, however, of the ideological framework for such readings and the audience appeal they might have in the current political climate. At a time when the president of the United States can call for a nationwide practice of religious tolerance, productions of the Gospel that downplay notions of religious intolerance on the part of the synagogue, and discourage the demonizing of Judaism become more and more attractive. (2002, 491)

Conway concludes that "from the theoretical perspective of new historicism

and cultural materialism, these readings lead to a different conclusion: the Gospel, as cultural token, lends itself to wide-ranging productions as we try to work out who we are in the twenty-first century" (2002, 492).

Jeffrey Staley has also considered the impact of postmodern interpretation on the historical-critical enterprise as practiced on the Gospel of John. Staley does not deny the importance of historical questions, but he does challenge what he refers to as the traditional historicism of Johannine scholarship. In his view, this challenge is particularly important in light of the tenuousness of the traditional reconstructions of the Gospel's origins and its community and of the tendency of scholars to use the prehistory of the text and its "origins" as a "rhetorical ploy to absolutize and authorize particular interpretations of that text." For this reason, Staley is skeptical of scholarly attempts to construct the history of the Johannine community and more inclined to investigate questions related to "the type of audience FG creates for itself" (Staley 2001, 50–51). Staley sees a two-tiered witness motif in the Fourth Gospel. Readers are invited to play a role like that of Peter and Nathanael or the Samaritans or the Greeks: to believe and follow Jesus even though their experience of Jesus is mediated through other, sometimes questionable, witnesses (2001, 55).

Kysar, too, is explicitly concerned with the question of ideology, which he views in political terms. Throughout the four decades of his career, Kysar has become increasingly aware of "the way in which texts arise from the author's own assumptions and perspectives, shaped by her or his position of power, and the way that texts tend to sustain social structures." This awareness has shaped his conviction that "interpreters of biblical texts have the obligation to ask how our interpretations reflect and sustain our positions of power and will work to strengthen the status quo" (Kysar 2005b, 218). Kysar agrees with the postmodern claim "that it is sheer pretence to suppose that any of us can examine the evidence for the past and come up with an objective, unbiased, and true picture of what took place" (2005c, 73). His own response is to be open and explicit about what has motivated his own exegetical career. "My scholarly efforts were and are always a part of my commitment to the interpretation of the Bible for the church. Without the assumption that I was in some way enriching the use of the Bible by Christians, I would never have had the motivation for what has turned out to be my scholarly career" (2005b, 5).

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF HISTORICAL CERTAINTY

If historical-critical theories regarding authorship and audience, or any other issue, are influenced and indeed shaped by the subjectivity of the interpreter, then perhaps it is necessary to be suspicious of the historical-critical enter-

prise altogether. As Conway has shown, there is no freedom from ideology, only varieties thereof. If Martyn's construction of the Johannine community as being expelled from the synagogue reflects a particular commitment with regard to the nature of Scripture and its relationship to history, my own deconstruction of that theory no doubt reflects my own commitments. These include my identification with the Jews of the first century, a sensitivity to the anti-Jewish potential of the Fourth Gospel, and the impressions that, as a student of Jewish history, I have developed with regard to the structure, preoccupations, practices, and beliefs of the Jewish community in the period both before and after the first Jewish revolt against Rome and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E.

For Kysar, the impossibility of historical certainty undermines the historical-critical enterprise as such. As he comments with regard to the "Q" hypothesis and scholars' self-assured constructions of what this entirely hypothetical document contained, it is folly to build a skyscraper on top of a toothpick (Kysar 2007, 173).³ Kysar is acutely aware of the fragility of the consensus view of the Johannine community as developed by Martyn. He comments that Martyn's

proposal swept through Johannine studies and took deep and healthy roots that grew until it was regarded almost as a given fact. By the 1990s in many circles, it was often a foregone assumption that this was the setting for the writing of the Gospel of John. Like other hypotheses, this model was so widely embraced that at times many of us may have forgotten that it was only a hypothesis. Indeed, along with the speculative Q document, the theory has now become one of the best examples of how scholarship tends to transform hypotheses into truth. The tale of this theory demonstrates the necessity to keep reminding ourselves of the difference between truth and hypothesis, as well as the fact that we never really prove much of anything. (Kysar 2005b, 238–39)

The excessively speculative nature of the expulsion theory ultimately caused Kysar to abandon it. "Most historical reconstructions done for the sake of interpreting the Fourth Gospel are excessively speculative and beyond provability.... This suspicion of historical reconstruction resulted in my abandonment of the theory of the expulsion of the Johannine Christians from the synagogue ... and the effort to reconstruct the Christian community

3. In his 2007 essay "What's the Meaning of This?" Kysar contrasts the ease with which he personally dismissed "Q" due to the historical fragility of the hypothesis with the momentousness of his turn from the Martyn expulsion theory, which had been a cornerstone of his own understanding of the Fourth Gospel for decades.

related to the Fourth Gospel” (2005b, 218). Indeed, in Kysar’s view, Johannine scholarship will soon shift away from any dependence on the concept of a reconstructed Johannine community and, perhaps, even from historical-critical method more generally.⁴

Whether Kysar’s prophecy will be borne out remains to be seen. For the present, historical-critical research continues unabated. But one might venture to suggest that Kysar’s comments are not so much descriptive as prescriptive. While he is too courteous to say so, his articles on this topic suggest that we Johannine scholars should outgrow our preoccupation with the historical circumstances of the Fourth Gospel—the world behind the text—and focus only on the literary elements—the world in front of the text.⁵

HISTORY DESPITE IDEOLOGY

My own position on the fate of historical criticism in the wake of literary criticism is somewhat conflicted. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* has had a strong influence on my thinking and was very helpful in arriving at what I believe is a more nuanced and, to me at least, more interesting set of readings of the Gospel than I would have achieved otherwise. Further, I certainly agree with Kysar on the impossibility of objectivity, as well as on the fragility of the Johannine community hypothesis.

Nevertheless, I am not ready to give up on historical criticism. This is no doubt because my interest in the Gospel of John was motivated first and foremost by historical curiosity and the attempt to perceive real live individuals behind the text. I have very little interest in the historical Jesus (though the historical Mary Magdalene and the historical Judas are both intriguing); what has fascinated me from the beginning of my studies, and continues to do so, are the earliest readers of the Fourth Gospel, the impact that the

4. Kysar’s generous nature does not allow him however to condemn historical criticism or to see it as entirely without value. He concludes his critique of historical criticism with the following words: “Still, should the whither of the Johannine community entail abandonment and rejection, we can and ought to continue to be grateful to those figures who contributed to its origin” (2005c, 76).

5. One of the major differences between historical and literary criticism is their respective understandings of the “meaning” of a biblical text. Kysar notes: “What all of the historical-critical methods have in common is that they depend almost exclusively on the assumption that the meaning of any passage can be discerned only by understanding the historical context and reference of the passage. Historical critics usually contend that the ‘true meaning’ of any biblical passage is the one the author intended in its composition” (Kysar 2005b, 7). Kysar’s own interest lies in “the reader’s experience of the text and the question: What does the text do to the careful reader?” (2005b, 145).

Gospel might have had on them, and what purposes it may have served in their individual and communal lives. At this stage, therefore, I will decline to follow Kysar in turning aside from the historical questions or in declaring the demise of the Johannine community, even though I can understand his reasons for doing so. At the same time, I will join with Kysar in declaring my own biases, to the extent that they are evident to me: concern for the ways in which the Gospel of John has been used to support anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and a hope that in some way my work will have a positive impact on Jewish-Christian relations.

In my view, then, the obstacles that stand in the way of historical certainty do not render historical criticism impossible, unimportant, or uninteresting. Scholars who are interested in history should continue to ask historical questions of the literary texts that we have, but in recognition of the literary design and features of the text, the value of literary-critical analytical tools and approaches, and the obstacles that Kysar has described. No doubt each scholar has to find his or her own way forward in this regard. My own approach is to attempt to bring three considerations to my own work: humility, imagination, and good humor. I will briefly illustrate how these considerations might be brought into play by reflecting, yet again, on the historical problem that still preoccupies me: the history of the Johannine community.

The exercise of humility begins with the recognition that, if “the quest of the historical Jesus” is a speculative venture, the search for the Johannine community is even more so. Whereas we can assume with some measure of assurance that Jesus of Nazareth, the subject of historical Jesus research, was an individual who really existed in the Middle East of the first century, we can make no parallel assumption with respect to the so-called Johannine community. The Johannine community is entirely a scholarly construct, the product of a circular hermeneutical process: we assume its existence from the very fact that we have a Johannine Gospel. We construct the community’s contours by reading between the lines of that Gospel, and then we use our construction of the community as a tool for interpreting the Gospel itself. If pressed, most Johannine scholars would admit that any theory of the Johannine community is speculative. A good dose of humility, taken explicitly and frequently, would remind us of this fact, guard against the reification of our own constructs, and help us to be open to other interpretations. Genuine humility, I believe, makes the historical-critical enterprise more interesting and perhaps also more fruitful by freeing us from the need to prove that ours is the only tenable solution.

To humility must be added a fertile imagination, for without imagination knowledge remains inert. Johannine studies, like most academic fields, emphasizes knowledge—in our case, knowledge of languages, texts, theories,

and the work of other scholars. Without imagination, however, we would not be able to ask new questions or to ask old questions in new ways. For many of us, it is the desire to imagine the past, or perhaps to imagine oneself into the past, that has prompted us to enter the field and persist therein. Imagination is the quality that allows us to suspend our disbelief—disbelief in the possibility of historical certainty and objective scholarship—in order to imagine an ancient community, its experiences, and its way of looking at the world. The results of this exploration may or may not be historically accurate; even if accurate, they may not be verifiable or convincing to others. But if done well, they may in turn be used as building blocks for the constructions that others propose. Not everyone will be satisfied with the labeling of scholarly construction as the exercise of imagination. But how can it be otherwise?

Of course, one must also contend with failure of the imagination. While I can imagine a Johannine community in conflict with at least some of their Jewish neighbors, I am unable to imagine a first-century Jewish community, or “synagogue,” that would expel Johannine believers from its midst. I explain this inability on the basis of my knowledge of Jewish society both before and immediately after 70 C.E. In that light, it strikes me as unlikely that the Jewish community was organized in a way that would have led to the expulsion of a group from within or that a confession of faith would have occasioned such an expulsion (see Reinhartz 1998c) rather than, for example, the abandonment of key Jewish practices such as circumcision and the dietary laws, for which we have no Johannine evidence. This failure of the imagination might also, I admit, be a product of my own biases: as a Jew who values interactions with those outside my own community, I like to think of ancient Jews as tolerant of difference and of ancient Judaism as a more elastic category than expulsion would imply.

Exercising humility, recognizing the constructedness of our historical work and the importance of the imagination—these are all made easier, and more enjoyable, with good humor. In scholarly terms, good humor may save us from taking ourselves and our constructions so seriously that our collegial relationships are affected. At a recent Society of Biblical Literature meeting, a panelist referred to those present at a session devoted to Johannine scholarship as “the Johannine community.”⁶ The comment occasioned laughter, but it is nonetheless true that students of the Gospel and Letters of John constitute not only a community of discourse defined by common interests, a common

6. The remark was made by D. Moody Smith in the course of a joint session of the Johannine Literature Section and the John, Jesus, and History Group at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego, 16 November 2007.

language, and a shared history (the history of Johannine scholarship) but also a collegial community in which we await one another's books and articles and talk to one another in public and in private, in person and through e-mail. It is good humor that allows the community to flourish.

LITERARY CRITICISM AND HISTORICAL CRITICISM REVISITED

It would not do for me to conclude this exploration of the impact of literary criticism on historical criticism without adding my own attempt to the case studies that I have already analyzed. With humility and good humor, I will now set forth the most recent fruit of my imaginative efforts to think concretely about what the Fourth Evangelist was up to when he stated that those who confess Jesus to be the Messiah have been or will be excluded from the synagogue (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).

Literary criticism, in which meaning is seen to reside in the interaction between reader and text, has encouraged me to focus attention on the Fourth Gospel's rhetorical dimension, that is, to consider the effect that the text might have had on its earliest audience. According to John 20:30–31, the Gospel writer hoped that the narrative would strengthen the hearer's or reader's faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and thereby allow the reader to have life in his name. But why? Was there a concrete situation that animated this intention? According to Martyn and many others, the concrete situation was the expulsion of the Johannine believers from the synagogue, but this reading is not the only possibility. Here I will present the hypothesis that the expulsion passages and other sections of the Fourth Gospel that represent the Jews in a negative way constitute a warning against synagogue participation and that these features of the Gospel are intended to deter Christ-confessors—the Gospel's primary audience—for whom Judaism remained attractive.

In the Gospel of John, the divide between those who believe and those who do not seems absolute. Unbelievers are most often described as "the Jews." In speaking to the unbelieving Jews, Jesus refers to the Torah as "your law" (8:17; 10:34),⁷ and in John 10 Jesus differentiates between "his" sheep and those that are not in his flock (see discussion in Reinhartz 1992). These references suggest that at least this community of Christ-confessors saw itself as both spiritually and organizationally separate from the Jews in their geographical vicinity. Nevertheless, the Gospel strongly implies that movement between these two groups is possible.

7. See John 18:31, where Pilate also uses "your law" when talking to the Jewish authorities.

Within the Johannine narrative, Jesus' discourses, whether mildly critical (as in his conversation with Nicodemus in John 3) or virulently hostile (as in 8:31–59), are intended to persuade his Jewish dialogue partners to see things his way—and some of them do. Nicodemus edges closer to belief (7:50–52; 19:39); some of the Jewish authorities come to believe, even if secretly (12:42). Whether or not we read these passages as a two-level drama, at the very least the narrative may be encouraging its readers to consider that Jews can become believers, as indeed is demonstrated by the fact that Jesus' earliest followers were Jewish (1:38–51). Some of the Jews who listen to Jesus' preaching at the temple on the festivals are quite prepared to change their minds about him (7:31, 43); some of the Jewish witnesses to Lazarus's resurrection are similarly moved (11:45). The Jewish authorities also recognize the possibility that soon everyone will believe in him, although they may shudder at the thought (12:10–11, 19).

If it is possible for people to move across the divide from nonconfession to confession, then, in theory at least, it is possible for Christ-confessors either to return to (in the case of ethnic Jews) or join (in the case, perhaps, of non-Jews, including Gentile Godfearers) the Jewish community, with or without relinquishing their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. That “backsliding” was a problem for early communities of Christ-confessors is suggested by other New Testament texts. For example, Heb 10:29 warns, “How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?” Paul's dire warnings to the Galatians may also be understood in this light. Paul vents his spleen against those who would persuade his Galatian church that they should follow Jewish law. This technically may not be “backsliding,” given that the Galatians were Gentiles, but Paul vigorously attempts to dissuade them from taking on Jewish practices by describing such a move as akin to returning to the nonsalvific beliefs that they had held before hearing and believing Paul's gospel (see Gal 4:8–11).

These examples suggest that the Fourth Gospel, even as it describes and prescribes faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God, may also attempt to deter those who already believe from giving up or diluting their faith by adhering to Jewish identity and community. The Evangelist's argument in favor of this hypothesis has several components, which I will now outline with relevant quotations from the Gospel.

The first step is to establish the superiority of faith through Jesus. For the Johannine Evangelist, faith in Jesus is the best, indeed, the only, way to know God and to be in loving relationship with him. As John 1:18 declares, “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's

heart, who has made him known.” Whereas in the past the Torah had mediated the relationship between God and humankind, it is now Jesus who does so; indeed, Jesus both embodies and exceeds all of the Jewish covenantal symbols (8:31–59; see Reinhartz 2001b). Jesus is “the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (14:6). “Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned” (15:6).

The superiority of faith in Jesus lies in no small part in the fact that it is a once and for all event, while other foundations for relationship with God are temporary and must be renewed regularly. This concept is repeatedly expressed in the Fourth Gospel through the metaphors of food and drink (see Webster 2003). In John 4:13–15, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman:

“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

In John 6:27, Jesus admonishes those who have followed him after the miracles of the loaves and fishes, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” He continues, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always” (6:32–34). Finally, he declares to them, “I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (6:48–51).

The consequence of faith is eternal life; lack of faith, by contrast, leads to eternal damnation. The narrator tells us in John 3:18 that “those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Jesus declares to his Jewish audience, “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life” (5:24). Finally, with exasperation, to those Jews who had believed in him but no longer do so, Jesus says, “I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he” (8:24).

By establishing the superiority of Christ-confession as a way of knowing God and achieving eternal life, the Gospel of John labels the Jews as those who epitomize the opposite of what the readers should be striving for. More than this, however, the Gospel declares that the Jews hate Jesus and those who follow him. The most explicit exposition of this theme is John 8:44, in which Jesus tells those Jews who used to believe, “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” The Jews try to stone and kill Jesus; similarly, they will also persecute and even kill the disciples. Jesus warns his followers, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me” (15:20–21).

If Judaism apart from faith in Jesus does not provide a path to the knowledge of God and salvation, and if Jews are ready to persecute and kill Jesus and his followers, why would anyone wish to be a part of the Jewish community, participate in synagogue activities, and otherwise retain a Jewish identity? Why would anyone forego the hope of eternal life and risk death in the here and now? Surely the only reasonable course is zealously to guard the believers’ separation from Judaism, while at the same time systematically to reinterpret the foundational texts and symbols of Judaism in light of a new understanding of revelation and covenant.

In this light, John 20:30–31 takes on a different nuance, if not a new meaning. These verses declare, directly to readers of or listeners to the Gospel, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue (or may come) to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” Most commentators hold that the Gospel of John is not intended as a missionary document and that its audience is the Johannine community itself (see Brown 1979, 67–68).⁸ In this case, the purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to strengthen the faith of the Johannine Christ-confessors. But strengthen them in the face of what? Their own inadequate faith? Expulsion from the Jewish community? Perhaps the specific purpose of the Gospel is not so much to prepare Jesus’ followers for physical and spiritual persecution as to reinforce their commitment to their Christian community, to maintain their faith lest they slide, or slide

8. As we have seen, however, Bauckham 1998 challenges this position.

back, toward the synagogue and thus lose all that they have gained by their belief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God.

What, then, of the three expulsion passages? According to the construction presented here, as in Martyn's analysis, these verses do not describe events that actually took place, or could have taken place, in the life of the historical Jesus. Nor do they, however, refer to the actual historical experience of the Johannine community, as Martyn would argue. Rather, they function as a graphic warning to that community: just as those who confessed Christ during his lifetime were expelled from the synagogue, so will you be persecuted and excluded, both from the Jewish community and from salvation, should you seek to affiliate with the Jewish community.

This construction of the Johannine community may not be as satisfying as the expulsion theory. It is both less specific and less dramatic, and it is not without its flaws. In any case, the idea that the Gospel of John may have been intended at least in part to discourage a turn or return to non-Christ-confessing Judaism does not in itself negate the expulsion theory. While it is unlikely that a community that had recently experienced a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue would have considered returning, it is not impossible that some members would have been tempted to abandon the excluded group in order to return to safer waters. Yet in my view the reading of the Gospel that I have sketched out is a plausible alternative, when one considers the absence of historical evidence for some of the building blocks of the expulsion theory: centralized Jewish religious authority structure; the use of the Birkat Haminim to exclude Christ-confessors from the synagogue; and the allegorical reading of the Fourth Gospel as a detailed account of the community's historical experiences. At the very least, we may humbly suggest that the expulsion theory should not be taken as axiomatic, no matter how useful it may be homiletically or exegetically.

These reflections are not intended to be definitive, nor are they meant to suggest that one theory or another must be discarded once and for all. At the most, they may pique the imagination of others and encourage further consideration of the relationship between the Gospel of John and its earliest audience as one factor in any reconstruction of the possible historical situation of this hypothetical community. At the very least, they testify to the fact that, twenty-five years later, at least this scholar has not lost her early appreciation for the literary-critical approach set forth in Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* and continues to find it valuable both for understanding the Gospel's literary design and as a tool in imagining how a Johannine community might have viewed itself in its own social and historical context.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN: JOHANNINE HISTORY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Colleen M. Conway

[T]he long-reigning and widely accepted paradigm represented by the historical critical method in all of its many guises and variations ... began to show rather ominous cracks at its very foundations and eventually gave way. (Segovia 1991d, 1)

[F]or all the sophistication of the theory-saturated part of the profession, scholars in all the relevant disciplines that contribute to or depend on historical information carry on in all essential ways as though nothing had changed since Ranke, or Gibbon for that matter; as though invisible guardian angels of epistemology would always spread protecting wings over facts, past reality, true accounts and authentic versions; as though the highly defensible, if not quite the definitive, version would always be available when we really needed it. (Partner 1995, 22)

Tracing the immediate effects of the 1983 publication of R. Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* is to tell at least two stories. One is the story of the welcome adoption of literary-critical method in Johannine studies. In this story, words such as "narrator," "implied reader," "characterization," and "irony" are carried in on a fresh methodological breeze, stirring up layers of dust from years of historical-critical scholarship. The other story is a battle narrative in which historical-critical scholars gird their loins preparing for what might be a long, hard fight for survival. Telling the first story would include attention to the studies that came after Culpepper, as Johannine scholars, myself included, bracketed historical treatment of the text to examine what "the text itself" might yield to the literary critic.

But here I want to focus on the second story. The initial arrows slung at literary critics capture my attention because, twenty-five years after *Anatomy's* release, I find myself more immersed in questions of history than at any point in my study of the New Testament. Moreover, many recent studies

of the Fourth Gospel that use “new approaches” seem particularly interested in the way the text is situated in a particular time and place. In other words, these new approaches are often interested in history. Indeed, “history” seems once again on the rise in Johannine studies and New Testament studies in general. But what kind of history is it, and how does it relate to literary criticism? Should this return to history be seen as cause for celebration among traditional, historically minded scholars of the Gospel?

To answer these questions, I turn first to the “past” of narrative criticism on the Fourth Gospel, especially the past debate concerning its usefulness in Johannine studies. I then move to more contemporary scholarship with an eye toward the relationship between literary and historical studies of the Gospel. In this move from past to present, it will emerge that the opening epitaphs from Segovia and Partner are both true. In the study of the Fourth Gospel since Culpepper, the bedrock built by historical criticism has in some sense given way. However one might describe the new interest in history, it is often decidedly different from the traditional historical criticism of past generations. Yet, as will be seen, even those who use new approaches to the Fourth Gospel readily draw on the results of historical-critical scholarship when they are needed. Taking both these observations into account, I will conclude this essay with some suggestions about the direction future literary studies of the Gospel might take.

THE OPENING VOLLEYS

Before considering the initial attacks launched against Culpepper’s narrative-critical approach, we would do well to recall his own stated motives for taking up the project. While acknowledging that the results of the historical approach have been “immensely fruitful and exciting,” he also sees its limits. From Culpepper’s perspective in 1983, the historical approach tied the meaning of the Fourth Gospel to considerations that were accessible only to New Testament specialists. It also neglected the “essential unity of the most ‘literary of the gospels.’” Finally, he suggested that historical criticism did not acknowledge the significance of the relationship between text and reader. Though stating these limitations, Culpepper was explicit in asserting that his work should not be seen as a challenge to historical criticism or its results. Indeed, he suggests that this alternative literary approach should be in dialogue with historical criticism and that “each should be informed by the other” (Culpepper 1983, 4–5).

Nevertheless, a review of the earliest responses to Culpepper from historical critics uncovers little dialogue and much in the way of objection. One common complaint concerned the issue of narrative coherence. More than

one scholar argued that the narrative critic's insistence on the unity of the text represented a regression to a precritical mode of reading. Thus, in one of the earliest reactions to the literary-critical approach, Jürgen Becker identified narrative criticism as an essentially conservative method. It recalled older strands of scholarship that were suspicious of the fragmenting nature of form and redaction criticism (Becker 1986). A few years later, Martinus de Boer voiced the objection even more directly, asking, "Can any avowedly *critical* method ... really presuppose coherence, whether thematic or literary, as an unquestionable principle?" (1992, 43, emphasis original). From his perspective, it was precisely a lack of coherence that had been firmly established by historical critics. To ignore this was to assume an uncritical perspective. De Boer also challenged the assumption that the original readers of the Fourth Gospel would have been concerned only with the final form of the text and had no interest in its prehistory. On the contrary, citing the work of Robert Fortna, de Boer argued that the early readers of the text were well aware of earlier sources and the redaction of previous editions. He noted with approval Fortna's suggestion that the method of redaction criticism "closely parallels the way the original readers would have perceived and understood the text" (Fortna 1988, 8). In short, both Becker's and de Boer's critiques implied that the use of narrative criticism (as it came to be called) was a step backward for scholarship on the Fourth Gospel. In their view, narrative critics had substituted the presumption of the Gospel's narrative unity for the presumption of the Gospel's theological and doctrinal unity that long dominated biblical interpretation.

Methodological regression was not the only problem that historical critics found with the literary approach. Charges of anachronism and confusion over genre were also raised. Along these lines, perhaps the most scathing critique came from John Ashton (1994, 141–65). Along with skepticism about a priori claims to narrative coherence, Ashton added an attack on the usefulness of the method itself as applied to the Gospels. To his mind, the Gospels were much "simpler" stories than those typically studied by narratologists and did not warrant complex narrative analysis. Ashton argued that for Johannine scholars to engage in such an analysis was "like using a combine harvester to mow the garden lawn" (1994, 159).¹ But Ashton's objections went beyond the

1. Ironically, given their widely disparate approaches to study of the New Testament, Ashton drew on Stephen Moore's observations to further critique the New Testament literary critics via the narratologists they draw on (Ashton 1994, 159 n. 17). "Narratology does not privilege or emphasize the unity of individual narrative works," according to Moore, and the views of someone like Genette "are calculated more to unsettle than to reassure" (Moore 1989, 52–53).

issue of complex versus simple narratives. He also raised more fundamental concerns about assuming that the Gospels are literature and treating them as such. By emphasizing the story elements of the Gospels, he argued, narrative criticism “neglects the difference between fictional and non-fictional texts” (1994, 165). Mark Stibbe expressed similar reservations, commenting that Culpepper “takes it too much for granted that a gospel can be studied as if it were a novel” (1992, 10).² Here, too, the issue of genre was at stake: Should the Gospels be viewed as history or fiction?

This led to a third objection, perhaps the most interesting insofar as it anticipated the direction that literary criticism would eventually take. If the initial impetus was to say that narrative critics had regressed, Mark Stibbe expressed concerns about a more ominous threat that he saw embedded in Culpepper’s version of narrative criticism. While some had criticized Culpepper and other narrative critics for ignoring history, Stibbe suggested that the biblical narrative critics harbored fundamental misconceptions about the nature of history. As he put it, “All NT narrative critics essentially follow Culpepper, who in his *Anatomy* (1983) was following Frank Kermode” (Stibbe 1992, 73). The problem with this, according to Stibbe, was that Kermode’s work was built on “post-Modernist presuppositions.” This meant that New Testament narrative critics were guilty by association of being “post-Modernists.” According to Stibbe, whether these narrative critics were aware of it or not, their work was based on the following presuppositions: (1) the idea that history is not storylike in character but chaotic, episodic, and unplotted; (2) the notion that historians place “reality-effects” in their narratives to create the illusion of historical reality; (3) the idea that historical texts, in spite of their claims, do not refer to a reality outside of the text but rather are autonomous narrative worlds (Stibbe 1992, 73–74).

From our vantage point today, Stibbe appears both right and wrong in his assumptions. In hindsight, narrative criticism of John’s Gospel does not appear to have been driven by postmodern tendencies. Indeed, Becker’s initial sense of its essentially conservative aspects was more accurate.³ Nevertheless,

2. As the title of his 1992 book *John as Storyteller* suggests, Stibbe is interested in the narrative aspects of the Gospel of John, especially insofar as they are (in his view) intricately connected to the historical nature of the Gospel. Stibbe was not the only person to argue for integration between narrative and historical approaches. Fourteen years after the release of *Anatomy*, Stephen Motyer had not seen much progress toward integration and was still “in search of arguments that might require narrative critics to pay attention to historical questions” (1997, 31).

3. Stephen Moore argues a similar point about narrative criticism’s essential conservatism. Unlike Becker, however, Moore suggests that narrative criticism can itself be seen as

even if Culpepper and the narrative critics who followed him were not disciples of postmodernity, Stibbe rightly anticipated the direction that much literary criticism would travel, and in this way his insight proved to be on target. That is to say that, in the twenty-five years since *Anatomy*'s release, literary criticism has spawned a wide range of approaches to the Fourth Gospel. The critical experiment did not end with examining the physical anatomy of the Gospels: their characters, setting, structure, plot, and so forth. The critical experiment went on to include an array of methods that were rooted in literary-critical theory. Already in 1991, Fernando Segovia indicated that the turn to literary theory in New Testament studies had produced a "full reliance upon and employment of literary theory, involving the wide range of the theoretical spectrum" (1991a, 1–2).⁴ At that point in time, Segovia included narratology, feminist theory, rhetorical criticism, communications theory, and reader-response criticism in this literary spectrum. Today one could also add gender theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory, and cultural studies. Many of these approaches would situate themselves within a postmodern perspective, embracing (although perhaps not with his exact language) the tenets that Stibbe labeled as "post-Modernist." Moreover, as I have suggested, several of the more recent approaches show a concern for the past in ways that differ significantly from the narrative criticism of two decades ago. This turn toward the past may be more threatening to the historical-critical approach than narrative criticism ever was. To understand why this is so, it will be useful to look briefly at a debate that was going on in the humanities at the same time that literary criticism was on the rise in New Testament studies.

THE KILLING OF HISTORY?

In the 1990s, a different battle about history and historical method was being fought outside the field of New Testament studies. Not only historical biblical critics but also historians in general increasingly felt the threat of their discipline's demise. But it was not the *ignoring* of history by literary critics that was problematic for these historians in the humanities. Indeed, as long as literary critics were engaged in New Criticism—an approach decidedly uninterested in history—the past remained in the hands of the historians. It was only when New Criticism gave way to other critical theories that problems arose. In particular, when critical theorists from across the humanities became ever more

a subset of redaction criticism insofar as it focuses, like redaction criticism, on the theology of the text (1989, 56–68).

4. Segovia identifies literary criticism and social-world criticism as the two new directions in New Testament studies, but my focus here is on literary developments.

interested in defining history and, worse, interpreting it, traditional historians took notice. What they observed was an encroachment into history by other disciplines and a redefining of history that made it virtually unrecognizable to them. From their perspective, these were “nonexperts” dabbling in their academic discipline. The debate, then, was over “who controls the past” (Clark 2004, 25).⁵

In 1994, Keith Windschuttle published a dramatic statement of the late-twentieth-century historian’s dilemma. With no subtlety lost in the title, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering our Past* made clear who the criminal was in this conflict. Windschuttle raised the alarm at the breaching of disciplinary boundaries and especially the invasion of the all-encompassing “cultural studies.” Windschuttle viewed this so-called interdisciplinary activity as the erasure of academic disciplines (see also Novick 1988, 584–92). For him, the erasure recalled the medieval church’s replacement of secular disciplines with revelation as the source of knowledge. As he put it,

Today’s theorists have substituted French theory for Christian texts but are seeking to break down the disciplines in exactly the same way. They are the most determined advocates for the reorganization of existing academic fields into multidisciplinary studies.... [T]heir aim is not to merge but to subsume all existing fields in the study of human life under the one central megadiscipline of Cultural Studies. Such a move should be seen for what it is, not a synthesizing of intellectual streams but an undermining of the disciplinary traditions that have formed the generative power of Western knowledge for more than two thousand years. (Windschuttle 1997, 222)

While Windschuttle is extreme in his opposition to the emergence of cultural studies, he is not alone in arguing that the introduction of multidisciplinary approaches signaled the end of history as a discipline. By the end of his detailed conceptual history of “historical objectivity,” Peter Novick came to a similar conclusion, though from a more nuanced perspective. Tracing the cross-disciplinary activity that included both the expansion of the historian’s interests into other disciplines and the production of historical studies in other disciplines, he noted that “all but a few crusty elders agreed that, on the whole, the historical discipline was stimulated and enriched by such contributions” (1988, 587). But he also was clear that such enrichment came with a cost. Like Windschuttle, Novick suggested that the price paid was the integ-

5. The phrase “who controls the past” comes originally from Nicholas B. Dirks’s 1996 article “Is Vice Versa? Historical Anthropologies and Anthropological Histories.”

rity of history as a discipline. According to Novick, as subcommunities of historians adopted language from a range of approaches that they borrowed from the humanities, they had a harder time communicating with each other. Thus, whether one assessed such cross-disciplinary activity positively or negatively, the end result was the same: a diffusion of history as a discipline until it was no longer recognizable. Sounding much like Windschuttle after all, although without evoking medieval church politics, Novick concluded, “Centrifugal forces of various sorts had killed the founders’ vision of a unified and cohesive historical discipline, and there seemed no prospect for resurrection” (1988, 589–90).⁶

This brief foray into the late-twentieth-century debate within historical studies is particularly striking when put next to the claims being made about the state of Johannine studies in the same period. If literary studies signaled the beginning of a wide array of approaches employed in the study of the Fourth Gospel, did it also signal the end of historical-critical study of the text? Or, to put it another way, has Johannine studies now become so fragmented that we can no longer speak to one another? The evidence suggests otherwise. The rest of this essay will examine two case studies of approaches to the Fourth Gospel that have grown out of literary-critical theory and how these approaches relate to historical study of the Gospel.

JOHANNINE HISTORY AND POSTCOLONIALISM: A CASE STUDY

In his attempt to map the field of postcolonial biblical criticism, Stephen Moore highlights the difficulty of the task. “Depending upon the example being considered,” he remarks, “postcolonial biblical criticism seems to emerge out of liberation hermeneutics, or extra-biblical postcolonial studies, or even historical criticism of the Bible, or all three at once” (Moore 2006, 14). Several articles in a 2002 collection of essays devoted to postcolonial reading of the Gospel of John illustrate his point (Dube and Staley 2002). In what follows, I will look briefly at several of these essays, both as examples of the direction that literary-critical work on the Gospel of John has traveled since Culpepper and as illustrations of the variety of ways that these postcolonial approaches intersect with historical-critical work on the Gospel.

6. Again, unlike Windschuttle, Novick saw positive as well as negative sides to this development. While the American historical profession was fragmented beyond any hope of unification, it was also the case that “new fields were explored in innovative ways” and “historical works of considerable originality and even brilliance appeared every year” (1988, 592).

The first clue that historical criticism has returned from its enforced exile by narrative critics is found in the foreword by the editors of *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*. Here Musa Dube and Jeffrey Staley acknowledge the importance of Tod Swanson's essay "To Prepare a Place: Johannine Christianity and the Collapse of Ethnic Territory" for their own initial explorations of postcolonial study of the Gospel. Swanson assumes, for the purposes of his reading, the existence of a Johannine community along the lines proposed by Raymond Brown (Swanson 2002, 14). While Swanson makes clear that such an assumption is not necessary for his argument, the frequent references throughout his essay to the Johannine sect, the Johannine Christians, and the Johannine community suggest that this historical construct is deeply embedded in his argument. For him, this early community, influenced by the Hellenistic emphasis on unity, recast diverse ethnic spaces (such as Jacob's well) as signs pointing toward the one God. But in so doing (and this is the postcolonial critique), the Johannine community not only impoverished the meaning of these particular sacred spaces but also "disenfranchised the natives of those places from the symbols that had empowered their ownership of a territory" (Swanson 2002, 27).

Moreover, Swanson's evocation of the Johannine community is no anomaly in this volume on *John and Postcolonialism*. The Johannine community construct shows up in several more contributions to the book. For example, Musa Dube's insightful reading of John 4 "attributes the construction of this story to the Johannine community and their missionary vision, rather than the historical Jesus and his disciples" (2002, 61). In Dube's reading, the Johannine community finds itself on the losing side of a battle for identity in the post-70 C.E. world. They are not making as many disciples as competing groups and are losing the allegiance of their own members (John 4:1; 6:66; 12:42–43). Thus, the Johannine community turns to foreign and formerly enemy soil for recruitment. "In other words," Dube argues, "the alternative vision of the Johannine community ironically embraces an ideology of expansion, despite the fact that it, itself, is the victim of imperial expansion and is struggling for its own liberation" (2002, 63).

For Dube, then, the historical construct of the Johannine community is useful insofar as it illustrates the ways that imperialism affects indigenous peoples. One such effect—infighting among indigenous people—can be seen in the interactions between the Pharisees and Jesus' disciples. Another effect—assimilation of the colonizers' ideology—can be seen in the way Jesus and his disciples move into Samaria looking for fields that are "ripe for harvesting" (4:35). As she puts it, John 4 is a story that "authorizes the Christian disciples/readers/believers to travel, enter, educate and to harvest other foreign lands for the Christian nations." Although the imperial interests of the

community are concealed through the literary characterization of Jesus and his disciples, it is no surprise that by the end of the story the Johannine Jesus “emerges fully clothed in the emperor’s titles,” that is, as “Savior of the World” (2002, 65–66).

If we look to another essay in this same volume, we find what would certainly sound like fighting words to the historical critics surveyed earlier. In fact, Leticia Guardiola-Sáenz specifically links her own approach to the Fourth Gospel with postmodern critical approaches, especially cultural studies. At the same time, she openly castigates historically minded critics as Western male scholars who have “monopolized and manipulated academia in the last decades with the myth of the text-as-window to the past.” According to Guardiola-Sáenz, these critics consciously or unconsciously concealed their agendas under their purportedly objective view of the text. “In the end,” because postmodernity has now revealed the socially constructed nature of such historical readings, “the West has been found guilty of reading the biblical text subjectively, *making history* according to its imperialistic and patriarchal agendas” (2002, 130, emphasis original). A clearer statement against traditional historical-critical methodology could hardly be found.

Still, even with this strongly stated conclusion, Guardiola-Sáenz turns to that well-known product of historical-critical work on the Fourth Gospel, the Johannine community. Indeed, she draws quite explicitly on the results of traditional historical-critical scholarship, relying, as Swanson and Dube did, on Brown’s reconstruction to inform her reading of the Johannine Christians. She notes, “The Johannine community, constructed here as a marginal group that was expelled from the synagogue, had to deal with issues such as ‘the relationship to Judaism, with questions of self-identity, and with the Christian life in a situation of minority status and some oppression’” (2002, 137, quoting Kysar 1992, 918). Later in the essay, the expulsion is called “an event” that influenced the Johannine community to construct their version of Jesus. Read in tandem with Guardiola-Sáenz’s hybrid identity as a Mexican woman raised in the border zone between Mexico and the U.S., the Johannine community becomes a border people and the Johannine Jesus a border-crosser. Jesus is “a model for survival in the hostile world which the Johannine community inhabits” (2002, 145). In contrast, the Pharisees are the border patrol that rises up to protect and secure the benefits of their gender, religious group, and authority. Rather than a perpetrator of imperial ideology, the historical Johannine community becomes a potential source of liberation as they become aware of oppressive borders that need to be transgressed.

These particular essays suggest that in some cases postcolonial readings can productively employ the results of a certain strand of historical-critical work on the Gospel of John. They also suggest that, in spite of their heavily

theoretical (and postmodern) underpinnings, methods such as postcolonial studies may well be concerned with what happened in the past, but typically only insofar as a view of the past informs a particular reading of the text in the present. Indeed, it is this latter point that distinguishes the place of history in these postcolonial readings. With traditional historical-critical approaches, reconstructing the world behind the text (in this case, the historical Johannine community) has long been the goal. The postcolonial readings, however, draw on the notion of a reconstructed historical community to enable them to read through the lens of a particular contemporary community's perspective.⁷ In that sense, it is not surprising that the historical scholarship on the Fourth Gospel that is of most interest is the Johannine community construct. Indeed, well before the emergence of postcolonialism and, incidentally, also before Culpepper's *Anatomy*, Leander Keck had already signaled the usefulness of the reconstruction of history for contemporary communities. As he put it in 1980, "material from the past illumines the ever-moving present.... the past is repeatedly paradigmatic" (1980, 124). Still, it is striking that these studies are interested *only* in the reconstructed Johannine community and then only as a springboard for their own concerns. They are not at all concerned with other sorts of traditional historical-critical questions, such as potential sources or the composition history of the text.

Moreover, there is postcolonial work on the Gospel of John that either relates to history in quite different ways from that described above or simply not at all. Another essay in *John and Postcolonialism* provides an example of the latter. Although Tat-siong Benny Liew's postcolonial analysis of John is very much concerned with community, it has no use for the historical Johannine community nor for the Gospel's ancient context. Instead, Liew focuses on the way the Gospel symbolically constructs community in a particular way. While Liew has some sympathy for this symbolic construction, based on his own Asian American experience, he is primarily suspicious of the way it shapes community. He points to several contradictory impulses in the text (e.g., the emphasis on both divine prerogative and human initiative for membership; the simultaneous will to include and exclude members) and finds a "deep and layered ambiguity in John's symbolic construction of community" (2002, 218). So also, Asian Americans' experience of living in white America is filled with ambiguities regarding their status as included or excluded or their status as "white" or "nonwhite," depending on the circumstances. Once

7. Notably, the one discussion I was able to find that explicitly takes up the topic of the interface between postcolonialism and historical-critical work on the Bible advocates, among other things, an approach in which "the concern with ancient empire would not be subordinate to a concern with modern empire" (Marshall 2005, 107).

again, the Gospel of John becomes a means through which to articulate the experience of a particular community, while its own construction of community is challenged.

Stephen Moore's postcolonial essay on the Gospel of John in *Empire and Apocalypse* (2006) engages history, but in a different way. Moore's discussion begins with an intertextual reading that places John's Gospel alongside Colin Falconer's *Feathered Serpent*. In so doing, the essay points to parallels between the story of the conquest of Mexico by Cortés and the story of the "world-conquering Johannine Jesus" (2006, 49). Here is an interest in the past, to be sure, but it is the history of Spanish conquest rather than the history of the Johannine community. Nor does a reconstructed community show up in the latter parts of the essay, although those portions do treat the Fourth Gospel's own historical context. Rather, Moore provides a close textual analysis that details both the Gospel's stringent critique of imperial Roman ideology (manifest especially in Pilate's torturous treatment of Jesus; John 19:1–3) and the ways that Johannine theology is itself intermeshed with this ideology.

In drawing some conclusions about the relationship of postcolonial criticism of the Gospel of John to historical-critical approaches, we might turn again to Moore's comments about the difficulty of mapping postcolonial biblical criticism. In Guardiola-Sáenz's work one sees links both to liberation hermeneutics and traditional historical criticism, even as the essay claims distance from the latter. Dube's essay, too, intersecting as it does with historical criticism, liberation hermeneutics, and extrabiblical postcolonial studies, is a good example of Moore's "all three at once" category. The essays of Liew and Moore are primarily examples of postcolonial analysis emerging from postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. They show little, if any, links with historical-critical work. That all these studies of the Fourth Gospel are designated as "postcolonial" suggests that is difficult to say anything definitive about the relationship between postcolonial approaches and historical criticism of the Bible.

Notably, Guardiola-Sáenz, Dube, and Liew all use a reading strategy that links the Fourth Gospel with issues involving their own particular ethnic contexts. In this way, their studies are also examples of the "contextual hermeneutics" that Stephen Moore discusses in his 2007 article "A Modest Manifesto for New Testament Literary Criticism." Whether one calls it cultural exegesis, cultural interpretation, or cultural studies, to list a few options, Moore suggests that these approaches are concerned "to bring an ancient text into meaningful and explicit dialogue with a contemporary context" (2007, 24). In the face of this type of engagement with the text, "biblical scholarship as a disciplinary practice threatens to crumble and come apart ... in order to be reformed as something other than what biblical scholarship originally was, which is

to say—among other things, and somewhat reductively no doubt—a white European ideology” (2007, 25). Thus, the field of cultural studies, in its many manifestations, appears to threaten more than just history as a discipline. If Moore is right, it also has its claws in the discipline of biblical scholarship as we know it. It is no wonder that historical critics were so wary about the appearance of literary criticism in Johannine studies. Perhaps they were aware that it signaled the beginning of the end of what they recognized as their discipline.

Still, I would suggest that there are ways that historical work on the text can continue in conversation with these new approaches. Indeed, there is potential for certain problems of historical-critical scholarship on the Gospel of John to be illumined by the results of this recent outgrowth of literary-critical theory. What follows is one brief example.

As noted earlier, some of the postcolonial approaches to the Gospel of John draw on the idea of the historical Johannine community. This very construct grew out of a seemingly intractable problem in contemporary interpretation and the ecclesial use of the Gospel: the harshly critical presentation of “the Jews” as the enemies of Jesus (see Conway 2002). That is, if the reader understood that John’s harsh anti-Jewish rhetoric was driven by feelings of exclusion from the first-century synagogue, it would remove the impetus for continuing hostilities in the twenty-first-century world. In the end, however, this hypothesis of a persecuted Johannine community did not solve the hermeneutical or historical problem of the Jews in John. Reconstructing the Johannine community as victims of oppression and exclusion from the synagogue leaders ran aground on both historical and hermeneutical issues (see Kimelman 1981; Katz 1984; Reinhartz 1998a). Nevertheless, it is a construct that remains firmly embedded in some studies of John, even, as we have seen, studies driven by postcolonial concerns.

Rather than relying on this problematic historical reconstruction, a postcolonial approach can offer new insight into the question of the Jews in John. To begin, the Gospel of John seems a particularly prime candidate for a postcolonial analysis. Only in this Gospel do the chief priest and Pharisees link the rising popularity of Jesus with the threat of Roman repercussion. “If we let him go on like this,” they say, “everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation” (John 11:48 NRSV). In spite of all the harsh rhetoric against the Jews, at this point the Gospel reflects the genuine fear and powerlessness experienced by the colonized subjects before their colonizers.⁸ Implicit in this brief statement is

8. A similar point could be made about the trial before Pilate. There, too, the Jews are portrayed as impotent before the Roman imperial presence of Pilate.

the astounding notion that the heated and deadly conflict between Jesus and the Jews might be unnecessary if it were not for the presence of the Romans in the land. Thus, this narrative moment is also the point at which a post-colonial theory can raise awareness of the ways that imperial powers turn indigenous groups against one another. Understanding this dynamic adds a new dimension to the long-debated question of the portrayal of the Jews in the Gospel of John. The Jews are not necessarily the oppressors of the hypothetical historical community. Rather, they, along with the followers of Jesus, are victims of colonizing occupiers. If the narrative portrays the Jews as the enemies of Jesus at points, it is also complicit in portraying Jesus as hostile to the Jews. But, in the end, it is Rome that is implicated in this internal struggle.

Here, then, is one example of how postcolonial theory can inform traditional historical questions about the rhetorical dimensions of a biblical text. I am not suggesting yet another way to justify the difficult anti-Jewish language of the Gospel of John. Instead, I propose that postcolonial perspectives can open new ways of understanding the presence of such language in its historical and cultural context. There is no way to prove that a Johannine community existed, was cast out of a synagogue, and felt animosity toward opponents whom the author identifies as “the Jews.” But Roman occupation and the destruction of the temple by Rome is a historical reality that had lasting repercussions on the communities, near and far, that were associated with the temple. The Gospel of John may reflect some of those repercussions.

HISTORY, JOHN, AND GENDER: A SECOND (AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL) CASE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, Segovia listed feminist criticism as one of the methods that emerged from the literary-critical trajectory. While feminist-critical work on the Gospel of John has continued, interest in gender has expanded in recent years to include masculinity studies. In this case, my own work can serve to illustrate the changing relationship between literary-critical research and historically focused studies. My 1997 dissertation was a study on male and female characters in the Gospel of John (now Conway 1999). Methodologically, I was influenced by literary theory, and, of course, Culpepper’s *Anatomy* influenced my approach. I resisted drawing conclusions about a historical Johannine community from my analysis of the role of these characters (to the annoyance of at least one reviewer) because mine was not a historical study. Even so, my own reliance on historical-critical results is evident in my assumption that portions of the text, such as John 21, were later additions to the narrative.

Now, a decade later, I have recently completed a book that studies Greco-Roman masculinity in relation to presentations of Jesus in the New Testament: *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (2008). Although I still read the Gospels as narratives, this work has been influenced by gender theory, postcolonial theory, and new historicism. As such, it builds on the results of the wide theoretical spectrum of literary theory to which Segovia pointed. But, as mentioned earlier, my recent book is also more historically oriented than my earlier study on characters in John, insofar as my approach continually situates the New Testament in its ancient cultural and rhetorical milieu. Indeed, this work has been heavily influenced by other studies, particularly in the field of classics, that have examined the conventions of masculinity in the ancient Mediterranean world. In my dissertation, I dwelt in the world of the Johannine narrative; with my new study of masculinity, I immerse myself in the world of the Roman Empire and the texts that it produced.

Nevertheless, *Behold the Man* is still a far cry from traditional historical-critical studies of the New Testament. Although I study presentations of Jesus in the New Testament, I do not treat the historical Jesus, and I do not attempt to reconstruct the historical communities behind the New Testament texts. Also, questions of source, composition, and redaction are not on the table. Instead, my interest in the past concerns the manifestations of a particular ancient gender ideology in the biblical text.

At the same time, my work could be used to discuss more traditional historical questions. Because it concerns the intersection of ideologies of masculinity with presentations of Jesus, my book has implications for historical questions about New Testament Christology. Although generations of scholars have explored “the past” to trace the origins of various New Testament formulations about the person and work of Christ, it is only very recently that gender ideologies have been considered a part of the historical puzzle, and this new awareness has come largely through interdisciplinary approaches. The question, then, is this: In making a turn back to history but viewing it through an interdisciplinary lens, have I picked up the very weapon that Windschuttle claims is killing “history”? Or, to put it another way: Is this kind of approach a further reflection of the debate over who controls the past?

THE FATE OF HISTORY AND THE FUTURE OF LITERARY-CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Here I would not wager to speak of the future of narrative criticism and the Gospel of John. I suspect that, in the same way that there are some scholars who will remain interested in traditional historical questions (e.g., composi-

tional layers, the historical Jesus, the idea of a “Johannine community”), there also will be scholars who remain interested in narrative aspects of the Gospel quite apart from these historical concerns.

Nevertheless, it also seems clear that historical approaches are not on the endangered species list, if they ever were. History keeps returning to the New Testament critic, even those reading through postmodern, literary-critical lenses. But this return to history does not signal the victory of traditional historical criticism. Rather, the variety of links to the past in recent studies of the Gospel of John points toward the incorporation of new ways of thinking about history that come via critical theory. In short, Culpepper’s initial steps away from historical-critical method and toward literary theory opened a path for other theoretical approaches to the Gospel of John. There is still much to learn from postcolonial analysis, gender-critical approaches, and other new approaches to the Fourth Gospel and the New Testament that I have not discussed or that have not yet been conceived. In many cases, what we have to learn may primarily concern our own communities in our own time. But in some cases, we may also learn something about the historical setting and formation of the New Testament texts, including the Gospel of John.

FROM ONE DIALOGUE TO ANOTHER:
JOHANNINE POLYVALENCE FROM
ORIGINS TO RECEPTIONS

Paul N. Anderson

Throughout the ages, one of the primary mistakes committed in studying the Gospel of John has been to read the text monologically instead of dialogically. This error has often led some readers of the Fourth Gospel to “get it wrong,” needing correction by later interpreters. Put otherwise, many an ecumenical council or more nuanced interpretation has restored the tension that had been lost by interpreters who had sided with one aspect of John’s witness without considering another. Likewise, one flaw of modern literary-critical theories is that they have often sought to ascribe the sources of the Fourth Gospel’s theological tensions to sets of imagined literary poles, failing to consider the possibility that the origin of those tensions was integral to the thinking and style of the Evangelist.¹ John’s material developed dialogically, and it must be read dialogically if its epistemological origin, developmental character, and rhetorical design are to be adequately understood. Indeed, different levels and types of dialogical operation appear to underlie the Johannine text—from origins to receptions—and these involve theological, historical, and literary factors that require a *polyvalent* approach to Johannine interpretation.

1. For a fuller discussion of the Fourth Gospel’s theological tensions as *external* to the thinking of the Evangelist (Bultmann and diachronic theorists) or *internal* to the Evangelist’s thinking (Barrett and synchronic theorists), see Anderson 1996; 2004. For a development of the four sources of the Gospel’s theological tensions (the dialectical thinking of the Evangelist; John’s Mosaic-Prophet Agency schema; the dialectical Johannine situation; and the dialogical/rhetorical work of the narrator), see Anderson 2007a. For the history of patristic discussions of Johannine Christology see T. E. Pollard’s excellent overview (1970).

POLYVALENCE AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

So what is meant by “polyvalence”? The word *valence* (from the Latin *valentia*) means “power” or “capacity,” especially with reference to the making of connections. In chemistry, the valence of an atom refers to the capacity of its particles to bond with those of other atoms. In linguistics, valence refers to the number of meanings implied by various qualifiers of a verb. In psychology, valence refers to a person’s feelings and thoughts, especially referring to two opposing feelings or drives leading to conflictive *ambivalence*. In literature, valence refers to the ways a narrative connects with audiences and themes, and *polyvalence in literature* relates to many levels of meaning, embedded within the text and beyond it, transcending time, space, and form.

This is an important consideration because literature, and especially narrative literature, is rarely monovalent, as though it has only one level of meaning. Even nursery rhymes carry within themselves multileveled associations beyond the simplistic themes they convey. Further, any “classical” text will be deemed such precisely because it conveys meaning on more than one level alone, which is why it continues to be engaged again and again across epochs and settings.² What Mikhail Bakhtin has described as “dialogism” reflects the multiplicity of meanings emerging from different systems of thought as represented through divergent voices within a narrative. As *polyphony* presents a diversity of voices, and as *polysemy* leverages a panoply of signified meanings within literature, *polyvalence* in narrative refers to the multiplicity of connections, associations, and meanings that accompany—both preceding and following—any theme or its signification in a given text.³

In Johannine perspective, a dialogical presentation of Jesus bears within itself multiple forms and modes of dialogue, which in turn engage each other in polyvalent ways. The question is whether approaches to the Fourth Gospel can also make connections from one system to another. Semiotic polyvalence works within literature, but can interdisciplinary polyvalence function within biblical studies?

Reflecting a trend that D. A. Carson calls the “balkanization of Johannine studies” (2007), it can be seen how Johannine scholars have often resorted to mono-disciplinary approaches to the Fourth Gospel’s riddles—understandably, but nonetheless to their peril. The introduction of any set of disciplinary tools to the analysis of a biblical subject or text requires its intensive appli-

2. Note James Fowler’s reference to the Fourth Gospel as one of the genuinely “classic” texts of religious literature (Anderson, Ellens, and Fowler 2004, 268–71).

3. See especially Bakhtin’s description of “heteroglossia” in the novel (1981, 324–31) and his analysis of the hero in aesthetic perspective (1990).

cation and narrow use, but the best studies will also take into consideration other relevant approaches, incorporating the findings of other studies into an interdisciplinary synthesis. Indeed, the great Johannine research programs of the twentieth century have done precisely this. One of the reasons Rudolf Bultmann's epoch-making synthesis has endured for so long, despite sustained criticism along the way, is that it was built upon multiple types of analysis, bringing together a synthesis of several approaches that had developed over a century or more.⁴ Since Bultmann's programmatic contribution in 1941, however, two others demand notice for their interdisciplinary character and multivalent impact. First, Raymond Brown's contribution stands out because, in addition to writing over two thousand pages in his Anchor Bible commentaries on the Johannine Gospel and Epistles (1966–70; 1982), he constructed compelling theories of the Fourth Gospel's composition and the history of the Johannine situation that intersected with the text's literary, historical, and theological features.⁵ Even in his analysis of the Johannine situation, however, Brown's refusal to limit discussion to a single dialogue (with the synagogue alone) is significant. Brown appreciated the polyvalence of the emerging Johannine situation itself, and in this way his approach differed from that of Martyn.⁶ As a second example, Alan Culpepper's contribution stands out because of its capacity both to introduce new literary theories to the critical study of Gospel traditions and his ability to integrate those new literary disciplines with historical and theological approaches.⁷ In particular, *Anatomy of*

4. On one hand, Rudolf Bultmann's 1941 commentary on the Gospel of John drew together an amazing synthesis of source-critical, redaction-critical, exegetical, history of religions, and theological analyses enriched by existential sensitivities. On the other hand, Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* (1951–55) is one of the finest theological treatments of the New Testament ever produced. The synergy between his diverse methodological approaches and their incisive theological implications was a winsome combination. With the possible exception of Schweitzer's *Quest*, Bultmann's *Commentary on John* deserves consideration as the most significant single work of biblical scholarship of the twentieth century.

5. In a 2006 review of *Life in Abundance: Studies in John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, I argued that Brown's contributions are worthy of being considered the most significant of any North American Bible scholar of the twentieth century.

6. See here Brown 1979 and his outline of several crises and dialogical partners in the Johannine situation in Brown and Moloney 2003. By contrast, Brown's colleague at Union Theological Seminary, J. Louis Martyn, focused on one primary dialogue within the Johannine situation: the Johannine-Jewish dialogue (see Martyn 2003).

7. Even before Brown wrote *Community of the Beloved Disciple* (1979), Culpepper had written a sustained development of the Johannine situation (Culpepper 1975). Following that work, however, Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*

the Fourth Gospel has captured the imagination of Johannine scholars in ways that have impacted the last quarter century of Johannine studies more than any other single work. With this new literary approach to Johannine analysis, the hopeless impasses related to historical-critical positivism and Johannine-Synoptic comparisons/contrasts could be sidestepped, while still yielding rich hermeneutical results. A consideration of the impact of these three luminaries upon biblical studies overall reveals that interdisciplinary approaches to the Johannine riddles augur for a more enduring set of contributions. That being the case, a brief overview of the Johannine riddles seems in order.⁸

THE PERPLEXING CHARACTER OF THE JOHANNINE RIDDLES

While a full treatment of the Johannine riddles cannot be presented here, a mention of some of the prevalent ones makes it apparent why these issues continue to be relevant for any sustained approach to the Fourth Gospel. Indeed, the very existence of these and other *aporias* (perplexities)—odd transitions, repetitions and variations, similarities and differences with the Synoptics, and theological tensions—makes simplistic approaches to John's narrative obsolete. It should also be pointed out that the polymorphic and multileveled character of these riddles explains why so many first-rate scholars have come to different views on the composition and development of John's text. Nonetheless, these are the very features that make the Fourth Gospel the mystifying text that it is, and each generation must struggle with its content and its presentation anew. Therefore, the literary, historical, and theological Johannine riddles deserve a fresh review.

LITERARY RIDDLES

Upon any serious reading of the text, it cannot be denied that numerous literary riddles abound within the Fourth Gospel. First, the distinctive style and form of the Prologue (John 1:1–18, which seem closer to 1 John

(1983) literally created a field of fresh literary approaches to John over the last quarter century. Yet Culpepper has still maintained his engagement with historical and theological interests. As notable examples, his 1998 commentary, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, and his *John, the Son of Zebedee* (2000) both explore the histories and legends pertaining to John, the son of Zebedee.

8. As a point of clarification, I do not use the word “riddles” in the more particular way that Tom Thatcher (2000) develops the term in his study of the of riddle as a speech genre but rather in the more general sense in which Moody Smith used the term in his gracious foreword to Anderson 1996 (p. iv).

1:1–5) and the apparent first ending at John 20:31 make it plausible that the first eighteen verses and the last twenty-five verses of the current text were added to an earlier edition. Certainly, the text-critical fact that John 5:4 and 7:53–8:11 were not part of the original narrative makes at least some sort of diachronic history likely, although unlike the above sections, these are post-Johannine additions. The final editor refers to someone else as the author—the Beloved Disciple who leaned against the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper—and “explains” the belief that Jesus never said that individual would not die, as though he has apparently died (21:20–24). Does this imply that there were at least two writers involved in the composition of the Fourth Gospel: an Evangelist and an editor? These phenomena force interpreters to consider at least some scenario of the text’s developmental history and editorial compilation.

Second, seemingly odd transitions puzzle John’s readers. The testimony of John the Baptist in 1:30 is described as a past event in 1:15. The debates about the Sabbath healing in John 5 and 7 are set in Jerusalem, while John 4 and 6 take place in Samaria and Galilee. In 14:31 Jesus declares “Let us depart” from the supper but does not reach the garden until three chapters later (18:1). While Mary’s anointing of the feet of Jesus is alluded to as having happened in 11:2, the event does not actually take place until 12:3; while Thomas asks Jesus where he is going in 14:5, Jesus declares in 16:5 that none of them has asked where he is going. Repetitions and variations also raise the question as to whether multiple layers of material are compiled in the Johannine narrative. Did some of John’s material get rearranged, or are these odd transitions and sequences factors of another sort of process?

Third, the existence of distinctive types of material in the Fourth Gospel raises the question as to whether distinctive collections of material may have been a part of John’s tradition or sources. The distinctive “I am” sayings, the “double amen” sayings (see, e.g., 1:51; 3:3–5; 5:19–25), the distinctive signs with their theologizing proclivities, the Scripture citations and their introductory formulas, and the Johannine misunderstanding dialogues raise questions about the origin and development of this material. Did signs and discourses grow up together in the Fourth Gospel, or were they combined at a later time, having been joined from disparate literary sources? Was there one primary source of the Johannine material or several? If there were several sources of John’s material, might that also account for theological tensions and differences within the material, or does assuming the latter point beg the inference of sources in lieu of other evidence?

Fourth, John’s relation to the Synoptics is an enduring source of puzzlement. On the one hand, several dozen similarities suggest intertraditional contact, yet none of these similarities is verbatim. This is especially true of

the events narrated in John 6 and 18–19—the two sections that are the closest between John and the Synoptics. It even seems that some Johannine passages are in corrective dialogue with Markan and Matthean traditions, while Luke appears to favor some Johannine details over Mark's, and the Johannine Father-Son motif shows up at least once in Q (Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22). If the Fourth Gospel was independent from the Synoptics, was its tradition entirely isolated, or might its engagement involve intertraditional dialogues along the way? Further, might a variety of different sorts of Johannine-Synoptic contacts have existed at different times and with respect to different traditions and their evolving forms as the traditions underlying all four Gospels developed?

Fifth, while there appears to be a *basic* synchronicity of John's tradition, dialogues are also apparent between earlier and later material. In several cases the narrator reminds the reader of what has happened, and either Jesus or characters in the narrative do the same (4:45–47; 9:15, 35; 10:25, 40; 12:1, 17, 37; 18:14; 20:24). On the other hand, the narrator sometimes clarifies points made earlier or anticipates things to come (2:4; 4:2; 7:39; 8:27; 11:30; 21:23). Proleptic statements by Jesus are fulfilled later in the narrative, confirming his identity as the authentic prophet-like-Moses of Deut 18:15–22, and the reader is drawn into the omniscient perspective of the narrator along the way (John 2:22; 12:33; 13:11; 18:32; 21:19). Given the pervasive unity of John's style and inclinations, the Fourth Gospel seems like a seamless robe that critics may gamble over but not divide.

Sixth, despite this synchronicity of tradition, there appear to be several aspects of diachronicity in the Johannine situation reflected in the text. Translations of Aramaic terms into Greek and explanations of Jewish language and customs for Hellenistic audiences suggest a Palestinian origin and a later development within a non-Jewish setting (1:38, 41, 42; 2:6; 4:9; 5:2; 11:55; 19:13, 17, 31, 40, 42). While some material emphasizes the presentation of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, he is also presented in categories conducive to the mindset of Hellenistic cultures.

So what do the above features suggest about the origin, development, and unity of the Johannine tradition? Was it a unitive tradition developing in its own distinctive way, or was it a compiled collection of disparate material and perspectives?

HISTORICAL RIDDLES

The Gospel of John's historical problems are many. First, many of the historically plausible features of the Synoptics are missing from the Fourth Gospel. The parables of the kingdom and the short, pithy sayings of the Syn-

optic Jesus are largely absent, as are all of Jesus' exorcisms and healings of lepers. The baptism of Jesus is not directly reported in John (Mark 1:9; John 1:29–34), nor is the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (Mark 14; John 13). Further, virtually every event in which John the son of Zebedee is mentioned in the Synoptics is missing from the Fourth Gospel, including the calling of James and John from their fishing nets and boat (Mark 1:19), the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31), the calling of the Twelve (Mark 3:16–19), the request of the Zebedee brothers for privilege (Mark 10:35–45), the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:22–43), the transfiguration (Mark 9:2–10), John's uneasiness with other exorcists (Mark 9:38–41), the request of the Zebedee brothers to call down fire from heaven (Luke 9:54), the arranging of the upper room (Luke 22:8), the Olivet discourse (Mark 13:3–37), and the slumber of the disciples in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–34). If *none* of these events is reported in the Gospel traditionally attributed to John the son of Zebedee, can it really be assumed that the Fourth Gospel was indeed written by him or, for that matter, by any other member of the Twelve?

Second and conversely, most of the distinctively Johannine presentations of Jesus' words and works are missing from the other three canonical Gospels. The "I am" sayings (John 6:35–58; 8:12, 24, 28, 58; 10:7–16; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1–8), the water-into-wine miracle (2:1–11), the healing of the Jerusalem paralytic (5:1–15), the raising of Lazarus from the grave (11:1–41), extended debates with Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (John 5; 7–10), dialogues with such characters as the Samaritan woman (4:4–42) and Nicodemus (3:1–21), the Baptist's "Lamb of God" testimony (1:26–36), various feasts in Jerusalem (2:23; 4:45; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22; 11:56; 13:1), the washing of Peter's feet (13:3–17), and the great discourses at the culmination of Jesus' ministry (John 14–17)—these are all missing from the Synoptics. If these things really happened as historical realities, how could they *not* be known to traditions besides John's, and if they were known, how could such memorable accounts be omitted from all three Synoptic Gospels? Given John's theological proclivities, many scholars have wondered whether the origin of these accounts was theological, questioning their historical basis. However, John has more mundane and archaeological material than all the other Gospels put together.

Third, differences between John and the Synoptics abound, especially regarding order and chronology. In the Synoptics, Jesus cleanses the temple at the culmination of his ministry (Mark 11:15–18), whereas in John the event is presented as an inaugural sign (John 2:13–21). Regarding the date of the Last Supper, the Synoptic accounts present it as a Passover meal (Mark 14:12–25), whereas in John's account it is dated as the day before the Passover (John 13:1–14:31). In the Synoptics, Jesus visits Jerusalem only once (Mark 11:11), at which point he is arrested, tried, and killed; in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus

makes at least four trips to Jerusalem (John 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 12:12), and his opposition results from the raising of Lazarus, not the temple incident. The Synoptics present only one Passover (Mark 14:1); John presents three (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). In Mark, the first miracles are the exorcism and the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:23–31); John presents the wedding miracle in John 2 and the healing of the official's son in John 4 as the first two signs Jesus had done in Galilee (John 2:1–11; 4:43–54). Did the agonizing of Jesus about the foreboding "hour" and events to come happen before or after the Last Supper (John 12:27; Mark 14:34–36)? Was it the third hour that they crucified Jesus (Mark 15:25) or the sixth hour (John 19:16)? In these and other ways, the Johannine order and chronology appear decidedly different from those of the Synoptics, although basic similarities remain.

Fourth, the presentations of Jesus' ministry and the emphases of his teaching are very different in John's Gospel and the Synoptics. The Markan Jesus shrouds himself in secrecy (Mark 1:44; 3:12; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9), whereas the Johannine Jesus declares his identity with extroverted disclosure (John 4:26; 6:35, 48, 51; 7:28–29; 8:12, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5; 18:5–8, 37). In Mark and Matthew, the woman anoints Jesus' head (Mark 14:3; Matt 26:7); in John and Luke, the woman anoints Jesus' feet (John 12:3; Luke 7:37). In Matthew, Jesus' followers are the light of the world (Matt 5:14); in John's Gospel, Jesus himself is the light (John 8:12; 9:5). In Mark, Jesus' ministry begins after the arrest of the Baptist (Mark 1:14); in the Fourth Gospel, the Baptist ministers alongside Jesus, at least for a while (John 1:19–37; 3:22–30). In Mark, the Nazarenes do not receive the home-town prophet (Mark 6:1–6); in John's account, even the Samaritans and the royal official believe in him (John 4:39–54). In the Synoptics, Elijah and Moses come in the ministry of the Baptist and at the transfiguration (Mark 6:15; 9:4); in the Gospel of John, the Baptist denies being these individuals, pointing instead to Jesus, who fulfills both typologies (John 1:19–27). The Synoptic Jesus teaches a great deal about the kingdom (Mark 1:15; 3:24; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23–25; 12:34; 14:25); the Johannine Jesus teaches correctively about the kingdom (John 3:5–8; 18:36) and is regarded as king (1:49; 6:15; 12:13; 18:33, 37, 39; 19:3, 14, 15, 19, 21). The Synoptic Jesus propounds the love of God and neighbor as fulfilling the commandments of Moses (Mark 12:29–31); the Johannine Jesus lays down a new commandment: the disciples' love of one another (John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17). The differences between these two sets of presentations make one wonder if it is the same Jesus who is presented—or divergent perspectives on the same subject.

Fifth, differences in detail and emphasis abound between John's Gospel and one or more of the Synoptics. "Much" grass is described at the feeding of five thousand (John 6:10), although Mark alone describes it as "green" grass

(Mark 6:39). Mark and John alone mention two hundred and three hundred denarii worth of bread (Mark 6:37; 14:5; John 6:7; 12:5), but Matthew and Luke omit these details. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, mentioned by Matthew and Luke, is apparently unknown to the Jewish leaders in John 7:42, yet in 6:42 the Jewish leaders claim to know Jesus' parents. Matthew and Mark have two feeding narratives and two sea crossings (Mark 6:44; 8:9; Matt 14:21; 15:38); John and Luke only have one of each (John 6:10; Luke 9:14). Rather than confess Jesus as the Christ, as he does in the Synoptics (Mark 8:29), the Johannine Peter confesses Jesus as "the Holy One of God" (John 6:68), the same title used by the demoniac in Mark 1:24. Peter is imbued with authority in Matt 16:17–19; in John 6:69 Peter affirms *Jesus'* authority. Luke moves Peter's confession to follow the *other* feeding, the feeding of the five thousand instead of the feeding of the four thousand, departing from where it is in Mark and siding with where it is in John (Luke 9:11–17, 18–26; John 6:1–15, 68–69). In the Synoptics, Jesus promises to return before the eyewitnesses have passed on (Mark 9:1); John's narrator clarifies that Jesus never said that he would return before the Beloved Disciple died (John 21:20–23). Peter's third denial is predicted in Mark as preceding the second crowing of the rooster (Mark 14:30, 72); the other three Gospels predict only one crowing as the prophetic signal (Matt 26:24, 74–75; Luke 22:34, 60–61; John 13:38; 18:27). Luke alone follows John in mentioning Mary and Martha (John 11:1–12:8; Luke 10:38–41), Satan's "entering" Judas (John 13:27; Luke 22:3), the servant's right ear that was severed (John 18:10; Luke 22:50), and the great catch of fish (John 21:1–11; Luke 5:1–11). Why do we find these similarities and differences between John's Gospel and particular Synoptic presentations in terms of graphic, illustrative detail? Perhaps a comprehensive theory of traditional contacts is needed, rather than a simplistic "John-and-the-Synoptics" approach.

Sixth, John's is the only canonical Gospel claiming to have been written by an eyewitness, yet this claim is made in the third person—apparently by the final editor about the "Beloved Disciple," who had leaned against the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23; 21:20–24). While the traditional view contends that the Fourth Evangelist was John the son of Zebedee, neither John nor James is mentioned explicitly in the Johannine narrative, and "those of Zebedee" are mentioned only once (21:2). Ironically, one might think that the authority of the eyewitness would testify to Jesus' divine authority, but this is not the case. The importance of the eyewitness's testimony in John 19:34–35 is to emphasize the fleshly humanity of Jesus rather than his divinity—water and blood pouring forth from his side while on the cross. Further, the final editor's emphasis that Jesus never said the Beloved Disciple would not die gives the impression that he *had* died by the time the Johannine Gospel was finalized (21:20–24). However, if the Fourth Evangelist were

someone well known, such as John the son of Zebedee, why was his name *not* mentioned more explicitly in the Johannine narrative? These are enduring questions regarding the question of John's historical character and origin.

THEOLOGICAL RIDDLES

A third set of riddles concerns the Fourth Gospel's theological tensions. In addressing these issues, one must ask whether their epistemological origin was a multiplicity of sources with their own perspectives or whether the text reveals a dialectical thinker engaging his evolving audience dialogically at work.

First, the Fourth Gospel's christological tensions must be noted. On one hand, the Son represents and is equal to the Father (John 10:30, 33, 38; 13:3; 14:7, 9, 11; 17:11, 21; 20:28), is equated with God (1:1, 18; 5:18; 8:28, 58), and is presented in glorified terms as one who knows what will happen next (6:6; 13:1, 19, 38; 11:11; 14:29; 21:19) and the hearts and minds of those around him (1:47–50; 2:24–25; 5:6; 6:64; 13:11; 16:19). His feet appear not even to touch the ground, as the Johannine Jesus escapes capture and proceeds undaunted on his mission (7:30, 32, 44; 10:37; 11:57). On the other hand, Jesus declares that the Father is greater than he is (5:19, 30; 7:16; 8:16, 28; 12:49; 14:10, 28), claims not to do his own bidding but only the Father's (5:43; 15:10), and is presented in flesh-bound terms as one who weeps at funerals (11:35), is deeply troubled (11:33, 38; 12:27; 13:21), and is filled with pathos over the welfare of his own (11:3, 5, 36; 13:1, 34; 14:21; 15:9, 12; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Water and blood flow physically from his side (19:34), and Thomas believes upon seeing and touching the flesh wounds of Jesus (20:27–28). The Johannine Jesus is presented as both stoic and pathetic, yet to ignore either side of these polarities is to distort the character of the dynamic tension intrinsic to John's distinctive flesh-and-glory Christology.

Second, the Johannine presentation of Jesus' miracles is equally filled with tension. On one hand, the signs are embellished as facilitators of belief (John 2:11; 4:53; 6:2, 14; 11:15, 45, 48; 12:11, 18–19). Jesus begins his public ministry with a party miracle (2:1–11), performs healings from afar (4:45–54), heals the sick in Jerusalem and Judea as well as Galilee (4:45–54; 5:1–15; 9:1–41), and even raises Lazarus from the dead despite his having been in the tomb four days (11:1–45). The Johannine Jesus performs signs reminiscent of Elijah and Moses (6:1–21), and these deeds confirm that he has been sent from the Father (6:29); if people cannot believe in Jesus, they are at least exhorted to believe in his works (10:38). On the other hand, people's requests for signs are rebuked by Jesus, whether they be from a royal official imploring help for his son or the crowd's challenge to produce more bread (4:48; 6:26). At every step of the way, the "significance" and meaning of the miracles is emphasized:

the water-into-wine wonder signifies Jesus' saving the best for last (2:10); the healing in Jerusalem shows Jesus' authority over the Sabbath (5:1–15); his feeding of the multitude points to his being the Bread of Life (6:1–58); the healing of the blind man exposes the blindness of those who claim to see (9:1–41); and the raising of Lazarus points to Jesus as the resurrection and the life (11:1–45). Further, dependence upon signs is challenged by the Johannine Jesus, and those who believe without having seen are considered especially blessed (20:29). Did these tensions regarding Jesus' miracles originate in the Evangelist's corrective treatment of alien traditions, or were they factors of his own dialogical presentation of his own material?

Third, tensions within Johannine eschatology are also pressing. On one hand, the saving/revealing work of Christ, the fullness of authentic worship, and the dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit are presented as here-and-now realities. The "hour" of Jesus has indeed come, and his glorification is actualized (John 1:33; 3:18a; 4:21–24; 5:25; 6:63; 10:10; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 15:3; 16:32; 17:1; 20:20–22). On the other hand, those who believe will finally be rewarded only on the last day, at least some of the Holy Spirit's manifestation lies still in the future, and the "hour" of Jesus and his glorification are yet anticipated as future events (2:4; 4:21; 5:28; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 7:6, 8, 30, 39; 8:20; 11:24; 14:26). The issue of judgment is also a puzzling one. On one hand, Jesus judges no one and did not come for judgment (3:17; 8:15; 12:37). On the other, the Father has entrusted judgment to the Son, and judgment is the reason the Son has come into the world (5:22; 9:39). Regarding the sending of the Spirit, the Fourth Gospel is equally ambivalent. Two passages declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (14:16, 26), and two assert that Jesus himself will send the Holy Spirit (15:26; 16:7). In terms of Christian theology, the way forward has been to read John's treatments of these issues dialectically; one wonders if even historic divisions between Eastern and Western Christianity since the middle of the fifth century might be transcended with a more dialectical approach to John's presentation of whence the Holy Spirit proceeds.

Fourth, regarding soteriology, is salvation through Christ a particular and exclusivistic reality, or is it a universal and inclusivistic one? On the one hand, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, the only means of access to the Father (John 14:6). Those who believe in him receive eternal life (3:16). On the other, the light enlightening all humanity was coming into the world in the ministry of Jesus (1:9). Jesus claims to have sheep "not of this fold," and his mission is described as gathering the children of God scattered in the Diaspora (10:16; 11:52). A related topic is the issue of determinism versus free will. On one hand, Jesus knows who will receive him and reject him (2:24–25; 6:64; 13:11); no one can come to God except having been drawn by the

Father (6:44, 65). On the other hand, as many as received him are given the power to become children of God (1:12), and the Fourth Gospel was written in order that people might believe (20:31). Of course, “can come” is different from “may come,” and the belief that no one has seen the Father except the Son (1:18; 6:46) explains why the only hope for humanity is the saving/revealing initiative of God. This being the case, can one respond believably to this initiative in salvific faith without knowing the story of Jesus’ coming as the Christ, or does the Johannine Jesus supplant one form of religious formalism with another? If the existential response of faith to the Revealer is the Johannine *Leitmotiv* (central and weighty theme), the Fourth Gospel poses a challenge to religious dogmatism rather than an affirmation of it.

Fifth, especially since the Holocaust, the question of John’s perceived anti-Semitism has been a pressing one. On the one hand, “the Jews” are portrayed as Jesus’ adversaries who seek to kill him and who reject both his ministry and his claims to authority (John 5:16, 18; 7:1, 13; 8:59; 10:31, 33; 11:8). They are portrayed as typologies of the unbelieving world (5:38; 6:36; 8:45–46; 10:25–26; 12:37–40) and are associated with the negative polarities of the Johannine dualism. Jewish leaders reject Jesus as the Messiah on the basis of the Mosaic Law (9:28–29), yet they do not realize that Moses wrote of Jesus (5:39–47). They claim to be children of Abraham (8:33, 39), yet they reject the one sent from the Father. In that sense, they fulfill the prediction of Isa 6:9–10 that humanity will fail to see and hear (John 12:38–41). On the other hand, many of “the Jews” indeed believe (2:23; 7:31; 8:30–31; 10:42; 11:45; 12:42), and Jesus declares that “salvation is of the Jews” (4:22). It is also a fact that the word Ἰουδαῖοι also means “Judeans” (7:1; 11:7), so the term is not a reference to all who are Semitic, which would include the receptive Galileans. Clearly Jesus is presented as the Jewish Messiah (1:41; 11:27), and even Pilate hails him as the “king of the Jews” (19:14, 19, 21). Nearly all the presentations of “the Jews” involve southern, Jerusalem-based religious leaders who are scandalized by the northern prophet (John 5; 7–12; esp. 7:40–53). Ironically, while the Judeans reject the northern prophet, Nathanael is described as an Israelite in whom there is nothing false—in contrast to the southern leaders, the northerner gets it right (1:45–50). The ontology of characters’ reception of Jesus in John’s Gospel is more spiritual and religious than racial and ethnic; after all, the Fourth Evangelist himself was also Semitic. The rejection of the Light is prefigured by predisposing darkness (3:17–21), and openness to the Revealer is facilitated by abiding in truth and love (15:1–17), according to the Johannine Evangelist. Nonetheless, John has contributed to anti-Semitism, even if wrongly so, and such distortions deserve to be challenged by sound exegesis rather than being granted any sort of status as valid interpretations of the most Jewish of the Gospels.

Sixth, the Fourth Gospel continues to be a source of puzzlement with relation to ecclesiological and sacramental questions. On the one hand, Jesus and his disciples baptize more disciples than the Baptist (John 3:26; 4:1), water and blood pour forth from the side of Jesus on the cross (19:34), Jesus dines with his disciples after the resurrection (21:12–13), and receiving eternal life requires ingesting the flesh and blood of Jesus (6:53–54). On the other, the narrator clarifies that Jesus himself never baptized anyone (4:2) and that John came baptizing to point to Jesus, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:26–36); no institution of the Eucharist is mentioned at the Last Supper (John 13); and the direct narration of Jesus' baptism is missing from the Johannine narrative (1:19–51). Is Johannine sacramentology so sacred that it cannot bear to be diminished by an explicit reference, or does the dearth of sacramental references reflect a deconstructive and critical stance?

John's tensions in the area of ecclesiology are equally apparent. Indeed, Peter makes a climactic confession in the Fourth Gospel (John 6:68–69), and a threefold denial around a charcoal fire avails him the opportunity to make a threefold profession of loyalty to Jesus around another one later on (13:38; 18:18–27; 21:9–17). However, it is the Beloved Disciple who is entrusted with a symbol of authority (19:26–27), one that is relational instead of hierarchical—the very *mother of Jesus*—while Peter is portrayed as affirming Jesus' singular authority rather than being imbued with such himself (John 6:68; Matt 16:17–19). Models for the church are more fluid instead of “petrified” in John's Gospel, and Jesus is portrayed as the dynamic leader of the church (flock/shepherd, John 10:1–30; vine/branches, 15:1–8), leading believers through the ongoing work of the Paraclete (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). If the Synoptic Jesus came to set up religious structures and forms, the Johannine Jesus certainly corrects that image, and programmatically so.

The literary, historical, and theological riddles in John, laid out here in a cursory way, illustrate the many reasons why scholars make such varying inferences about the composition and development of John's tradition. To be fair, some issues are granted more prominence within some composition theories, but a good deal of disagreement also exists over how to deal with the same acknowledged puzzle. Further, the moves one makes in addressing one issue affect one's treatment of others, so varying degrees of plausibility will accompany features of any theory.

Views that fail to convince include the following.⁹ First, the traditional view that the Fourth Gospel represents a flat eyewitness memory and insider's

9. For extended analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of these views, see Anderson 1996, 1–169; 2006a, 1–99.

perspective is countered by the fact that the Beloved Disciple is described in third-person terms, including allusions to his death, which imply that he had died by the time the Johannine Gospel was finalized. Second, the history of religions approach, regarding multiple sources of John's material, fails to be convincing even by the marshalling of Bultmann's stylistic, contextual, and theological evidence. Third, implicit within Bultmann's program is the view that the Fourth Evangelist could not have been a dialectical thinker. Modern theologians can think dialectically, and the best ones do so according to Bultmann and other scholars, but this mode of reflective operation is not extended to a first-century thinker (the Fourth Evangelist), to the peril of Johannine interpretation (see Bultmann 1969, 146). Essentially, any analysis of the Johannine perspective that does not include an appreciation for the dialectical thinking of the Evangelist is almost certain to be inadequate. Fourth, views that John's Gospel is a spiritualization of Mark or is dependent on one or more of the Synoptics are challenged by the fact that none of the many similarities between them are identical. Some contact may have existed, but John's direct literary dependence on other traditions goes against the evidence. Fifth, complex rearrangement and multiple-layer theories diminish in their plausibility in direct proportion to the intricacy of the theory. While at least a first edition and a final edition of the Fourth Gospel seem likely, complex scenarios of multiple editions or rearrangements of material are impossible to demonstrate. Sixth, despite the fact that new literary and rhetorical approaches to John have been advanced over the last three decades, one must still deal with the historical material in the Fourth Gospel, as well as its claims to first-hand memory. John's Gospel is highly theological, but that does not imply detachment from originaive history and historiographic concerns.

In all of these approaches, some aspects are stronger than others, calling for a new synthesis. Given the implausible character of these leading theories, a workable hypothesis deserves to be advanced. The most workable synthesis, in my view, relates to the *dialogical autonomy* of the Fourth Gospel.

JOHN'S DIALOGICAL AUTONOMY AND ITS TRADITIONAL POLYVALENCE

While John's Gospel is not based on a dependent tradition, either on Mark or alien (non-Johannine) sources, neither is it isolated and disengaged from other traditions. Therefore, "autonomy" is a better way to describe the character of John's independence. This means that, while John's tradition develops theologically, theological speculation was not its origin; an independent reflection on the ministry of Jesus is what the Johannine tradition shows itself to be, casting light on the Jesus of history as well as the Christ of faith. Further, while the Evangelist operated dialectically, he was also engaged dialogically

with particular audiences as the Johannine situation evolved over decades, as well as being in dialogue with other Gospel traditions. Here Bultmann's interest in theology and Brown's interest in the Johannine situation deserve to be conjoined with Culpepper's rhetorical analysis. Because the Fourth Gospel's narrative presentation relates to its composition history, evolving situation, theological operation, and rhetorical purposes, polyvalence between these factors deserves consideration. My own theory of the Fourth Gospel's dialogical autonomy is thus based upon the following six inferences.

(1) There seems to be a final compiling of the Fourth Gospel by someone other than the Evangelist. Further, some of the material apparently added to the earlier edition of the Gospel is very close to that of the Johannine Epistles. This makes it plausible that the author of 1, 2, and 3 John may have been the final editor of the Johannine Gospel, likely placing the Epistles between the first and final editions of the Gospel.

(2) The stylistic unity of the Johannine Gospel argues for a unified tradition, reflecting an individuated perspective throughout the origin and development of the narrative. Some repetition and transitional oddities may have resulted from compiling a final edition, but there is nothing in the Fourth Gospel that appears alien to the Johannine tradition, beyond the post-Johannine additions that are evident from the facts of text-critical analysis.

(3) Given the likelihood that the Fourth Evangelist was a dialectical thinker, the dialogue between earlier perceptions, subsequent experiences, and later reflections deserves to be taken into analytical consideration. Therefore, cognitive-critical analysis must be applied to the character and development of the Johannine witness, including considerations of origins, developments, and finalized forms of the Johannine material.

(4) John's developing tradition may have had different sorts of engagements with parallel Synoptic traditions, and analyses between John's tradition and each of these distinctive traditions deserve consideration in order to ascertain the character and likely origin of these similarities and differences. More than one form of intertraditional relationship may have existed between the Johannine and parallel tradition.

(5) A basic two-edition theory of composition is the least implausible way of dealing with the major textual perplexities in John's narrative. While John is likely the last canonical Gospel to have been finalized (around 100 C.E.), an earlier edition is plausible (80–85 C.E.), which was likely the second Gospel narrative to be developed. Following the first edition of the Fourth Gospel, the Epistles were written by the Elder as the ministry of the Evangelist continued. After the Evangelist's death, the author of the Epistles appears to have finalized the Gospel, adding the Prologue, chapters 6, 15–17, and 21, and the references to the Beloved Disciple and eyewitness.

(6) The three phases in the history of the Johannine situation each included two crises, with a seventh set of Johannine-Synoptic dialogues spanning all three phases. Period 1 (30–70 c.e.) involved the Palestinian stages of the tradition, including north-south dialogues between Galileans and Judeans and dialogues with Baptist adherents. Period 2 (70–85 c.e.) involved a move to Asia Minor (or some such mission setting), and dialogues with local Jewish leaders saw movement out of and back into the synagogue, while tensions developed with Rome under Domitian's reign. Period 3 (85–100 c.e.) saw the emergence of several Christian communities as the movement grew. New threats included the assimilative teachings of Hellenistic docetizing Christians and the centralizing endeavors of Diotrefes and his kin.

As these elements embrace the most plausible and least conjectural approaches to the major literary and historical features of the Johannine tradition, theological interpretation deserves to follow accordingly. In doing so, however, the valences and open receptors of one approach deserve consideration in the light of others. This is especially appropriate because each of these features is itself something of a dialogical construct. The Evangelist reflects dialogically on his tradition, but he does so in the light of other traditional renderings and also in the context of an emerging situation. While there is an impressive synchronicity of tradition as the Johannine memory develops, the diachronicity of the Johannine situation evokes particular emphases and stylization as a means of addressing the needs of the evolving audience. Even the compiler's crafting of a final presentation of the narrative completes the earlier work and pulls it together into a unified whole, introduced by a hymnic composition and finalized with a second ending. Therefore, from one dialogue to another, Johannine polyvalence enriches interpretation and expands the number of valid meanings accordingly. The key is approaching the interpretive task in an integrated and synthesizing way.

THREE MODES OF DIALOGUE UNDERLYING THE JOHANNINE TEXT

Just as there are three general types of riddles facing Johannine interpretation, three types of dialogical realities that underlie the Johannine text deserve consideration. These features must be approached dialectically because of the Fourth Gospel's literary, historical, and theological dialogical character. While some interpreters may seek to confine the discussion to a single discipline or issue, adequate biblical interpretation cannot accede to such an artificial request. Again, the interpretive paradigms of Bultmann, Brown, and Culpepper have made enduring contributions precisely because they worked with multiple disciplines and approaches, addressing the polymorphic character of the Johannine riddles with complementary hypotheses

that provide suggestive ways forward for understanding matters Johannine: literary, historical, and theological.

In addition to the Fourth Gospel's thoroughgoing dialogical character, however, its central literary, historical, and theological features also include dialogical modes of operation. One wonders if the dialogical function of narrative ever stops; to pose a Bakhtinian answer: No! While there may have been a first word in the cosmos, there is never a *first* word in literature, nor will there ever be a *last* word. In that sense, we are involved in the making of meaning, and from one dialogue to another we ourselves are engaged dialogically in hearing and reading the Johannine narrative (see Clark and Holquist 1984, 350; Anderson 2007a). Yet even great programs have their particular strengths. Bultmann's theological sensitivity and acuity will withstand the test of time; Brown's illuminating history of the Johannine situation will make a perdurant (to use one of his terms) contribution; Culpepper's literary contributions will continue to capture the imagination of interpreters over the long term. In picking up the mantles laid at the feet of interpreters, we, too, are invited into dialogue with the Johannine text, as well as with the most enduring contributions of its finest interpreters. That leads now to the threshold of John's theological, historical, and literary dialogical realities.

JOHN'S THEOLOGICAL DIALOGISM

From beginning to end, the theological character of the Fourth Gospel is thoroughly dialogical. The challenge, of course, is to understand clearly the epistemological character of John's theological dialogism and to interpret it accordingly. While other features could be noted, three aspects of John's theological dialogism deserve special consideration. They include the dialectical thinking of the Evangelist, the agency schema at the heart of John's Christology, and the human-divine dialogue at the center of John's revelational theology.

First, any adequate interpretation of a Johannine theological theme must engage *the dialectical thinking of the Evangelist*, lest its character and meaning be missed. Some exceptions will apply, but the common thread in the tensions inherent to most of John's theological riddles (as outlined above) is the fact that the Evangelist characteristically works in both/and conjunctive ways rather than either/or disjunctive ones. This feature reflects a first-order type of cognition, which in turn reflects the dynamism and creativity of first-generation discovery. In contrast to the right-answerism of the author of the Johannine Epistles, the author of the Gospel challenges monological thinking, religious platforms, biblical notionalities, and political motivations in the name of the liberating power of truth. Whether discovery emerged from

pneumatic openings mediated by the work of the Paraclete or from spiritual encounters and associations during the historic ministry of Jesus, or both, or some other means, John's is a theology of encounter—originating from, and leading to, the same in the way the narrative is constructed. Therefore, rather than allow the reader to get smug in one presentation or another, the Gospel's irony, apparent contradictions, abrupt shifts in sequence, and other narratological ploys hook the reader, seeking to engage later audiences in the same sort of first-order encounter that the Evangelist has himself experienced. From a cognitive-critical perspective, certainty is challenged by mystery precisely because the ineffable cannot be reduced to the notional. Deep calls to deep, and theological interpretations that do not appreciate the epistemological character of John's dialectical thought will fall short of adequacy.

Second, *the Johannine agency schema* is central to understanding the Son's relation to the Father and mission in the world. One thing Bultmann got right was the dialectical structure of John's agency schema. The saving-revealing agent was sent to the world to disclose God's love, knowledge, and light and to lead humanity into the fullness of restored relationship by means of an authentic response of faith to the divine initiative. Indeed, the Revealer scandalizes the world and its religious approaches to the divine precisely because his revelation calls for the forfeiting of trust in human ventures and their scaffolding in exchange for the receiving of grace through faith. One thing Bultmann got wrong, however, was made apparent by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls just six years after his 1941 commentary appeared. The prophetic agency schema was rife within Judaism itself, and while John's dualism played well within Hellenistic settings, its origin was profoundly Jewish. When the Father-Son relationship in John's narrative is viewed in the light of the prophet-like-Moses agency schema of Deut 18:15–22, virtually all of the Son's emissary characteristics may be identified within the outline of this agency schema below. Rather than locating a high Christology in inferred gnostic poetry countered by the incarnational inclination of the Evangelist, the Johannine Jesus' equality with and subordination to the Father are flip-sides of the same coin: a Jewish agency schema, within which the agent is in all ways like the one who has sent him.

Therefore, (1) God will raise up a prophet like Moses who will speak God's words to the world (the Son speaks the Father's words to the world); (2) the prophet will say nothing on his own behalf, only what he is instructed to say (the Son speaks not on his own behalf but only what the Father has instructed him to say); (3) his audiences will be accountable to God for their responses to him (to reject or receive the Son is to reject or receive the Father); and (4) as distinguished from the presumptuous prophet, the authentic prophet's words will come true (Jesus' proleptic words come true, showing

that he is authentically sent from the Father). This is the christological subject of which Moses wrote (John 5:39, 46), and the main thrust of the first edition of the Fourth Gospel is to present Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophetic agency typology.

A third dialectical aspect of Johannine theology is to further *the divine-human dialogue*, which the Fourth Gospel bespeaks *and* conveys. John presents salvation in revelational and relational terms, and in that sense salvation is a function and the goal of the divine-human dialogue. Again, the issue of initiative is central. What the Revealer reveals is the message that human initiative cannot suffice: no one has seen God at any time (John 6:46); only the one who is sent from the Father has seen God and can fully reveal the love of the Father to humanity (1:18). Therefore, all that is of human origin and initiative is scandalized by the divine initiative, and in that sense it is not only the Jewish leaders and their religious platforms that are challenged, but all religious scaffolding—Christian, atheist, academic, political, popular, sectarian, and otherwise. This is what makes the Johannine Gospel classic religious literature: it continues to speak and to challenge within Christian traditions and beyond them. It declares that the truth alone is liberating and that, while the light is available to all (1:9), the world either receives the light or seeks the “security” of darkness (3:17–21). Like Plato’s Allegory of the Cave (*Republic* 8), humanity’s response to the light betrays its inclination toward it.

John’s dualism is a “dualism of decision,” to use Bultmann’s language, and in the narration of John’s Jesus story humanity is called to make a choice for or against the Revealer. Indeed, this existential response of faith is the most difficult for the religiously invested, for to come to the light in faith is to acknowledge the frailty of one’s theological constructs and claims to knowledge in exchange for that which is of God. Yet no one can come except through being drawn by the Father, which is what the saving/revealing initiative of the divine Word does. To say yes to God’s loving YES to the world is to enter into that eternal Dialogue that was and is from the beginning and that will be until the end. Its scandal, however, is not that it requires laying humanity’s sin at the foot of the cross, but its religious claims to see (9:41).

JOHN’S HISTORICAL DIALOGISM

As mentioned above, many a classic theological statement of especially the first four ecumenical councils restored the both/*and* component of a theological issue that had been stripped of its conjunctive tension by one heretical movement or another. Interestingly, while dialectical reasoning has been the time-tested way forward for addressing the Fourth Gospel’s theological tensions, the same has not successfully been attempted in addressing the text’s

historical tensions. This may be a factor of an overconfidence in objectivism within the modern era or a privileging of noncontradiction as the prime marker of historical truth. While Bultmann failed to conceive of the Johannine Evangelist as a dialectical thinker (unlike his conception of the best of modern theologians), he nonetheless called for a dialectical approach to historiography, which may yet pose the way forward for addressing John's historical riddles (Anderson 2006a, 175–90). While Brown did more to set the template for those investigations, John's historical dialogism deserves consideration in terms of the Evangelist's historical dialogues within his own tradition, parallel traditions, and his emerging audiences.¹⁰

A first dialogical consideration relates to the fact that the Johannine narrative contains several references to earlier and later understandings within the Johannine tradition. This *intratraditional dialogue* is evidenced by the fact that Jesus' disciples did not understand what he said at first, but after the resurrection their comprehension was fulfilled (John 2:22; 12:16). Indeed, Jesus predicts fuller understanding later (13:7), and the disciples' understanding of Scripture becomes fuller from a distanced perspective (20:9). Correctives and clarifications to particular meanings abound within the Johannine tradition itself, suggesting engagement between earlier narrations and later renderings (see 1:15; 4:1–2; 7:22; 12:6; 18:32; 19:35; 21:19). Further, one of the central features of Johannine theological operation involves reflecting on the meaning of earlier events for later audiences. The words of the wedding steward, that Jesus saves the best for last (2:10), may allude finally to the raising of Lazarus and the glorification of Jesus (John 11; 19–21); the well-water scene points to Jesus' availing living water (4:7–26; 7:37–39); the feeding of the multitude points to Jesus as the bread of life (6:1–15, 27–58); the restoration of the blind man's sight exposes the blindness of the religious leaders (9:1–7, 8–41); the raising of Lazarus from the tomb points to Jesus as the resurrection and the life (11:1–45; 20:1–28). In these ways, the theological reflection of the Evangelist upon his own tradition shows the inference of meaning, even in later settings, as understandings continue to unfold as a factor of intratraditional dialogue. Climactically, an extension of graciousness to later generations is evident in the declaration of blessedness for those who “have not seen and yet believe” (20:29). Ironically, the very mention of later understandings attests to the reality of earlier impressions—perhaps even alluding to first impressions and the originative stages of the Johannine memory.

10. For a development of these three levels of dialogue using John 6 as a case study, see Anderson 1996, 167–251.

Second, while a good deal of intratraditional dialogue is apparent in John's Gospel, there are also signs of *intertraditional dialogue*. Assuming Markan priority, while Matthew and Luke built *upon* Mark, the first edition of the Fourth Gospel appears to have built *around* Mark. Given that the most likely contents of the supplementary material include the Johannine Prologue, chapters 6, 15–17, 21, and the Beloved Disciple and eyewitness passages, the following inferences are likely. (1) Distinctive contacts between the Johannine and Markan traditions reflect “interfluence” between the oral Markan and Johannine traditions (Anderson 2006a, 104–6). (2) The first edition of John's Gospel augments Mark with two early miracles (John 2:1–11; 4:45–54) and three southern ones (John 5, 9, 11), also setting the record straight here and there (Anderson 2006a, 106–12). (3) Luke departs from Mark and sides with John at least six dozen times, suggesting Luke's dependence on the Johannine oral tradition (Anderson 2006a, 112–17). (4) Johannine motifs in the double tradition material suggest that the Q tradition may have incorporated some Johannine material (Anderson 2006a, 117–19). (5) The later Johannine material appears to have been engaged dialogically with Matthean ecclesial developments, including the role of Peter and the character of apostolic authority (Anderson 2006a, 119–25). (6) Of course, a good deal of secondary (and perhaps tertiary) orality likely existed between the Johannine and Markan traditions, so that these “bi-optic Gospels” should be interpreted as reflecting a good deal of interfluentiality from the earliest to the latest stages of their traditions.¹¹

Regarding understandings of the kingdom, miracles, ministry, worship, the *parousia*, sacraments, leadership, and authority, the Johannine and Markan traditions were engaged in dialogue over the course of seven decades at least. While John's intratraditional dialogue found new meanings in earlier impressions, intertraditional dialogue appears at times to have set the record straight, especially with reference to the Markan and Matthean traditions. Therefore, historical memory was likely a part of at least some of the interfluentiality between the bi-optic Gospels, ultimately casting light upon the historic ministry of Jesus.¹²

11. Anderson 2006a, 127–73. Beyond the simplistic source-dependence approaches, contacts during oral stages of traditions also deserve critical consideration. Here Walter J. Ong's theory of secondary orality bears great interpretive potential. In his *The Presence of the Word* (2002) and *Orality and Literacy* (1982), Ong describes the informal ways that contacts happen beyond written means.

12. Note, e.g., the interfluentiality between the Johannine and Markan traditions regarding the sea crossing in John 6 and Mark 6 (Anderson 2004). More comprehensively, see Anderson 2001; 2006a, 101–26.

A third dialogical aspect of Johannine historicity relates to the *dialectical Johannine situation* evolving over several decades. While Raymond Brown argued for the basic historicity of the Johannine tradition and even was becoming open to some “cross-influence” between John and the Synoptics, his greatest contribution was a plausible sketch of the historical Johannine situation (see Brown and Moloney 2003, 104). While his inference of Samaritan influence on the Johannine tradition is not as compelling as his theories regarding the Johannine Christians’ dialogues with Baptist adherents, local Jewish leaders, Gentile Christians, and apostolic Christians, the primary impact of his contribution is to pose a realistic synthesis of Johannine Christianity, drawing in the content of the Gospel and Epistles effectively. What is evident over a period of seven decades is at least as many dialogical crises within the evolving Johannine situation, with two in each of the three periods and with the running dialogue with Synoptic traditions spanning the other six.¹³ While most of these dialogical crises were largely sequential, many were also at least somewhat overlapping. Within John 6 alone, no fewer than four or five of these crises can be inferred when a history-and-theology reading of the narrative is performed in the light of its *Sitz im Leben*.¹⁴

JOHN’S LITERARY DIALOGISM

Historical narrative is every bit as rhetorical as novelistic narrative, and even

13. Within the *Palestinian period*, (1) north-south dialogues between the Galileans and the Judeans are apparent, as are (2) dialogues with adherents of John the Baptist. Within the *first Asia Minor period*, (3) a set of dialogues with local Jewish leaders of the synagogue is followed by (4) increasing tensions with the Romans during the reign of Domitian (81–96 C.E.). The first edition of the Johannine Gospel was drafted during this time. The *third period* saw the proliferation of other Christian communities, coinciding with (5) the threat of docetizing Gentile Christian teachers advocating cultural assimilation, and (6) the proto-Ignatian structuralizing attempts to diminish the docetist threat by Diotrophes and his kin (3 John 9–10) was experienced adversely by the Elder and his fellowship. The Epistles were written during this time, and after the death of the Beloved Disciple the Elder finalized the Johannine Gospel and circulated it among the churches as a testimony to Jesus’ will and testament for the church (Anderson 2006a, 193–99).

14. While John 9 shows clearly a later set of dialogues with Jewish leaders around the time the first edition of the Gospel was finalized (80–85 C.E.), John 6, as a later addition to the text (ca. 100 C.E.), shows evidence of dialogue with the crowd on the meaning of the feeding (Synoptic-Johannine dialogues), Jewish leaders (“Bread” versus Torah), disciples of Jesus (willingness to ingest the flesh and blood of the suffering Son of Man), and Peter (the challenge of rising institutionalism in the late first-century church). See here Anderson 1997, 25–59. The crisis with Rome would have been still impending, and the first two Palestinian crises (north-south and with Baptist adherents) would have been in the distance.

the claim to historicity itself is a rhetorical assertion. Nonetheless, the Gospel of John must be engaged literarily, as well as theologically and historically. The new historicist will ask “Whose history?” while the new literary critic will focus on what is in front of the text instead of what might lie behind it. This is the most significant advance in Johannine studies over the last three decades, and Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* is the book that heralded the new literary paradigms for interpreting the Fourth Gospel. In his analysis of the Gospel’s plot, characterizations, presentations of time, and ways of drawing the reader into the omniscient perspective of the narrator, Culpepper’s advances brought fresh analyses and insights to subjects that were once mired hopelessly in historical-critical or theological debates. As diachronic theories of composition have given way to more synchronic approaches, a better feel for John’s rhetorical purposes and functions has emerged. Thus, the focus has changed from the question “Is John’s Gospel true historically?” to “How is John’s narrative true literarily?” Rather than being held hostage to Synoptic-Johannine comparisons and Synoptic historical hegemony or afflicted with speculation about “the theological interests of the Evangelist,” Johannine readings have been liberated with answers facilitated by reader-response criticism, irony, characterization, symbolism, typological, and rhetorical-critical analyses.

The literary dialogism of the Fourth Gospel thus functions on several levels. First, the Evangelist seeks to engage the reader rhetorically by means of producing a dialogical narrative in the form of a literary text. While literary deconstructionists will question any interpreter’s ability to discern the original intention of an author, the Johannine Evangelist openly declares his *literary purpose* in 20:30–31: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” The question here is the particular meaning of this statement of purpose. As others have argued regarding the rhetorical interest of a hypothetical σημεία source, I would suggest that the purpose of the first edition of the Fourth Gospel was the presentation of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah in order that its hearers and readers might come to believe. Virtually all of the text’s dialogues involving the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem and presentations of Jesus as fulfilling the prophet-typologies of Moses and Elijah occur in this first edition material. The Johannine narrative even presents John the Baptist as denying his associations with the Prophet and Elijah, and perhaps the transfiguration narrative has been omitted because Moses and Elijah are indeed come, according to John, in the ministry of Jesus. That being the case, in the Fourth Gospel the witnesses, the signs, and the fulfilled word all testify that Jesus is the prophet-Messiah, call-

ing for a response of faith from members of the Johannine audience.¹⁵ Given that the first Johannine edition augments and to some degree corrects Mark around 80–85 C.E., it should be considered the *second* Gospel rather than seen as originally presenting an alternative to all three of the Synoptics.

Yet regardless of the Evangelist's original intention, what may be said about the final purpose of the Fourth Gospel? Debates abound as to whether the call to belief in John 20:31 should be understood as the invitation to first-time faith or as an exhortation to believers to continue abiding in faith instead of defecting, as others apparently had done (see Anderson 2000). Might it have been *both*? Put otherwise, the first edition appears more apologetic in its evangelistic thrust, whereas the supplementary material more explicitly calls for solidarity with Jesus and his community in the face of trials and hardship. Not only do the trials described in the Johannine Epistles make this emphasis clear, but the character of the later material itself does so even more clearly in anti-Docetic ways.¹⁶ Therefore, the final purpose of the Fourth Gospel—and by the time of its finalization it was “the *Fourth* Gospel”—is to call believers to solidarity with Jesus and his community, even willingness to participate with him in his suffering and death if they wish to share with him in his gift of eternal life. Therefore, the literary *purposes* of the first and final editions of the Johannine Gospel functioned to elicit responses of initial and abiding faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God.

A second feature of John's literary dialogism involves the personal engagement of the reader in the experience and testimony of the author and his community. From a cognitive-critical standpoint, the narrator seeks to draw the hearer/reader into the community of those who testify as to the meaning of Jesus and his mission. As the Prologue reflects the corporate embracing of the Gospel's message within the Johannine faith community, it is added as a

15. On the many parallels between the elements of the prophet-like-Moses typology (rooted in Deut 18:15–22) and the Johannine Father-Son relationship, see Anderson 1999.

16. Note the incarnational (and thus, anti-Docetic) thrust of the supplementary material: (1) the Prologue invites fellowship with the flesh-becoming Word; (2) John 6 calls for the willingness to suffer with Jesus on the cross—to ingest his flesh and blood (6:51–58) if one wishes to be raised with him in the afterlife; (3) Jesus promises that, despite the trials believers will face in the world (John 15–16), he has overcome the world and will send them the Holy Spirit to empower and encourage them; (4) the testimony of the eyewitness is to the flesh-and-blood suffering of the Lord on the cross—physical water and blood poured forth from his side (19:34); (5) Jesus prays that his followers will be one and that they will be kept in the world but not of the world (17:11–19); and (6) John 21 adds a final ending to the original, emphasizing the shepherding responsibilities of leaders to care for the flock instead of themselves and to be willing to suffer martyrdom if needed.

dialogical beginning to its final edition. The first-person plural (“we”) functions to include the willing reader in the experience and perspective of the narrator and his community. To behold Jesus’ glory (1:14), to receive from his fullness grace and truth (1:18), to have found the Messiah (1:41, 45), to have seen the Lord (20:25), and to know that the Beloved Disciple’s testimony is true (21:24) are just a few of the ways that the reader is invited into the collective experience and perspective of those who testify to a relationship with Jesus. Indeed, the promise of the Holy Spirit, who will abide with believers and in them (John 14–16), invites future hearers and readers into the same level of first-order encounter as that experienced by the eyewitnesses themselves. In that sense, the apostolic community celebrating intimacy with the risen Lord continues from one generation to another, and later audiences are invited dialogically into fellowship with that original community across the boundaries of time and space.

Finally, the most distinctive feature of the Johannine narrative is neither its signs nor its sayings, but rather the prevalence of dialogues with Jesus, laced throughout the story, which invite hearers and readers themselves into an imaginary dialogue with Jesus. The dialogues basically function in two ways: comprehending and believing responses to Jesus are affirming and exemplary; misunderstanding and unbelieving responses to Jesus are disconfirming and corrective. Interestingly, these two rhetorical thrusts are characteristically signaled in the presentation by who takes the initiative. When Jesus or God’s agent takes the initiative, the structure is nearly always revelational. As discussants respond in faith to the revelation, this is a positive example for others to follow; as they reject or respond incompletely to the divine initiative, this is presented as a negative example. However, when human actants come to Jesus asking a challenging question or making a self-assured statement, this presentation nearly always exposes their incomprehension and spiritual inadequacy. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night, betraying his being “in the dark” (John 3:1–21); the crowd comes asking for a sign that they might believe, exposing their lack of adequate faith (6:22–34); religious leaders challenge Jesus’ authorization, evidencing their lack of scriptural understanding (5:16–47; 7:14–10:42); the soldiers declare their quest for the Nazarene, yet despite falling to the ground in awe they nonetheless take Jesus away as a hostage (18:3–6); and Pilate makes bold statements to Jesus about his power, yet he is reduced to impotence before the demanding crowd (18:28–19:22). It is as though the inadequacy of human initiative is mirrored in the actions of the discussants. The only hope for humanity is that which is of divine origin, and the reader is drawn into an imaginary dialogue with Jesus by being engaged in the story. In that sense, each reader is subsumed into the identity of Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the crowd, the Beloved

Disciple, Peter, Pilate, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas. Therein we find our own misunderstandings challenged and our authentic understandings confirmed. From one dialogue to another, the hearer/reader is finally engaged in dialogue personally, becoming a participant in the story.

POLYVALENT READINGS OF JOHN: FROM ONE DIALOGUE TO ANOTHER

Polyvalent readings of John, however, do not imply discipline-free license, as though any reading will be just as good as another. What they do commend and facilitate is the synthesizing of the best of various approaches, realizing that no reading stands alone—in isolation from others. While disciplinary investigations of the Gospel of John must necessarily narrow their focus so as to establish arguable hypotheses and degrees of plausibility, the findings of these approaches must eventually be integrated with other approaches effectively. Because literary, historical, and theological aspects of the Johannine Gospel involve dialogical realities from beginning to end, synthesizing them together is itself an interdisciplinary and dialogical venture.

As understanding John's literary operations and evolving situation helps one better appreciate his theological claims, one becomes engaged experientially in the reception of the narrative. In that sense, hearers and readers in every generation are drawn dialogically into an imaginary dialogue with the Johannine text and its subject, Jesus, wherein conventional notionalities are challenged by the Revealer and contemporary readers are faced with the dualism of decision: whether to seek the truth and its liberating effects or to remain in the relative comfort of darkness, lest the crises of the story become personal. This is the enduring scandal of the Johannine narrative, but also its liberating promise.

As Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us, there is never a first meaning nor a last meaning, because we all are involved in the making of meaning (Clark and Holquist 1984, 350). In that sense, the polyvalence of the Johannine levels and modes of dialogue invites new connections between the open receptors of the narrative's many dialogical features. In so doing, our certainties are challenged as the invitation to mystery is extended. As the Johannine tradition began with an originative set of cognitive and experiential dialogues, it developed traditionally and literarily by means of dialogical explorations of the truth and its meanings. That is what is reflected in the Johannine text, but also what is furthered through it.

Finally, the narrative invites future readers and hearers into the same dialogical encounter from whence it came. In engaging dialogically the content of the Gospel, the reader's involvement in the making of meaning becomes a new story with its own history to tell. Existentially, the valences of personal

openness find connections with valences of interdisciplinary learnings and discoveries, and the truth is always liberating. From origins to receptions, the dialogical origins of the Johannine tradition evoke new sets of dialogical encounter and reflection within its later audiences. After all, when considering the character, origin, and development of the Johannine narrative, one must confess that:

In the beginning was ... the *dialogue*.

INTRATEXTUALITY AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Jean Zumstein
(Translated by Mike Gray)

In his epochal work *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983), Alan Culpepper argued that the Fourth Gospel should be read according to its literary genre as a narrative that is coherent, skillfully considered, and artistic. The underlying concepts that he proposed as approaches to the text—narrator and point of view, narrative time, plot, characters, implicit commentary, implied reader—are highly productive and appropriate. In the following contribution I will take up—indeed, presuppose—Culpepper’s work while approaching the phenomenon of narrative from a different standpoint, with the intent of demonstrating its intertextual characteristics. While Culpepper considers the Gospel of John an independent unit whose meaning arises in its entirety from the interactions between the various elements of the text considered in a synchronic way, I assume that the Fourth Gospel is characterized by interactions: on one hand, with the Gospel itself, and on the other hand, with other literary corpora.

One might well be surprised at the choice of the topic “Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the Johannine Literature.” However, this topic reflects a basic experience of readers: every text triggers connections to other texts within its reader’s memory. Toward the end of the 1960s, Julia Kristeva proposed that no text can be formulated independently of what has already been written in other texts (Kristeva 1978). The tradition of the “already said” is a deep well from which every author draws. On this point, Roland Barthes stresses that “every text is an intertext; other texts can be perceived within it at various levels, in various forms which may be more or less clearly discerned: the texts of earlier culture and those of its contemporary context. Every text is a new construction of past quotations” (1996, 998).

The Gospel of John is no exception to this rule. It too is a networked text, that is, an intertext. Although it is usually read and interpreted as an

autonomous literary unit, it presumes the existence of other writings, some of which possess canonical status, the Hebrew Bible being a paradigmatic example. Moreover, even at the time of its writing the Gospel of John was understood in reference to other texts (perhaps the Synoptic Gospels); it was then introduced into other collections over the course of its reception history. Hence, from the beginning it has featured as an element in various literary corpora, such as the Johannine corpus, the Gospels, the New Testament, and, finally, the Christian Bible. The term *intertextuality* refers to the basic fact that a reading always takes place against the backdrop of certain pre-texts or in correlation with other texts. In this case, the Fourth Gospel is, and always has been, read as part of a larger collection.

Put more precisely, the phenomenon of intertextuality exists in the interplay between, on one side, a “hypotext” or reference text, and, on the other, a “hypertext” or reception text (see Piégay-Gros 1996). This general definition can be further sharpened: the term *intratextuality* is used in the more narrow sense of an interplay within the work itself; on the other hand, *intertextuality* refers, *stricto sensu*, to the phenomenon as developed between separate literary works.

The question of intertextuality has significant hermeneutical implications. The interpretation of a literary work—in particular here, of the Gospel of John—does not emerge merely from an exact study of its narrative or argumentative contours (so Culpepper 1983, 4–5) but also from the perception of its internal and external connectedness.

This essay will develop the above premises in two steps. First, I will examine the phenomenon of *intratextuality*, delineating the paratext of the Fourth Gospel, the process of *relecture*, and the phenomenon of multiple interpretations. In the second part, I will sketch out the phenomenon of *intertextuality* in its more narrow sense by examining four aspects of intertextuality, relating respectively to the Fourth Gospel’s heading, its relationship to the other canonical Gospels, its relationship to the other books in the Johannine corpus, and, finally, its relationship to the Hebrew Bible.

THE PHENOMENON OF INTRATEXTUALITY AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF MEANING

The Gospel of John is a self-interpreting narrative. This process of inner interpretation is carried out through the interweaving of intratextual relationships of meaning. The implied author employs various literary strategies to set the meaning of *the story*: “the content of the narrative, what it is about” (Powell 1990, 23; see also Chatman 1978, 19, 31, 43; Genette 1994, 16). This hermeneutical process can be seen in several phenomena, three of which will be

examined here: the paratext, *relecture*, and multiple levels of interpretation of the narrative.

THE PARATEXT: PROLOGUE, CONCLUSION, EPILOGUE

The Fourth Gospel displays a fully developed “paratext,” which may be defined as “the sum of various signs that introduce, frame, present, interrupt or conclude an existing text.... The paratext generally carries out the function of accompanying or framing another text” (Hallyn and Jacques 1987, 202). The Gospel’s opening Prologue (1:1–18), its conclusion (20:30–31), and its epilogue (John 21) belong to this sort of text. This raises the question of the inner relationship between the Johannine narrative and the Prologue, conclusion, and epilogue.

We begin with the Prologue (1:1–18). In the terminology of literary criticism, a prologue is a type of text that “contains as much the reading’s retrospective of its writing as the writing’s anticipation of its reading. A foreword (also known as a prologue) can aim at setting the work’s significance.... The foreword is a decoding instrument. It guides the reading, protects the text against non understanding or false interpretation” (Hallyn and Jacques 1987, 210–11). This definition is not new; in fact, it can be traced back to Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3.14.12–19, 22–25). According to Aristotle, a prologue must enlighten its readership about the work’s intentions and provide the means to understand its subject and development.

Accordingly, as Culpepper highlighted in *Anatomy* (1983, 19–20), John’s Prologue should be understood as an entrance into the reading of the text that enables a correct decoding of the following narrative (Theobald 1988; Zumstein 2004, 105–26). This opening word does not place itself on the same level as the following narrative; rather, it assumes a prior reflection about that narrative. The meta-reflective nature of the Prologue marks its intratextual relationship with the narrative, which properly begins in 1:19. In other words, the Prologue should be understood neither as the first episode of the Gospel (it does not tell about the beginning of Jesus’ life but rather takes up the theological significance of the incarnation), nor as a summary of its dramatic plot (the passion, particularly Jesus’ death on the cross, is not mentioned), nor as its theological précis (most notably, the christological title “Logos,” while basic to the Prologue, occurs nowhere else in the book). Rather, the Prologue functions to stake out the hermeneutical framework in which the narrative should be read. Through a surplus of meaning characteristic of myth, it elucidates the central thrust and meaning of the following narrative before the narrative has even begun (Weder 1992, 401–34). This can be expressed in terms of theological content: by relating the Logos to *the* absolute and foun-

dational beginning and then tracing out its trajectory from preexistence to incarnation, the Prologue emphasizes that the man Jesus at the center of the following narrative is none other than God himself, come into the midst of the world.

The Gospel's conclusion (20:30–31) presents a further example of the Fourth Gospel's paratext (Schnelle 1987, 151–56; Zumstein 2007b, 294–97). While the last narrative episode of John's *vita Christi* concludes with the appearance of the resurrected Lord to Thomas (20:24–29), the Gospel's conclusion picks up the *intentio operis* at a meta-level. Both the usage of the term “book” (βιβλίον) as well as the reference to “signs” (σημεῖα) in 20:31 brings the intratextual relationship to the forefront. The conclusion's retrospective standpoint allows an explicit formulation of the pragmatic intention that guides the *narratio*, namely, calling believers to faith (Zumstein 2004, 31–45). However, the contents of this faith are laid out more precisely by means of two connecting theses: one christological, the other soteriological. Whoever recognizes the one sent by God in the person of the earthly Jesus receives the gift of true life in its fullness (20:31)—and this conclusion allows readers to verify the appropriateness of their reading.

The epilogue (John 21) presents a final important example of the Johannine paratext (Zumstein 2004, 291–315). According to the theory of paratexts, “the epilogue or postface typically has the function of portraying a (stable) situation that is temporally subsequent to the actual conclusion and is caused by it” (Genette 1993, 280). John 21 both confirms and illustrates this definition. Research has led to the nearly unanimous conclusion that John 21 is a later addition to the corpus of the Gospel (Zumstein 2007b, 298–302). In fact, the chapter may be understood to claim this explicitly, in that the literary and theological conclusion of the Gospel (20:30–31) was neither deleted nor moved but recognized in its function as a conclusion. It stands outside of the narrative itself but stands nonetheless in a close intratextual relationship.¹

What is the meaning of this epilogue that links itself to the preceding narrative while at the same time drawing an explicit distinction? The accounts presented in John 21 are conceived as continuations of the completed narrative that stake out a position on the narrative by placing it in a new historical frame of reference. While the central theme of the Gospel's corpus is christological, John 21 turns to ecclesiology. Christ no longer reveals himself but now instead clarifies the meaning of two key figures for the time following

1. The relationship between John 1–20 and 21 is marked neither by discontinuity nor simple continuity but by a dialectical interplay in which clear lines of connection are combined with shifts.

Easter: Peter and the Beloved Disciple.² Peter is directed into his role as universal shepherd and renowned martyr; the Beloved Disciple becomes the author of a testimony—the Fourth Gospel—that shall serve the edification of all believers. In this sense, the completed reevaluation of the Gospel's leading disciples in John 21 carries out at a repragmatization of the Gospel, showing how the post-Paschal story of the incarnate Logos opens onto the future. Where the Gospel itself (John 1–20) introduces Christ into a narrative, the epilogue introduces the narrative into the church.

THE PHENOMENON OF *RELECTURE*

The *relecture* model³ of composition takes account of a typical phenomenon of the Gospel of John: certain parts of the narrative are supplemented by texts of various lengths and orientations.⁴ It must be stressed from the outset

2. Although the verses that frame John 21:1–14 give the reader the impression of a classical Easter appearance, one should note that both the miraculous catch (which shows the helpful presence of the risen Lord for the post-Paschal community) and the shared meal on the beach (with allusions to the Eucharist) show Christ's continuing presence for the church after Easter.

3. The term *relecture* was first used by Schnackenburg (1975, 103) and belongs to the terminology of biblical criticism. The approach presented in this article was first developed at the University of Zurich, although not specifically in reference to the Johannine literature. With his theory of "Fortschreibung," Steck (1993, 198–244) has sketched out an analogous project within the context of Old Testament literature. This suggests that the *relecture* process is a typical characteristic of biblical literature. In the New Testament literature, it plays an important role not only in the Johannine literature but also in the Pauline corpus, where it applies to the interpretation of the relationship between 1 and 2 Thessalonians or between Colossians and Ephesians. Likewise, the Synoptic problem or the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter can be clarified with the *relecture* model. As Dettwiler has pointed out, the *relecture* model should be located within the context of literary criticism—or, more specifically, within the context of research into intertextuality.

As regards the history of its implementation, I first outlined the *relecture* model in the context of the relationship between John 20 and 21, then developed it as an interpretive program in my inaugural lecture in Zurich (1991) and in a main paper at the meeting of the SNTS in Prague (1995; see also Zumstein 2004). In his doctoral dissertation about the Farewell Discourses, Dettwiler (1995) has developed and improved the model in a decisive way. The *relecture* model was taken up and developed further by other authors, including Moloney (1998a), Scholtissek (1999, 131–139), and Rahner (1998, 88–96).

4. On *relecture* as a hermeneutical model for analyzing the Gospel of John, see Dettwiler 1995, 44–52; 2000, 185–200; Scholtissek 1999, 131–39; Zumstein 2003, 9–37; 2004, 15–30. The distinctions between the various forms of *relecture* evident in the Fourth Gospel should be noted: the paratext (title, Prologue, epilogue); the internal *relecture*

that these additions are not intended to fill holes in the plot but to extend the theological reflection of the text as it exists. Hence there is a meaningful relationship between the original text (the so-called “reference text”) and its supplementation (the so-called “reception text”). The *relecture* model tries to determine the nature of this relationship more precisely. The reference text and the reception text are not simply strung together but refer closely to one another, since the reference text leads to the emergence of the reception text.

Two further characterizations of a *relecture* model are in order. First, if we agree that the reception text intends to deepen the reference text—or to allow a new level of reflection about the questions it has raised—then it follows that the reception text does not in any way denigrate the validity or authority of the reference text; in fact, this is precisely what it recognizes.⁵ Second, although this interpretive movement is characterized by continuity, the reception text does not simply submit a variant reading of the reference text, providing a mere reformulation of the original content. Nor is the *relecture* simply a commentary, which (*per definitionem*) clarifies the text as faithfully as possible. Rather—and this is the crucial point—the *relecture* expresses a surplus of meaning. The reference text receives a creative reception that extends it into a new dimension of meaning.

By way of illustration, Andreas Dettwiler (1995, 48–49) has identified two interpretive movements in the Johannine Farewell Discourses: (1) an “explanatory reception” that explains in detail certain aspects of the reference text, hence underscoring its theological orientation; (2) a “thematic shift of accents” that places the theological issues of the reference text in a new context and approaches them from a new perspective. An example will be helpful. The succession of Jesus’ three discourses during the Last Supper—the first and second Farewell Discourses (13:31–14:31; 15–16) and the farewell prayer (17)—poses a classic problem of Johannine exegesis. How are we to interpret this succession of different addresses? Interpreters have often sought to solve the problem by means of a source-critical hypothesis: John 15–17 are an addition of the final redactor to the work of the Evangelist (see Becker 1991, 531, 571–72; Dettwiler 1995, 41–44; Dietzfelbinger 1997, 359–62; Onuki 1984, 15; Painter 1981, 525–43; Schnackenburg 1975, 101–3; Segovia 1982, 117–18; Winter 1994, 231–60).

(marginalia, the *relecture* of a narrative through a speech, the *relecture* of a speech through another speech); the *relecture* of one literary work through another.

5. This point reveals the limitations of classical “literary criticism,” which operates only with the models of contradiction (so that, e.g., the theology of John 15–17 would stand in opposition to the first Farewell Discourse [John 13:31–14:31]; see Becker 1991, 39–41) or accumulation (further material being assumed to have been added; see Brown 1966–70, 2:581–97).

Even though hypotheses of this type carry a certain legitimacy, they do not explain the meaningful relationship between these different speeches. The *relecture* model opens a new perspective. The second Farewell Discourse was added neither by a process of accumulation nor as a theological correction: what it shows is a process of *relecture* (Zumstein 2007b, 90–93). The christological thesis of the first discourse opens a sequence of questions that the second Farewell Discourse takes up for intense reflection. However, the first Farewell Discourse was not supplied with corrections or additions; its original structure was left intact, and its theological authority was recognized without reservation. The problematic verse segment 14:31c (“rise up; let us go hence”), which remains the conclusion of the first discourse, is the best proof that the second discourse (John 15–16) positions itself over against the first as a decisively new interpretive movement (Dettwiler 1995, 34, 37–41).

THE PHENOMENON OF MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS

The paratext frames and comments on the narrative at a reflexive meta-level. The *relecture* carried out by the reception text makes the reference text the object of continuing interpretation. Explicit commentary, a recurring characteristic of the Johannine *narratio*,⁶ is a third example of an intratextual relationship played out at various textual levels (Bjerkelund 1987; Olsson 1974; O’Rourke 1979, 210–19; Tenney 1960, 350–64; van Belle 1985). It interrupts the course of the narrative to stake out a position about the narrative. A classical example is the wedding of Cana. Where the actual story itself finds expression in John 2:1–10, verse 11 interprets the story at a meta-level in terms of theological categories that do not appear in the miracle story itself: “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” This phenomenon of intratextuality is well known and requires no further discussion (Zumstein 2007a, 68–82).

What I find more interesting are those cases in which the text offers not only one but multiple interpretations of the narrative. The most famous example here is the footwashing, where the narrative, as presented by the text in its final form, explains Christ’s actions (13:4–5) first in symbolic-christological terms (13:6–11), then in ecclesiological-ethical ones (13:12–17; see Bultmann 1941, 351–52; Zumstein 2004, 161–76). This is carried out in such a way that the second interpretation does not take the first into consideration.

6. In *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, Culpepper devotes further discussion to the concept of narrative commentary and sets out the term “implicit commentary” as a distinguishing characteristic of the Johannine literary strategy (1983, 150–202).

This means, then, that the same text generates multiple interpretations that take on differing roles depending on whether they are perceived and evaluated in terms of their diachronic order or their synchronic co-presence.⁷ The cleansing of the temple (2:1–11) is also given a double interpretation. While 2:16b–17 represent the traditional meaning, verses 18–22 decode the narrative from a post-Easter standpoint, that is, from the standpoint of the cross and the resurrection.

INTERTEXTUALITY, OR, LITERARY WORKS INTERACTING

A literary work does not lead a solitary existence; it is always networked. Its reading always takes place against the background of other writings and in dialogue with them. The Fourth Gospel is no exception to this rule. It is linked to three literary corpora: (1) it belongs to the collection of the four canonical Gospels; (2) it is part of a corpus that includes the three Johannine Epistles and, according to some testimony of the early church, the book of Revelation; (3) a meaningful reading of the Gospel of John is impossible apart from the Hebrew Bible. This interplay between various literary corpora displays the classical form of intertextuality.

THE GOSPEL'S HEADING

The phenomenon of the Johannine heading presents a good point of departure for our observation of intertextuality in Johannine literature. The heading of the Fourth Gospel, "Gospel according to John," is a secondary addition belonging to the paratext of the Gospel. This heading has, first of all, a naming function, providing a distinguishing mark that allows for the work's identification. The heading made it possible to distinguish the Fourth Gospel, whether in public reading in church services or in the community's archives (Hengel 1984, 33–40; 1993, 204–9). A title was a particularly important condition for a work's adoption into a written collection—be it the Johannine or New Testament corpus. Hence, a heading became necessary as the Gospel was circulated in the early Christian community and the process of canonization began.

7. If one views the text from a diachronic standpoint, one notes two successive christological interpretations of the footwashing (the traditional interpretation in 13:12–17, then the interpretation of the Evangelist in 13:5–11). On the other hand, if one reads the text synchronically, 13:5–11 express a christological interpretation, 13:12–17 an ecclesiological-ethical one.

The choice of the title “Gospel according to John” (εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ἰωάννην) has hermeneutical significance and leads to a new reading of the work.⁸ Although the term “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) is nowhere found in the Johannine literature itself, it was nonetheless chosen as the designation for this writing. It served as the title for the Synoptic Gospels, too, and had established itself as the technical term for narratives of the life Jesus by the beginning of the second century (Bauer and Aland 1988, 644; Friedrich 1964–76, 2:735–36). Hence, the title “Gospel” classified the Fourth Gospel as a member of this literary genre and placed it in a relationship with the already extant narratives. From this point on the Johannine *vita Jesu* would be read as a “Gospel.”

The prepositional expression “according to John” (κατὰ Ἰωάννην) marks a further, theologically significant decision. The Johannine writing is not designated as the Gospel “of” or “by” John, but “according to” John. This formulation suggests that the work does not articulate just any gospel but *the* gospel itself. The Gospel of John is introduced as a legitimate expression of the one gospel.

The *relecture* carried out by this heading had decisive consequences for the Fourth Gospel’s reception history. It fixed the Gospel’s literary genre as well as its apostolic authority. The Gospel of John was no longer simply a writing of Johannine Christianity but advanced to a position among the writings of the early church as a whole.

INTERTEXTUALITY WITH THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The history of the canon shows that the collection of the four canonical Gospels was already established by the end of the second century (Kaestli 2004, 453–59). The corpus of writings that thus came into being poses the question of intertextuality. That is, from very early on readers were confronted with the phenomenon of a single gospel in four forms. However, it is possible to identify this problem even earlier, albeit from a different perspective. Here one must deal with the famous problem of the relationship between John’s Gospel and the Synoptics at the time of its writing. This question has stimulated controversy up to the present time. Was John aware of one or more of the Synoptic Gospels, or was his work conceived independently (see recently Brown and Moloney 2003, 90–114)? Further, supposing, for example, that he

8. The title “Gospel of John” is not merely interesting in the context of debates about the apostolicity of the Gospel (as has traditionally been the case) but also carries clear hermeneutical implications. For more extensive discussion, see Zumstein 2004, 16–17.

was acquainted with the Gospel of Mark, did he know it in the form of an oral tradition or a written text (Byrskog 2000)?

Two initial observations are in order. First, it seems increasingly improbable that John effectively reinvented the Gospel genre in complete autonomy from the Synoptics (according to Becker 1991, 47). Nonetheless, it seems highly problematic to assume (with the Leuven school;⁹ Thyen 1992, 81–107; 2005; and Schnelle 1999:506–9) that John arranged his Synoptic pre-text according to the model of the Two Source Theory. The type of intertextual process brought into motion here is not that of source criticism, that is, the careful and word-for-word revision of a written source. Rather, following Genette's model (1982, 14–17), a process should be envisioned that can be described in terms of hypertextuality, meaning that John's reception of the Synoptic Gospels was distanced and free.

However, what implications does this intertextual interplay bear for one's reading of the Fourth Gospel? That is, what are the results of a reading that no longer concentrates on the purely linear development of the narrative but rather on its indirect relationship to the Synoptic Gospels, particularly the Gospel of Mark?

An example of paradigmatic importance may be found in the integration of the passion narrative into the entire Johannine *vita Jesu*. Readers who are familiar with the Synoptics quickly notice that the narrator has shifted a noteworthy portion of the passion tradition into the first part of his Gospel (1–12; 13:1 marks the beginning of the second part of the narrative).¹⁰ One notes, for example, the cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–22; see Zumstein 2006b, 27–39). While the Synoptics present this episode within the context of Jesus' final stay in Jerusalem (see Mark 15:11–19 par.), which seems clearly correct from a historical-critical standpoint,¹¹ the event appears in chapter 2 of John's

9. The Leuven model, which functions according to a distinction between tradition and redaction, presupposes a Synoptic source (mainly Mark) and examines the way John selects, leaves out, and adds various elements. See the essays in Denaux 1992.

10. The cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15–19) is moved to John 2:13–17, the question of authority (Mark 11:27–33) to John 2:18–22. Moreover, the Gethsemane scene (Mark 14:32–42) is omitted by John, with only a few fragments being picked up and recontextualized in John 12:23, 27–29. Jesus' trial before the Jewish authorities is emptied of its traditional contents: the temple word (Mark 14:58) is inserted into John 2:19; the messianic question and the charge of blasphemy (Mark 14:61–64) are moved to John 10:22–30, 31–39. One can also see that the narrator has moved the execution plan (Mark 14:1–2) to John 11:45–53 and the anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:3–9) to John 12:1–8, before the entrance into Jerusalem (cf. Mark 11:1–11 with John 12:12–19).

11. In fact, this incident was probably one of the reasons for the arrest and trial of the historical Jesus (see Luz and Michaels 2002, 125–26; Roloff 2002, 107–10).

account, at the very beginning of Christ's ministry. This segment, together with the first miracle in Cana (2:1–11), forms the programmatic beginning of the ministry of the Johannine Jesus.

How are we to understand John's representation of the *vita Christi*? A historicizing fundamentalism might propose that the temple cleansing happened twice: first at the beginning, then again at the end of the Galilean's ministry. Or, as historical criticism might suggest, was John simply confused, the victim of a badly informed tradition or of his own ignorance of the circumstances of Jesus' life? Stopgap solutions of this sort are doomed to failure. Both the Johannine school and the first readers of the Gospel were perfectly aware that the cleansing of the temple belonged to the context of the passion story. However, it was precisely because of its specific association with the passion that the authorial authorities placed it at the beginning of the Gospel. This intertextual relationship creates a meaning effect: the shadow of the cross hangs over the narrative from its inception. As a positive counterpart to 2:13–22, the sign in Cana (2:1–11) confirms this interpretation, setting the same accent as the cleansing of the temple in Jesus' famous statement: "My hour has not yet come" (2:4).¹² True, as the miracle of the wine suggests, the time of salvation has dawned; however, this time cannot, and may not, be separated from the "hour" that has not yet come—the hour of the cross, which is understood as the completion of the revelation. The conclusion is inescapable: a view of the Gospel's intertextual play with the Synoptic tradition points not to some incompetence on the narrator's part but to the creative power of his theological program.

INTERTEXTUALITY WITHIN THE JOHANNINE CORPUS

A further interesting phenomenon is to be found in the development of the Johannine corpus, composed of the Gospel, the Epistles, and possibly the book of Revelation. The Fourth Gospel is part of a collection and should be read within its parameters. What sort of hermeneutical process does this set into motion?

The relationship between the Gospel and 1 John provides an interesting example of this intertextual interplay (Brown 1982, 86–103; Klauck 1991, 88–109). However, before taking up the relations between these two literary works, two questions must be addressed. The first regards their chronological

12. The classical formulation of the prolepsis of the "hour" is found in the statement, "My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4; 7:6, 30; 8:20). The usage of the term ἡ ὥρα in 12:23, 27; 13:1 makes it clear that this refers to the hour of the cross.

order. While it cannot be ascertained with absolute certainty, it seems most likely that the Gospel was written before the Epistle (Klauck 1991, 125–26). The second question is that of authorship: whereas the Gospel advances an explicit claim about its authorship in John 21—whatever the historical value of this reference, the Beloved Disciple *is* identified as the author at 21:24—1 John remains anonymous. Hence, we find ourselves confronted with two different authorial authorities.

If we grant these two suggestions a certain probability, the Gospel should be considered the hypotext, 1 John the hypertext. But what sort of justification can we provide for this hypothesis (Brown 1982, 90–92; Zumstein 2004, 18–21)? The Epistle's line of argumentation is characteristic, drawing up a confrontation between two categories of knowledge: the church's traditional knowledge, with which the author sides; and the knowledge of the opponents, which he combats. The author locates himself within the traditional knowledge of his community, or of his tradition of faith, which he then reformulates to refute the opponents' position. In this communication context, it is not his intention to modify the old faith; nonetheless, he does apply and reactualize it in a new context. Thus, 1 John carries out a hermeneutical movement that can be termed a *relecture* and that presents instructions for a correct reading of the Gospel, creating a hermeneutical context in which a right understanding of the received tradition is possible.¹³

The argumentative strategy thus adopted by the Epistle can hardly be questioned; what remains controversial is the existence of a connection between 1 John's tradition of faith and the Gospel. However, two circumstances speak clearly for such a connection. On one hand, 1 John imitates the structure of the Gospel (prologue, conclusion, epilogue).¹⁴ In imitating the outline of the Gospel, 1 John impresses the reader with a particular relationship to the Gospel, so that its reading presupposes a knowledge of the Gospel (Brown 1982, 91–92; Klauck 1998, 258). On the other hand, the Gospel and 1 John display not only great similarities but significant differences, too, in their style, terminology, and subject matter. The tensions of this relationship should neither be marginalized nor exaggerated; their dialectical nature should instead be valued, since it creates a paradigmatic example of

13. See Brown 1982, 90: "It was commonly held by the church fathers that 1 John was written to accompany the Gospel of John as a kind of introduction to make the Gospel of John more intelligible."

14. A comparison of 1 John with 2 and 3 John shows that, whereas 2 and 3 John are true letters, 1 John has a prologue instead of an opening formula, a final statement about the purpose of writing instead of a greeting and benediction (compare with John 20:30–31), and an epilogue (compare with John 21).

intertextual play—of *relecture*. The Epistle takes up certain expressions from the Gospel (hence the agreements) to reformulate them in view of the aporiae they create and for the benefit of a new context (hence the differences). Here we recognize the double movement of explicating reception and thematic transfer.

INTERTEXTUALITY WITH THE HEBREW BIBLE

This final topic poses the question of the Fourth Gospel's reception of Scripture, particularly of the prophet Isaiah and the Psalms, which appear to be the implied author's favorite books.¹⁵ In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels and to 1 John, in these cases the hypotext or reference text is materially present in the hypertext or reception text. In other words, fragments of the hypotext are introduced into the hypertext as the Gospel directly incorporates some element of the Hebrew Bible. This is the classic phenomenon of the "quotation."

Until recently, exegetical work has concentrated on two areas. The one strand of research devoted itself to identifying quotations that appear in the *narratio*. The question here was of possible sources and the way in which the implied author received and modified the passages he had borrowed from the Hebrew Bible (Menken 1996). A significant weak point of this approach, one that surfaces even in the Nestle-Aland text (27th ed., 1998), is the insufficient distinction between quotations, references, and allusions. A "quotation" is to be understood as the literal reproduction of text A in text B. A "reference" is also an explicit form of intertextuality; however, in contrast to a quotation, text B refers to text A without presenting it *in extenso*—we are confronted here with a relationship *in absentia*. In contrast to a quotation, an "allusion" is neither an explicit nor a literal reproduction of text A in text B. Rather, a word or turn of phrase is used so as to call some other well-known text to mind.

The other sort of hermeneutical question took as its premise the authority of the Jewish scriptures. Here quotations were seen first and foremost as elements in a process of legitimation. A passage from the Jewish scriptures conferred unquestionable credibility on some word or action of the Johannine Jesus.

However, more recent research on intertextuality has shown that this stance is too simplistic (Theobald 1997, 327–66; Zumstein 2004, 127–45). A careful reading of the bread discourse (John 6) shows that the reader indeed

15. Isa 6:10 in John 12:40; Isa 40:3 in John 1:23; Isa 53:1 in John 12:38; Isa 54:13 in John 6:45; Isa 66:14 in John 16:22; Ps 6:4–5 in John 12:27; Ps 22:19 in John 19:24; Ps 34:21 in John 19:36; Ps 35:19 in John 15:25; Ps 69:10 in John 2:17; Ps 78:24 in John 6:31; Ps 82:6 in John 10:34; Ps 118:25–26 in John 12:13.

encounters two quotations (6:31 quotes Ps 77:24 LXX, while 6:45 quotes Isa 54:13), a reference (6:31a refers to Exod 16), and several allusions (the murmuring of the Jews mentioned in 6:41, 43, 63 as allusions to Exod 16:2, 7, 8, 9, 12; the true prophet in 6:14 as a possible allusion to Deut 18:15, 18). However, these connections to the Jewish Scriptures should not be viewed in isolation but rather should be seen as composing a coherent whole that creates a hermeneutical background for the entire discourse. The hypotext (the Hebrew Bible) is not simply adduced as a legitimizing strategy; it is productive in a way that shapes the entire hypertext (John 6). Hence, the meaning of the bread discourse is developed not only through the linear movement of the argumentation but also through its continued, albeit oblique, relationship to the hypotext. In reading the text with the manna story in mind, one taps a set of metaphorical reserves that allow for a full understanding of the chapter. However, it is important to note here that the relationship between the manna story and the bread chapter is not one-sided but dialectic. That is, while the conscious reference to the manna story leads to an appropriate understanding of the bread chapter, a mindful reading of the bread chapter simultaneously prompts a new perception of the Jewish manna story. The reading of John 6 thus not only sparks a recognition of the hypotext but also surpasses its simple recognition.¹⁶

A final, important point requires attention here. The successful perception of the intertextual play between the manna story and the bread discourse depends on the competence of the reader. The text proffers not one single reading but many different ones; the resultant awareness of the text's intended connections varies according to the sharpness of the reader's own eye.

CONCLUSION

In summary, four points may be noted to locate the above considerations within the hermeneutical debate over early Christian literature. First, if hermeneutics should be understood as the theory of, or as meta-speech about, interpretation, the approach outlined here has looked into a specific process in the interpretation of a text: a serious consideration of intertextuality. Of course, the text to be interpreted—in this case, the Gospel of John—is an independent unit of meaning, but it cannot and should not be approached as an isolated unit. Whereas classical hermeneutics interpreted texts primar-

16. The theory of intertextuality suggests that text B does not merely acquire a new hermeneutical horizon through reference to text A but rather that text B also places text A in a new light. The intertextual reference triggers an interaction between the texts.

ily in their historical contexts, and whereas narrative criticism considers the text as an independent, integrated unit in which the meaning arises in its entirety from the interaction between the various elements of the text (Culpepper 1983, 3–11), the approach taken here would advocate a perspective in which the intratextual and intertextual contexts are placed in the foreground. It is no longer the history but the text that stands at the center of this hermeneutical concept.

Second, as noted above, the approach advocated here does encounter several methodological problems. Both intratextuality and intertextuality require sophisticated interpretive models to make sense of the text. Hartwig Thyen's recently published commentary on the Gospel of John (2005) exemplifies the necessity of this sophistication. It is not adequate merely to discuss, as Thyen does, the text's interactions with its pre-text, since this interplay can take many different forms that must be carefully distinguished.

Third, reading a text as an intertext puts a premium on the competence of readers.¹⁷ The text's meaning is not a set, immanent element to be discovered and worked out through exegesis, but emerges through a dialectical interplay between what Umberto Eco calls the *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris* (1992, 19–47). Where classical hermeneutics accents the author, recent years have seen a shift first toward the text, then toward the reader.

Fourth, the hermeneutical model that has been sketched here is not a theological hermeneutic, to the degree that it is not connected to any particular theological prerequisites that would guide or normalize the task of interpretation. The model in question is intended to cultivate a more fruitful reading of any literary text—the early Christian literature being, of course, one example of this. I am convinced that only a carefully considered hermeneutic of the text can take proper account of the New Testament texts, theological though they are.

17. The “implied reader” plays an important function in Culpepper's approach because his theoretical model is derived to a great extent from the communications model of Roman Jakobson (1983, 6, 204–11). The notion of the implied reader refers to “the recipient of the narrative constructed by the text and capable of realizing its meaning in the perspective into which the author leads him: this image corresponds to the readership imagined by the author” (Marguerat and Bourquin 1999, 177). But the work of Wolfgang Iser has shown that “the meaning of a text ... is not inherent in it but must be produced or actualized by the reader” (Culpepper 1983, 209). More recent research (Eco 1985 and 1994; Iser 1980; Ricoeur 1992) has accentuated the creative role of the reader in interaction with the text. Intertextuality is a component of this dialectical process.

JOHN IS DEAD; LONG LIVE JOHN!*

Robert Kysar
(with Tom Thatcher)

In the years between the birth of historical-critical methods of research in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of contemporary interpretive models, interest in the Fourth Evangelist's identity, intention, and background has dramatically increased.¹ The driving interests behind this endless quest for the "historical John of the Gospel of John" are twofold. First and most generally, one sees here the power of the human imagination in the face of a blank page in our history books: we are seldom satisfied with a simple admission of ignorance. Second, but probably more important, knowledge of the author seems to somehow confirm the truthfulness (if not the historicity) of the story of Jesus in the Gospel of John. The available information is too skimpy, the evidence too ambiguous, and the visual image of Jesus dreadfully incomplete without knowledge of the writer. We want to know the identity of this mysterious disciple whom Jesus loved and what circumstances generated that title. As an indication of the power we grant to authors, historians are often hopeful that the author of the Fourth Gospel is a reliable source of historical truth. But how can we hold onto this hope if we do not know who this person was? Further, how can we hope to interpret this text "accurately" apart from an understanding of this author's intentions?

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1. This trend is evident in the simple fact that the introductions to commentaries on the Gospel of John have generally grown more and more extensive. To cite but a few prominent examples, Raymond Brown's Anchor Bible commentary dedicates some thirty-three pages to the issues of authorship and composition history (Brown 1966–70); Schnackenburg's HTKNT entry (English translation) devotes some thirty pages to the issue (1968); Craig Keener's recent commentary spends a remarkable 160 pages on authorship (2003).

Although a satisfactory answer to these complex questions is far beyond the reach of this essay, it is worthwhile to inquire into the motives of the historical thirst to know the identity of the Fourth Evangelist. What difference does (or should) it make? To say it another way: Putting aside the specific details of the historical questions, why do we care about “John” in the first place, and what role should this person play in our understanding of this enigmatic Gospel?

JOHN, THE EVANGELIST

In biblical studies, the role of the author of the Fourth Gospel (whom I will call “John” here) loomed larger and larger as the influence of historical criticism spread. The tasks of identifying and describing the work of “John the Evangelist” have become a major topic of analysis. Both scholars and lay readers have pressed those of us who are supposed to know something about John’s Gospel to provide details of the life of this shadowy figure. Tradition names the apostle John, the son of Zebedee as the author, but supplies no additional information about this figure.

In assembling the jigsaw puzzle of the birth of the documents that were later to become our sacred literature, it seems that “the disciple Jesus loved,” understood to be identical to John the brother of James mentioned in the Synoptics, soon stood at the head of the line of proposed authors of the Fourth Gospel. Irenaeus championed this view in his struggle against gnostic believers, citing John numerous times as a weapon against those whom he regarded as heretics (see, as one of many examples, *Against Heresies* 3.11.7–8). However, the so called “heretics” did not easily surrender their own grasp on the Fourth Gospel, and the document gained popularity among the Christians attracted to Gnosticism, as well as others. Still, the Fourth Gospel was instrumental in the emergence of a so-called Christian “orthodoxy” and was treasured in the earliest church. As its role in the life of the early church increased, the claim for its apostolic authorship became almost indisputable. By the third century, the author of the Fourth Gospel was thought to be distinct from other “Johns,” including the authors of the Johannine letters and Revelation (see Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.39).

Still today, the jumble of “Johns” mentioned in the New Testament and the patristic literature presents a formidable interpretive puzzle. Perhaps more interesting than the historical problems surrounding these figures, however, is the strength of our curiosity about them. The author whose work we honor in this volume, Alan Culpepper, has provided a marvelous history of the various “Johns” who have appeared in church history and the legends surrounding them (Culpepper 2000). While Culpepper never pretends to solve

all the historical issues in the “life of the legend” (the apostle John the son of Zebedee), he highlights the rich tradition of scholarship and art that the historical issues have generated. In the process, his study also, and perhaps unintentionally, highlights the depth of our desire to identify the “real John” behind our Fourth Gospel. Notably, Culpepper concludes that “the Fourth Evangelist and the Elder (the author of the Johannine Epistles) provided leadership for this community after the death of the Beloved Disciple. None of the Johannine writings appears to have been written by the apostle John, however” (2000, 327). Yet this stark conclusion, shared by many Johannine critics, has done little to dampen the flames of curiosity about the identity of the Fourth Gospel’s author. The place of John the Evangelist in historical research demonstrates a widespread desire to make the authors of the biblical literature take on greater descriptive detail. Before we enthrone these figures as the originators of one of our four Gospels, we want to know as much about them as we can. All this attention has encouraged scholars to elaborate on the very little hard data about the author of the Fourth Gospel, as if the enriched picture might provide significant insights and confirm the reality of such a figure. Unfortunately, the whole process seems dangerously similar to the way that contemporary celebrities capture attention and endlessly fill newspaper columns and television reports.

It is important to note the deeper implications of attempts to re-create the image of the historical author of the Fourth Gospel. Once John is identified as a “real person,” readers seek to understand what he intended to say about the historical Jesus—a process that had begun, apparently, even before the Fourth Gospel was written (see John 21:20–23). In a development that defies simple explanations, readers of the Bible came to believe that they were charged not only with the task of reading and understanding the Evangelist’s words but also of discerning what exactly the author wanted to say with these words—as if one could look deeply into the words themselves and see there what the author had hoped to accomplish with them (Beardsley and Wimsatt 1954). The inherent futility of such an effort is clear to any careful reader of the Gospel of John. For example, the author of John reports that Jesus confused Nicodemus by telling him that he “must be born from above” (ἀνωθεν; 3:8). Since the word ἀνωθεν is hopelessly ambiguous, one can only wonder how it could have helped the baffled Nicodemus at all. What might the author of those words have intended to say, and, ultimately, what difference does that make to our understanding?

It appears that we want John, the Evangelist, to be a sure and dependable biographical recorder of the historical Jesus—if not sure and dependable, at least real and comprehensible. Modern Western readers have a deep need to know that John was “really there,” as if his existence could somehow ground

our interpretation and our faith in some objective reality outside the text of the Fourth Gospel itself. Where else might we look for such confidence?

“JOHN,” THE IMPLIED AUTHOR

In 1982, Alan Culpepper returned from a productive sabbatical leave in Cambridge University with the beginnings of a revolutionary volume in his briefcase. Without a doubt, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* was one of the most important books on the Fourth Gospel published in the second half of the twentieth century. *Anatomy* opens with an introduction to a skeletal outline of Seymour Chatman’s communication model, and with it many scholars learned a new vocabulary as well as a new approach to exegesis (Culpepper 1983, 6–8). At first glance, Culpepper’s adaptation of this model seemed dizzying, with its abundant series of “implied” phenomena, including among others the “implied author” and the “implied reader.” Culpepper wisely proposed that, while real readers may not know much about the historical author or the original intended readers of the Fourth Gospel, we can—indeed, must—learn a great deal from a new colleague, the mysterious “implied author” so well concealed in the text.

At the time of the publication of *Anatomy*, I had little idea of how this new interpretive construct (as we now know it) arose and what its impact would be. However, Culpepper guided the uninitiated so gently and intentionally that soon the terms became comfortably familiar.

Literary critics distinguish between the real author and reader and their counterparts within the text. As the real author writes, he or she makes decisions about the narrative, constructs the story, and tells it through the narrator in such a way that the narrative projects an image of the author, but the image may not conform to the identity of the real author at all. The “*implied author*” is defined by the sum of the choices reflected in the writing of the narrative, choices of the use of settings, irony, characterization, the handling of time, suspense, distance, and all the problematics and potential of narrative writing which must be dealt with in one way or another.... The *implied reader* is defined by the text as the one who performs all the mental moves required to enter into the narrative world and respond to it as the implied author intends. (Culpepper 1983, 6–7, emphasis added)²

2. “The Bible and Culture Collective” (authors of *The Postmodern Bible*) has more recently offered the following useful summary definition of the implied author and audience: “[T]he author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader, he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement. The implied

Initially, scholars who were used to having some historical basis for discussions of this or that feature of the authorship of John might have been disappointed by the limitations of the “implied author” as a basis to construct at least a tentative “real author.” Since, as Culpepper asserted, the implied author is a product of the text and the interpreter’s imagination, one cannot conclude a great deal about the real author of the Fourth Gospel from this implied author. Was the real author highly influenced by Judaism, Hellenism, sectarianism, Gnosticism, Mandaeanism, or still other religious movements of the time? Was the real author an advocate of the sacraments? While *Anatomy* closed with a chapter that reflected on the connections between the implied reader of the Fourth Gospel and the real world Johannine Christians (Culpepper 1983, 211–27), Culpepper’s new approach essentially swept aside the question of the identity of the Fourth Evangelist. Indeed, the “meaning [of the Fourth Gospel] is produced in the experience of reading the gospel and lies on this side of the text, between the reader and the text” (1983, 5). From the perspective of this theoretical framework, all historical questions about the author go unanswered. Implied author/reader exegesis is, by definition, freed from the need for historical evidence.

Culpepper’s approach to “authorship”—particularly his decision to focus on the implied author, a construct that emerges from the narrative of the Fourth Gospel itself, rather than on the historical Fourth Evangelist—raised serious questions, some relating to more conventional historical-critical approaches and others relating to the limits of his own, new model. As an example of the former, Does the attempt to define such an imaginary person (the implied author) not prejudice any knowledge that we might glean from the text about the identity of the real-world person (the Evangelist) who produced it? As a significant instance of the latter, To what degree is this “implied” character simply the product of the interpreter’s own peculiar interests and commitments? Isn’t there a danger of creating the implied author of a text in one’s own image, so that the real reader and the implied author are twins, making the text always already sympathetic to our own concerns and values? Can we really, in other words, resist the temptation to paint our portrait of the historical Evangelist with colors derived from our “objective” analysis of the “implied author”? As Adele Reinhartz would later note, it seems all but impossible for readers to put their own commitments aside so that they can sit at table with the Fourth Evangelist, and the loss of historical distance created by the notion of the “implied author” would seem to make the task even

author controls the reader and leads her into his fictional world” (Bible and Culture Collective 1995, 32–33).

harder. Indeed, “his role as implied author may too easily migrate to that of real author and the hypothetical Johannine community may too readily take on solid walls, and acquire wooden pews, stained glass windows, and a bell tower” (Reinhartz 2001a, 165).

Of course, the “implied author” is, in itself, a neutral heuristic concept, one that could obviously be used in a number of different ways. The implied author, as an objective element of the Fourth Gospel’s narrative, may free the interpreter of her own commitments and background in understanding “authorial intention.” On the other hand, we may try to personalize the implied author and attribute feelings and emotions to this counterfeit character, giving this construct the appearance of a greater reality outside our own. But, unfortunately, the whole concept of “implied author” has not contributed in any sense to an increased “objectivity” in answers to the question of authorship, as some thought it might. The research that followed *Anatomy* has shown that implicit authorial figures, like reconstructed “historical figures,” are susceptible to disfigurement in the interpreter’s hands.

Despite these limitations, Culpepper’s model remains a valuable and potentially productive method of reading the Fourth Gospel. His approach highlights the interaction between the reader and the text rather than assigning the “meaning” of the Gospel to an ancient figure, or series of figures, whose identity ultimately cannot be known. Indeed, some have understood the implied reader “as a product of the encounter between the text and the reader, a realization of potentialities in the text but produced by a real reader” (Bible and Culture Collective 1995, 31). The nomenclature of Culpepper’s method was intended, in part at least, to suggest openness, flexibility, and new topics for research.

THE DEATH OF THE AUTHORS

In the quarter-century since *Anatomy*’s release, postmodern criticism has drastically redefined the role of the author—“real” or “implied”—in biblical interpretation. Within the postmodern literary community, both “secular” and “biblical,” the spectrum ranges from scholars who simply claim that traditional notions of authorship must be significantly revised to those who argue for the total exclusion of the notion of an author as an element of interpretation. Specifically, postmodern criticism has moved beyond *Anatomy* in significant ways, all of which essentially depend on “the death of the author” as a centering authority in establishing the meaning of a text.

The literary critic Roland Barthes (1915–1980), who coined the phrase “death of the author,” believed that the author of a text stands in the way of the reader’s ability to receive its meaning (1977, 160–61). Rather than embracing

their freedom to interpret the text for themselves, readers assume that the author has some *authority* (note the etymology of the term) in determining the meaning of a text and seek to understand the text the way the author would have. Under this model, readers are not free to receive and construe the text in any way other than how they think the author meant it. In the case of the Fourth Gospel, historical-critical interpreters are limited by the notion that the true meaning of the text must be located in the mind of the person who produced it (“John”), while narrative critics who follow the trajectory of *Anatomy* are advised to stay within the objective confines of the implied author as that figure can be constructed from the text itself.

Michel Foucault’s influential article “What Is an Author?” (1984) outlines some of the key issues that have emerged in recent decades. Foucault seeks to clarify the relationship between the author, the text, and society. Ultimately, the notion of the “author” functions to provide a certain sense of security, a rationale for the elements of a text and their meaning. The notion of the “author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in his work, but also their transformation, distortions, and diverse modifications (through his biography, the determination of his individual perspective, the analysis of his social position, and the revelation of his basic design)” (Foucault 1984, 111). “The author’s function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society,” specifically, of those discourses that function to normalize values, behaviors, and power relations (1984, 108). Indeed, the need for an author “marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.” Because the production of new meanings through new readings of texts can liberate or imprison, the production of meanings must be controlled and limited. Viewed in this light, the notion of the “author” is “a certain functional principle by which, in our [Western] culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction” (1984, 118–19).

If a text is full of possible meanings, as some would contend, the reader’s effort to follow the author’s lead functions to limit her range of perception. For Barthes, the matter pivots on the ideology of individualism. Emphasis on the author of a text is, in his view, a mistake that deprives readers of their due credit. The role of the author as an authoritative interpreter is propagated in order to limit power and to claim that an author’s interpretation of her or his work is the only authentic, “true” one. Barthes sought to democratize the interpretive role that the ideology of individualism had limited to the author. By declaring the “death of the author,” Barthes hoped to switch the interpretive authority from the author to the community of readers. “Barthes thus

rejects the model of the individual author who composes a text and to whom we assign primary responsibility; instead he claims that ‘language’ itself does the writing, describing it as almost a transpersonal force operating through the writer’s subjectivity” (Wicks 2003, 163). This concern with *authority* underlies Barthes’s famous (or infamous) dictum, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author” (1977, 143); in other words, a willingness to recognize the rights of the reader automatically marks the end of the author’s sovereign reign over interpretation. Following this paradigm, all readers are now entirely responsible for interpretation and not simply for the discernment of what the author—real or implied—meant/means.

Whether or not the empowerment of the reader necessarily entails the demise of the author, the approaches of Barthes and Foucault illustrate the postmodern belief that texts are indeed rich with meanings. While the issue of final responsibility for the comprehension of meaning is debatable, it seems certain that readers are somehow finally accountable for grasping a text’s meaning. Still, how powerful is the author in this process? Have we been saved by the democratizing of the Bible, so that there are no controls on who might say what the text means?

ASSESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

What can be done when Johannine scholars cannot reach a consensus on an issue as central as “authorship,” which now must be understood not in terms of the identity of the Fourth Evangelist but rather in terms of the broader questions of the locus of textual meaning and the authority of different interpretations? In my view, A. K. M. Adam points the way forward when he says, “The postmodern question of the author will thus not be ‘Is the author dead or alive?’ but ‘How do you imagine the author and why?’—which question gives ample scope for debate, for agreement, and for further exploration” (2000, 13). Simply put, “John,” whether a real person from the ancient world or an implied element of the Fourth Gospel, is not dead but lives forever, endlessly puzzling us with meanings.

These observations bring us back to the question that opened this essay: Why are some so fearful of John’s absence and so obsessed with re-creating his presence? Why does the absence of certainty in a matter of this kind trouble some so much? There is a growing need for certainty, an emptiness that can be filled only with the Truth. Perhaps the real question is not so much “Who is John?” but rather “How we can go on believing without certainty about John?” In a world filled with uncertainty, it is difficult to live with uncertainty or to believe without certainty. Perhaps one effort to deal with the vacancy of authority is to declare the Bible as literally word-for-word God’s Word to be obeyed.

Obviously, the difficulties inherent in any affirmation about the Fourth Gospel's authorship, real or implied, are complicated and sensitive; so are the difficulties involved in living with and embracing the absence of the author. While I cannot probe the psychological issues behind either option in detail here, I do not think we can ignore them. Let me make one suggestion by raising a series of important questions.

Could it be that in shrugging off the issue of whether or not a historical figure named "John" matters, we dodge the explosive center of the issue? What difference does it make whether the author of the Fourth Gospel is an identifiable historical person? Could this author called "John" walk away from his place in tradition without any unfortunate consequences? Would Christian history be weaker for the absence of any "real person" standing at the head of the authorship process? Or, could we say about the author of John what has been said about "Paul Bunyan": while his gigantic presence has historically contributed to the identity of the immigrant population of the midwestern United States, no one would be mortally wounded by the news that the mighty Paul and his ox is a wonderful tale that has no foundation in history except in the human imagination?

When does the historical reality of a person, event, or place matter? Reflection on this matter brings us face to face with questions about the very nature of historical "reality": What is it, and what does it represent? What do we claim to know? History has recently undergone severe attacks and devastating reconstructions. Clearly, the view that seems to be taking deep root in the academy is what has been labeled the "linguistic turn," and with it the realization that there is no "past" as such outside that which we construct through language. To utilize Fred Burnett's terminology, "Events happen, facts are constituted by linguistic description.... In other words, there are no facts that exist independently of a discourse." For this reason, postmodernists cannot maintain a strict distinction between "history" and "fiction," or what some have called "fictive narrative." The turn to literary remnants from another time is what the postmodernist historians call "history." Burnett summarizes the nature of this linguistic turn this way: "history is ... an organized re-presentation of textual traces from the past. 'History' is the practice of representing texts that have themselves already re-presented the past. The textuality of the past is the primary referent of the historian's work, not an object known as the 'past itself'" (Burnett 2000, 107). In this theoretical context, then, the line between "history" and "ideology" is difficult, if not impossible, to draw.

Obviously, not all historians have bought into this new (one might say, "radical") view of history, but it arises from a fundamental revision of the view of the past. Restricted to texts alone, postmodern historians do not

struggle so fiercely with differing views of the past, and there is no longer a necessity to present our account of the past as the one “true” version of things. It is wise, for example, to resist the temptation to declare one’s own view of the first century superior to all others. For instance, is the Synoptic dating of Jesus’ crucifixion true, and does it really somehow need to be reconciled with the Johannine narrative? Perhaps the truly significant issues here have nothing to do with the calendar; perhaps the real issue is the wrestling with the “meaning” of the events that are only represented in the biblical dates. In the process, we can become more appreciative of the literary quality of the references to those events.

In John’s Gospel, then, we will not find a diary record of Jesus of Nazareth, nor will we find an “implied author” whose identity can be objectively distinguished from our own interests. In comparing the four Gospels (and other extracanonical writings), we find the ponderings of the first Christians, which really are not unlike our own, about what happened and what difference it makes.

PART 2
ANATOMICAL PROBES

MAGNIFICENT BUT FLAWED: THE BREAKING OF FORM IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Mark Stibbe

There are two reasons why I'm looking at you like this. One because it seems in a few minutes you will officially be the only survivor of this train wreck, and two, because you didn't break one bone, you don't have a scratch on you.
—*Unbreakable* (2000)

In concluding his seminal study *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, Alan Culpepper states that “as a construction, the gospel is magnificent but flawed.” He qualifies this by adding that the Gospel is “magnificent in its complexity, subtlety, and profundity, but oddly flawed in some of its transitions, sequences, and movements” (1983, 231). This is a very fair assessment of the Fourth Gospel. On the one hand, the Fourth Gospel reveals a kind of architectural symmetry, a formal harmony that looks like the work of someone consciously creating a coherent story. On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel reveals moments of disruption and disunity.¹ These moments suggest the very opposite of order. They point to a different vision, maybe even a different voice—one more at home with *aporia* or disruption.²

1. A similar point has been made by Gary Burge. “The supreme irony of the Johannine literary format is that—while many narratives show remarkable attention to detail and a concern for precision ...—others appear rough and units of narrative seem to collide” (Burge 1992, 66).

2. Burge highlights the etymology of the word *aporia*: a difficult passing, either an impassible maritime strait or a difficulty in logic in a debate (1992, 62 n. 10). The *aporias* in the Gospel of John are the seams that disrupt the narrative flow of the story and are attributed to the work of a later editor. Discussion of these *aporias* is usually traced back to the articles entitled “Aporien im vierten Evangelium” by the German scholar Eduard Schwartz in 1907 and 1908. As Burge states, “we have a puzzle. The Fourth Gospel is a fractured text—seismic seams, literary lacunae, and editorial traces are abundantly evi-

An oft-cited example of an *aporia* is found in John 14:31. Having spent the previous two chapters teaching his disciples through speech and action, Jesus now says to his disciples, “Arise, let us go from here.” The very next verse, however, far from indicating movement to a new location, presents Jesus continuing to teach his disciples, as he had been doing throughout chapter 14. This teaching or discourse material continues through John 15 and 16 and leads into the lengthy prayer of Jesus in John 17. Only at the start of John 18 does the expectation of arising and leaving indicated at 14:31 become fulfilled: “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered” (18:1; all translations NKJV). After three chapters of speaking, Jesus at last acts on what he said in John 14:31.

Many commentators have noted that John 18:1–3 flows very naturally from 14:30–31. Setting the two passages side by side creates the kind of transition, sequence, and movement that Culpepper very ably described in his narrative-critical approach to the Fourth Gospel. The flow is uninterrupted when John 15–17 are taken out of this section of the narrative:

I [Jesus] will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here (14:30–31)... . When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. (18:1–3)

It is hard to miss the narrative logic here. Jesus ends John 14 by alerting his disciples to the imminent approach of “the ruler of this world” and with a call to get up and go. John 18 begins with Jesus moving to a new location and Judas—now the embodiment of darkness, the emissary of the ruler of this world—guiding Jesus’ enemies to a secret garden hideout. John 18:1 therefore follows very neatly from 14:31. The addition of John 15–17 has disrupted an original unity.³

dent” (1992, 74). “Clearly the text of John is made up of sources pieced together to form a unified narrative. If we look carefully we can discern seams where these sources have been stitched together. Some of them are rough, rugged signs of an awkward assembly” (1992, 82).

3. While most scholars would support the above reading, some deny it. For example, Andreas Köstenberger, in a discussion of “the So-Called Seams (Aporias) in John’s Gospel,”

This kind of disruption is not confined to John 14–18. When I was writing my narrative-critical commentary on John, I noticed a similar sense of rupture in John 2–4 (see Stibbe 1993). John 2:1 begins, “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee.” Here a new section of the Gospel begins, and it begins in Cana, with the miracle of Jesus’ transformation of water into wine. The end of this section brings us back to Cana. In 4:46 the narrator reports, “So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.” The narrative goes on to describe a miracle, the healing of the official’s son. This miracle, like the miracle at the beginning of John 2, is referred to as a σημεῖον or “sign.” This creates a neat *inclusio* between the end of this section and its beginning. The two episodes are linked both by their common location (Cana) and by their designation as “signs.”

The *inclusio* noted above suggests a very careful attention to literary unity. However, as I pointed out in my commentary, there are passages in John 2–4 that seem to disrupt this sense of coherence. If the cleansing of the temple episode (2:13–25) and the discourse material (3:16–21, 31–36) are removed, John 2–4 becomes a finely structured section abounding in chiasmus, inclusion, and parallelism:

- A The first Cana Sign (2:1–11)
- B Transitional passage (2:12)
- C Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1–15)
- D Transitional passage (3:22)
- E Jesus and John the Baptist (3:23–30)
- D' Transitional passage (4:1–3)
- C' Jesus and the Samaritan woman (4:4–42)
- B' Transitional passage (4:43–45)
- A' The second Cana sign (4:46–54)

argues that “John’s narrative is remarkably uniform” and dismisses all the following *aporias*: 3:22; 4:54; 5–6 (which appear to be out of sequence); 7:53–8:11; 11:2; 14:31; 16:5; 20:31 (2002, 259). On John 14:31 specifically, Köstenberger observes that “the incongruence can merely be apparent. For the plausible suggestion has been made that Jesus and his followers indeed leave the Upper Room after 14:31 and that vineyards provide a suitable backdrop for Jesus’ continued discourse in John 15 as he and his disciples embarked on their walk.” He concludes that, “At the end of the day, it is doubtful if there is even a single instance where we are driven to the conclusion that the text of John’s Gospel as we have it reflects a genuine literary seam, an incoherence in the way the Johannine narrative is told” (2002, 260). While not impossible, I find Köstenberger’s explanation of John 14:31 unconvincing.

Here a very obvious literary design is evident. This unity is disturbed when the material in John 2:13–25; 3:16–21, 31–36 is added.

Culpepper's *Anatomy* points to such flaws without really explaining them. The main reason for this, as I have stated elsewhere, is that Culpepper's methodology treats the Fourth Gospel as a "tale," not a "tell" (see Stibbe 1992, 9–12).⁴ In other words, Culpepper was reacting to historical-critical studies of the Fourth Gospel that treat the Gospel as an archaeological tell, digging it up and dividing it into different layers of historical development. *Anatomy* was grounded in the view that this kind of approach distracts us from the final form of the text and the narrative artistry of the Gospel as a tale; as such, Culpepper's analysis sought to emphasize what lies in front of the text rather than what lies behind or beneath it. No one has done more to bring the story-telling art of the Fourth Gospel to light.

However, as I have respectfully pointed out in my book *John as Storyteller* (Stibbe 1992), a purely synchronic reading of the Fourth Gospel is not sufficient to explain all the subtleties at work within this magnificent narrative. A more integrated approach is called for, one that attends to the connection between narrative and history and that treats the Fourth Gospel in a "tell-tale" manner, that is, as a story that is both artfully told *and* composed in different stages over time. Such an integrated approach means rescuing narrative criticism from its apparently antihistorical bias and placing it as a method among other more diachronic approaches.

One of these "other approaches" is redaction criticism, particularly as practiced by scholars such as Raymond Brown.⁵ Scholars like Brown have helpfully shown that there is evidence—in the final form of the Fourth Gospel—for a developmental theory of composition. In other words, Brown and many others have explored the strong possibility that the Fourth Gospel was composed over a period of sixty to seventy years and that different hands were involved in the construction of John's story at critical moments in the community's history.⁶ This is a very important point and one that narrative critics of the Fourth Gospel need to incorporate rather than ignore or dis-

4. In *John as Storyteller* (Stibbe 1992), I proposed a more integrated approach than Culpepper's, combining both narrative and historical-critical readings of John's story.

5. See Brown 1966–70; Brown and Moloney 2003. Brown's posthumous *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* contains the introduction to the second edition of Brown's commentary on the Fourth Gospel, which was not completed before his death. The unfinished introduction, however, was amended and published after Brown's death by Frank Moloney—similar to my proposal here for the composition of the Fourth Gospel.

6. In the introduction to the first edition of his AB commentary (1966), Brown provided a five-stage theory of the compositional development of the Fourth Gospel. In the

miss.⁷ For all its novelistic features, the Fourth Gospel was not composed in the way a twenty-first-century novel would be composed. For one thing, the Fourth Gospel is a biographical account of the historical Jesus and therefore cannot be consigned to fiction. For another, the Gospel was composed in the life of a community and, most probably, by a community of contributors, not by an individual in isolation. Finally, the Fourth Gospel was composed over at least six decades, not in the space of a few months or years. So while Culpepper was right to point to the parallels between the literary strategies of novelistic narratives and the Gospel of John, the Fourth Gospel itself is not a novel and should not be treated as such.

In my view the Fourth Gospel was the product of a lengthy process of composition. The simplest hypothesis posits three major stages in this process. In stage 1, the eyewitness tradition of the Beloved Disciple was preserved and proclaimed over time. Craig Blomberg (2001) has demonstrated convincingly that this tradition contained historically reliable accounts of the words and works of the historical Jesus. If I were to hazard a guess, the timeframe for this stage (which I simply call J1) would fall between the 30s and 50s C.E.

In the second stage of John's development (J2), the Fourth Evangelist compiled the material from the Beloved Disciple and composed a coherent account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. In forming this first edition of the Gospel, the Fourth Evangelist relied not only on the eyewitness tradition of the Beloved Disciple but also on material from other sources. One such source was possibly a "signs source," a collection of miracle stories that centered on Jesus' ministry in Galilee and that referred to these miracles distinctively as *σημεῖα* ("signs"). Other sources may also have been used. This stage of the development may be dated between the 50s and late 60s C.E.

introduction to his second edition, Brown opted for a three-stage theory (see Brown and Moloney 2003, 2–6, 62–89).

7. It is interesting to track Culpepper's more recent comments on Brown's hypothesis concerning the composition history of the Fourth Gospel. In his 2005 article "The Legacy of Raymond E. Brown and Beyond," Culpepper applauds Brown because "he did not minimize the evidence of the breaks, gaps, repetitions and inconsistencies in the gospel in order to argue for a unified composition by the evangelist, as so many others have." Culpepper then argues that Brown's three-stage theory of composition (two editions and a final redaction) is cleaner and more compelling than the five-stage theory proposed in 1966. He also indicates, however, what he preferred about Brown's earlier hypothesis: "the genius of Brown's original proposal ... is that the evangelist himself was responsible for the second edition, and the redactor was a close disciple who used the evangelist's material in the final redaction" (Culpepper 2005:42–43).

A final stage of composition (J3) began after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. and probably ended some time after the alleged excommunication of Jewish Christians from the Diaspora synagogues in the mid to late 80s C.E. In this time frame, the community for which the Fourth Gospel was written (sometimes referred to as “the Johannine community” or “the community of the Beloved Disciple”) experienced a traumatic period of fractured relationships. Externally, the hostility experienced by Jewish Christians at the hands of non-Christian Jews reached its climax, making it impossible for Christians to remain in fellowship with Jews who did not believe in Jesus and causing a total separation. While the exact process and date of this fracture is hotly disputed, the overall scenario of persecution is still compelling and helps to explain a number of features unique to the Fourth Gospel.

As the Johannine community experienced fractured relationships externally, internal relationships became strained as well. The unity of the Johannine believers was threatened by a group mentioned in the Epistles of John who regarded Jesus in a gnostic or at least a protognostic way (see 1 John 4:1–3).⁸ Whether this happened before or after the separation from the synagogues is hard to say. In any case, by the time of J3, the Johannine believers no longer enjoyed united fellowship with their non-Christian Jewish brothers and sisters. To make matters worse, the internal unity of the church was severely impaired by false teaching of a christological nature.

It is in this third stage (J3) that a third figure emerged in the composition process. In discussions of J3, this key figure is normally referred to as the Ecclesiastical Redactor.⁹ The Ecclesiastical Redactor, writing in the last decades of the first century C.E., added material that came from the Evangelist but was not used in the earlier edition of the Gospel, and also used material that did not derive from the Fourth Evangelist. So, essentially, the Ecclesiastical Redactor added material to the first edition of the Gospel,

8. There is evidence in the Gospel and in the Epistles of John of a struggle with an early form of Gnosticism or “proto-Gnosticism.” The most thorough recent study of this thesis is that of Schnelle 1992. Moloney notes that Raymond Brown rejected an anti-Doctetic purpose in the Fourth Gospel but asserts that he did so “wrongly, in my [Moloney’s] opinion” (Brown and Moloney 2003, 9 n. 17).

9. See Rudolf Bultmann 1941. Writing of Brown’s theory of the composition of the Fourth Gospel, Culpepper admits that he has “been intrigued that Brown assigns so much material to the redactor” (2005, 43). In Brown’s view, the Ecclesiastical Redactor added material that had been preserved from earlier stages of the tradition (3:31–36; 6:51–58; 12:44–50; 15–17; probably chs. 11–12) as well as material that did not derive from the Evangelist (1:1–18; 21; etc.). Culpepper suggests that in Brown’s reconstruction the final form of the Fourth Gospel is more the work of the Ecclesiastical Redactor than of the Beloved Disciple; in my view, Culpepper exaggerates this point (2005, 43).

which had been composed and published by the Fourth Evangelist in J2. The Ecclesiastical Redactor also moved the cleansing of the temple to its present position in John 2 and inserted the lengthy discourse material in John 15–16 and the prayer of Jesus in John 17 (whose principal theme is oneness or unity). The Ecclesiastical Redactor also added John 21 (a second ending, after the clear and logical closure provided by the Fourth Evangelist at 20:31) and a number of other passages, including the Prologue (1:1–18), which emphasizes that “the Word became flesh” (1:14). Obviously, the Ecclesiastical Redactor is a hypothetical construct, as is my account of this figure’s contribution to the Fourth Gospel. At the same time, this figure, while elusive, is intriguing. If such a person existed, what was his or her motivation in disrupting the work of the Evangelist? Why did the Ecclesiastical Redactor include the material outlined here, even at the risk of disturbing the “narrative unity” of the Gospel?

In order to answer the above questions, one may begin with an analysis of the material that many commentators regard as additions to the Fourth Gospel in the final stage of the Gospel’s composition. Perhaps the least debatable of these is the final chapter of the Gospel. Few doubt that the first edition of the Fourth Gospel ended at John 20:30–31. Here the narrator rounds off the story with a final flourish concerning the Gospel’s purpose: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” Here the sense of an ending is palpable. The narrator brings closure to the story. The book is finished; the story is told. While more could be added from various sources (“Jesus did many other signs”), there is nothing more to be said.

No sooner are these verses offered, however, than a new chapter (21) begins. This section may well be termed a “second ending.” As many have pointed out, the Greek vocabulary of this section is different from the rest of the Fourth Gospel, suggesting that it came from a different hand: that of the Ecclesiastical Redactor (see Brown and Moloney 2003, 41). So why did the Ecclesiastical Redactor add this second conclusion? To answer this question, we must attend to the details of the text itself.

The story of John 21 revolves around a fishing trip (21:1–14) in which the risen Jesus appears to seven disciples (including Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple). These disciples are out at sea and have caught nothing. The risen Jesus appears on the shore and tells them to put the nets out on the right side of the boat, whereupon they catch a multitude of fish, so many that they have difficulty drawing the nets in. The Beloved Disciple recognizes that it is Jesus who has called to them, and Peter jumps in the sea and swims to his Master.

Jesus takes bread and fish and, using a charcoal fire, makes a breakfast by the sea. During this breakfast, Peter is restored after his earlier moral failure, also beside a charcoal fire, in John 18.

This “second ending” is full of many intriguing hints concerning the Ecclesiastical Redactor’s vision and the purpose behind his later additions to the Fourth Gospel. One of the most significant appears at 21:11: “Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.” Much has been made of this statement over centuries of Johannine scholarship. The symbolic significance of the number of fish, 153, has generally formed the center of exegetical interest, and a plethora of possible interpretations (mostly fanciful) have been suggested (see Brown 1966–70, 2:1074–76). This is somewhat regrettable, because these theories have the effect of distracting readers from the really important detail, which is not the fish.

What is it that causes the narrator such a sense of surprise here? Is it the number of the fish, or is it that the nets, in spite of that vast number, were not broken? I am not alone in thinking that it is the latter (see discussion in Longenecker 1995). I believe that the Ecclesiastical Redactor was fascinated by the unbrokenness of the nets because the Ecclesiastical Redactor’s vision is for the “unbrokenness” or “oneness” of the church. This conclusion is suggested by a number of factors in John 21—a chapter, as noted earlier, that most scholars agree was added by the Ecclesiastical Redactor. This chapter records the narrator’s astonishment about the unbroken nets. It records the restoration of the broken relationship between Simon Peter and Jesus. It deals with an apparent issue of brokenness in the relationship between Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple. For the Ecclesiastical Redactor, what really matters is that people and things do not get broken.

This emphasis is further indicated by the narrative echo effects between John 21 and John 6. When Jesus lights the charcoal fire and prepares bread and fish for breakfast (21:9), the reader is supposed to perceive echo effects with 6:1–14. There Jesus goes up a mountain at Passover and performs a miracle of multiplication with five barley loaves and two small fish. At the critical moment the narrator records that “Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted” (6:11). The reader should pay close attention to the actions of Jesus in this verse. Any reader aware of the same story told in the Synoptic Gospels (see Mark 6:30–44; Matt 14:13–21; Luke 9:10–17), as well as the Synoptic institution narratives (Mark 14:22–25; Matt 26:26–29; Luke 22:14–23), should perceive what appears to be an omission. In John 6:11 Jesus is portrayed performing three actions: he takes the bread; he gives thanks over the bread; and he distributes

the bread to his disciples (who then distribute the bread to the crowds). What is missing here is any reference to Jesus “breaking” the bread. While Mark, Matthew, and Luke include this act, the narrator in John 6:11 excludes it.

There are any number of possibilities why John 6:11 omits overt reference to bread “breaking.” It could be that John’s tradition did not contain the word. I find that unlikely, but it is possible. It could be that the word was regarded as implied (by reference to the distribution of the bread) and therefore redundant. This is also possible, but, given the widespread awareness of the tradition of bread breaking in earliest Christianity, I find that unlikely, too. A third suggestion is more compelling. In this scenario the redactor, at the very last stage of the Gospel’s editing, deliberately removed the reference to the breaking of the bread but left reference to “taking, giving thanks, and distributing.” But if the Ecclesiastical Redactor did that, what would have been the motivation?

We have already seen that the Ecclesiastical Redactor has highlighted the detail of the unbroken nets in John 21:11. The theme of “unbrokenness” is evidently of significance to this late editor of the Fourth Gospel. In the case of the fishing nets, the imagery most likely has an ecclesiological significance. In Luke 5:1–11, Simon Peter had been commissioned by Jesus to catch people in the net of the church. Fish are symbols of new converts, nets of the church. The unbroken nets of John 21:11 express something of the Ecclesiastical Redactor’s longing for unbroken Christian community.

In the case of John 6:11, the lack of reference to breaking occurs in the context of bread, which, in at least the Synoptic tradition, is a symbol in the institution narratives of the body of Jesus. Jesus breaks the bread as he institutes the Last Supper as a symbolic presentation of the breaking of his body a few hours later on the cross. What is remarkable about John 6:11 is the reluctance of the narrator to include any mention of the bread being broken. This is all the more interesting when one tracks ahead to John 19 and the description of Jesus’ death.

One of the passages in John 19 that commentators believe may have been added by the Ecclesiastical Redactor is 19:31–37. In this passage the narrator describes how the Sabbath was fast approaching and how there was now an urgent need to bury the bodies of the crucified victims (before this very sacred Passover Shabbat began). The soldiers on guard at Golgotha are commanded to break the legs of the three victims (a practice known as *crurifragium*). The two criminals on either side of Jesus have their legs broken because they are still alive. However, in Jesus’ case the *crurifragium* is not performed. The reason given is that Jesus was already dead. Instead of breaking his legs, one of the soldiers pierces his side with a lance; blood and water are said immediately to pour out of the wound. The narrator inserts a comment

stating the veracity of the eyewitness testimony at this point. A note is then added concerning another reason why Jesus' legs were not broken. Not only was there a practical explanation (Jesus was already dead); there was also a prophetic explanation: "For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced'" (19:36–37).

In John 19:36, Jesus' legs are not broken because he is the fulfilment of the Festival of Pesach or Passover. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is declared by the Baptist at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel (1:29, 36). Now, at the end of the story, Jesus' death is described in ways that indicate he is the perfect Passover lamb. Using the device of *inclusio* once again, the Gospel writer returns to a theme that was explored at the Gospel's beginnings. Like the unblemished male lamb of Exod 12, Jesus' bones are not broken. Jesus is the Passover Lamb who is sacrificed at the same time as the lambs were being prepared in the temple precincts.

But there is more to the matter than this. The Ecclesiastical Redactor has inserted this passage in the Johannine passion narrative to exploit not only the Passover theme but also the theme of "unbrokenness." Here what matters to the Ecclesiastical Redactor is that, even on the cross, Jesus was the unbroken Messiah. Like David Dunn (Bruce Willis) in M. Night Shyamalan's film *Unbreakable*, Jesus' body remains unbroken.¹⁰ So the Ecclesiastical Redactor's ecclesiology promotes unbrokenness, just as his Christology does. Just as the nets are not broken, so the bread is unbroken and the body is unbroken. Indeed, a few verses before Jesus' death, the Gospel underlines this theme all the more by reporting how the seamless tunic of Jesus was not divided by the quaternion of Roman soldiers: "let us not tear it," the soldiers say (19:24).¹¹

All this seems to point to the Ecclesiastical Redactor's vision in which fragmentation and division—whether referring to the body of Christ or the Christian community—are regarded in the most negative light. The Ecclesias-

10. M. Night Shyamalan is one of the most original screenplay writers in contemporary mainstream cinema. His movie *Unbreakable* tells the story of David Dunn, the sole survivor of a train crash. While the train and all its occupants are broken, Dunn emerges without a broken bone or a scratch. His broken relationships with his wife and son then begin to heal. He also develops a relationship with a man called "Mr. Glass," a man with a medical condition that causes his bones to break very easily. The movie explores the enigmatic and increasingly disturbing relationship between these two polar opposites.

11. John uses σχίζω of Jesus' body in 19:36, as he does with the nets in 21:11. The ecclesiological, or at the very least sociological, importance of this verb is indicated by the way the noun σχίσμα is used in the Fourth Gospel of people being divided about Jesus (see 7:43; 9:16; 10:19).

tical Redactor's vision is for what Mark Appold has called "the oneness motif" (Appold 1976). Perhaps this is a major reason why the Ecclesiastical Redactor felt it important to insert John 17, even at the expense of interrupting the narrative sequence and movement of the second half of the Gospel. In John 17, the prayer of Jesus is summed up in the phrase "that they may be one" (17:11, 21 [2x], 22 [2x], 23). Jesus' prayer is for oneness between the brothers and sisters of the Christian community, a oneness that reflects that enjoyed between the Son and the Father (10:30). "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (17:20–21). Six times in this prayer Jesus asks the Father that his disciples may enjoy oneness – even complete oneness (17:23). The Ecclesiastical Redactor's longing is for an unbroken people.

It is precisely at this point that something of a paradox emerges, for in inserting so much material that promotes the theme of unbrokenness, the Ecclesiastical Redactor succeeds in breaking the text! In underlining the importance of unbrokenness in the *content* of the story, the Ecclesiastical Redactor succeeds in creating brokenness in the *form* of the story. Put simply, the redactor values unbrokenness in a broken text!

How are readers to respond to this? It is at this point that I want to highlight the potential of deconstructionist criticism in biblical studies. A deconstructionist approach could proceed in a variety of directions, but two readings spring to mind. The first employs a negative approach, the second a more positive one.

In order to appreciate how such a critique might work, one must first understand deconstructionist criticism. David Seeley's book *Deconstructing the New Testament* is a helpful place to start (1994, 103–28).¹² Seeley begins by observing that narrative criticism treats biblical books as unified compositions. A narrative critic examines a story such as the Fourth Gospel as a unity. All inconsistencies in the narrative are suppressed by the narrative critic, who brings a totalizing vision of order and symmetry to the gospel. Francis Moloney has emphasized this point as well, noting that "contemporary narrative criticism ... claims that it is possible to identify a strong narrative unity across the Fourth Gospel." Moloney goes on to add, "much attention is given to the literary shape of each section of the story; the way each section follows logically from what went before and leads directly into what follows ... the

12. For a more demanding and less convincing application of the method of deconstructive criticism to the Fourth Gospel, see Counet 2000. See also Kelber 1993; Jasper 1998; Moore 1993.

consistency of the underlying point of view of an author who has shaped and told a story of the life of Jesus" (2003, 31, 33). Moloney's focus here on order and symmetry echoes Culpepper's assertion in *Anatomy* that "in its present form, if not in its origin, the Gospel must be approached as a unity, as a literary whole" (1983, 49).

Seeley's deconstructionist approach directly opposes *Anatomy's* foundational claim. Deconstructing the Gospels (or any other New Testament text) begins with the reader attempting to locate what Derrida (the father of deconstructionism) called the "differences" in the text.¹³ These differences may be fissures in the narrative. They may be different voices, the different witnesses implied by these cracks and gaps. The important thing for a deconstructionist is that these tensions threaten the unity and coherence of the Gospel. They suggest not only different voices but also voices that contradict one another. Thus, a New Testament text may promote an idea (e.g., about Jesus) and at the same time contain material that undermines what is being proposed. Locating these dissenting voices, these witnesses to "difference," lies at the very core of what it means to "deconstruct" the New Testament. In this respect, deconstructing the New Testament is not entirely dissimilar from the more traditional approach of source criticism. Indeed, Seeley argues that New Testament scholars have really known Derrida all along, that the relentless pulling apart of a text's strands leads to the same kinds of questions asked by historical critics of the Bible for many years (Seeley 1994, 17).

So how might this approach help us with the Ecclesiastical Redactor's disruptive behavior in the Fourth Gospel? The answer is not hard to find. A deconstructionist approach would start by taking the theme of oneness in the Fourth Gospel and then showing how the work of the Ecclesiastical Redactor undermines the very position that the Gospel professes. In such a light, the brokenness of the text, indicated by its *aporias*, would be regarded as a seismic fault line. It would be used in evidence against the Fourth Gospel, indicating that the Fourth Gospel speaks with an uncertain voice, that its argument deconstructs itself. The redactor, in attempting to profess unity, disrupts his own text and creates disunity. In the process, the Ecclesiastical Redactor devises a text fraught with fragility and instability, creating incoherence in the very attempt to argue for coherence.

This is one way of reading the Ecclesiastical Redactor's disruptive behavior from a deconstructionist perspective: as a critique designed to subvert

13. See Seeley 1994, 17, where Seeley mentions Derrida's notions of "play" and "difference." Later in the book Seeley rightly points out that the "differences" in a biblical text are more insightfully discerned and exploited by deconstruction (1994, 159).

the Gospel's thesis. But there is another way of approaching the paradox of "unbrokenness explored in a broken text." This alternate approach also exploits the playful strategies of deconstructionist criticism.

At this point, I want to enlist the help of one of the foremost literary critics of our time, Harold Bloom. Bloom contributed an insightful essay called "The Breaking of Form" to a volume entitled *Deconstruction and Criticism* (1979). Bloom begins this essay by speaking about "meaning," referring to the etymological roots of the word and its connection with "moaning." He proposes that the meaning of a poem is often a form of complaint, then goes on to point out that the way in which a poem utters this complaint is through what he calls "the breaking of form."

What is "form"? Bloom employs a somewhat subjective definition, interpreting form as something that arouses and fulfills a desire. The form of a work is that which leads a reader to anticipate another part—an expectation that is satisfied in the sequence of the parts. Bloom argues that the poet will often create meaning through the breaking of form, through the disruption of an anticipated sense of order and plenitude. Meaning is thus produced in the moment of rupture. Indeed, this kind of transgression of writing produces not only meaning but also revelation. Bloom says of poets, "They instruct us how to break form to bring about meaning, so as to utter a complaint, a moaning intended to be all their own" (Bloom 1979, 1). Bloom gives examples of this phenomenon from twentieth-century American poets such as Wallace Stevens and John Ashbury, but I will provide an example from one of the British war poets, Wilfred Owen.

Toward the end of World War I, Owen began to write poems that deliberately avoided pure rhyme. Instead of ending lines with full rhyme, Owen developed an artful use of assonance known as half-rhyme (see Weeland 1960, ch. 6). It is not clear when Owen began to use this device or who (if anyone) influenced his style. By 1917, however, Owen was using half-rhyme in a very subtle way. Breaking a previously used form, that of full rhyme, Owen disrupted what the reader anticipated and refused to provide the gratification of an expected harmony: a full rhyming ending to a line.

Of the fourteen poems where Owen used half-rhyme, thirteen were written in the last twenty months of his life (1917–1918). One of these poems, "The Show," contains the following lines:

Whereat, in terror what that sight might mean,
I reeled and shivered earthward like a feather.
And death fell with me, like a deepening moan.
And He, picking a manner of worm, which half had hid
Its bruises in the earth, but crawled no further,

Showed me its feet, the feet of many men,
And the fresh-severed head of it, my head. (Owen 1963, 50–51)

Here Owen consciously breaks form. He uses assonant endings—“mean,” “moan,” “men”—and, in the process, evokes meaning and moaning. In the squalor of the trenches, Owen refuses the temptation to employ full rhyme. There is nothing harmonious, after all, about trench warfare, drowning as it is in a storm of cacophony. Owen employs a poetics of rupture, his technical innovation of half-rhyme creating a haunting sense of complaint, as in the following lines from “Insensibility.”

But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns,
That they should be as stones;
Wretched are they, and mean
With paucity that never was simplicity.
By choice they made themselves immune
To pity and whatever moans in man
Before the last sea and the hapless stars;
Whatever mourns when many leave these shores;
Whatever shares
The eternal reciprocity of tears. (Owen 1963, 38)

Owen’s use of assonance here highlights precisely how the breaking of form can evoke not just meaning but revelation. The half-rhyme at the end of his lines points to the unanswered and even unanswerable questions that trench warfare provoked. Far from imposing an artificial harmony and order on his thoughts, Owen subverts the reader’s expectation by not resolving lines into rhymes. In the process of not gratifying the reader’s longing for form, Owen creates a poignant complaint about the disorderly and discordant existence of trench warfare. In this respect, the meaning emerges out of the moaning. Revelation issues out of the breaking of form.

This model may help us when it comes to the Gospel of John. What if something like this is going on in the Fourth Gospel? What if the Ecclesiastical Redactor, in creating a plea for unbrokenness in a broken text, is not undermining the value that he is longing to profess? What if, instead, the breaking of form is part of the strategy? What if this very act of textual rupture is in itself a lament, a “blessed rage for order,” to quote Wallace Stevens?

Here, of course, I am in the realm of speculation. But there is something compelling about this second kind of deconstructionist reading of the Fourth Gospel. The first approach (the deconstructionist critique) is still valid as

one of many reading possibilities, but I cannot help seeing the paradox of unbrokenness in light of Bloom's remarks: as an example of the revelation that comes out of rupture. Could it not be that this very act of disrupting the Fourth Gospel's story is an artful literary device, as innovative and subtle as Wilfred Owen's use of half-rhyme? Could it not be that in the trench warfare of his community's life, the Ecclesiastical Redactor chose to employ what one might call "Johannine half-rhyme" to make his plea for oneness? If the answer is yes, then there is something remarkably postmodern about this vision, embracing as it does the fragmentation and discordance of life, as well as a desperate longing for wholeness and integration.

The Ecclesiastical Redactor has created a broken book and in that respect admits to and laments the world's ambiguities and fissures while at the same time including what one might call "epiphanies of unbrokenness"—not just the big calls to unity such as the command to love another (13:35; 15:12) but also the little details of unbroken bread, unbroken tunics, unbroken legs, and unbroken nets. The Ecclesiastical Redactor's fracturing of the text of the Fourth Gospel is a lament, a "moaning" that reveals "meaning." In light of this, perhaps there is an ironic resonance to Jesus' words in 10:35, "the Scripture cannot be broken." John's Gospel is itself Scripture. Indeed, the Ecclesiastical Redactor inserted comments in both 18:9 and 18:32 that reveal this, emphasizing the way in which Jesus' words in the Fourth Gospel have the same status as Old Testament Scripture. When Jesus declares "the Scripture cannot be broken," he of course means that Scripture cannot be nullified. But given the thesis put forward here about "the breaking of form," the statement—even as a parenthesis—calls out for a wider application.

So, returning to Alan Culpepper's memorable description, the Fourth Gospel is indeed "magnificent but flawed"—flawed in the sense that the Ecclesiastical Redactor would not allow the Gospel to remain a unified story. The Ecclesiastical Redactor did not say with the soldiers in 19:24, "Let us not tear it." Rather, the Ecclesiastical Redactor functioned like a *bricoleur*, causing disruptions and disjunctions in the text because that is precisely what he was witnessing in the Johannine community.¹⁴ In spite of a great longing for

14. This again is deconstructionist terminology (deriving from Derrida and Levi-Strauss). A *bricoleur* is a jack of all trades, to be distinguished from a craftsman. While the craftsman creates a stable and organized system, the *bricoleur* produces a *bricolage*: an assortment of different odds and ends from older material, rearranged in new combinations. In this sense, the Fourth Evangelist is the craftsman creating a stable and coherent narrative, while the Ecclesiastical Redactor is the *bricoleur* who adds material, disrupting the original logic of the story and creating more of a collage than a unified and stable narrative.

unbroken fellowship, the Ecclesiastical Redactor was seeing severe *schisma*, both externally (in relation to fellow Jews) and internally (in relation to the early gnostics). The Ecclesiastical Redactor therefore caused “the breaking of form” in the very act of making a plea for unity.

In his pioneering study *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, Stephen Moore made a strong case for the potential of deconstructionist criticism in Gospels studies (Moore 1989; see also 1994). He argued that a deconstructionist reading would pay particular attention to the disruptions of a Gospel’s internal logic. He pointed out how this kind of ploy (even play) has a close family likeness to source criticism, which “could be said to have prefigured deconstruction in its often scrupulous attention to minute tears in the ostensibly smooth fabric of the text” (1989, 164–65). The fact that both source criticism and deconstructive criticism use the word *aporia* is an interesting signal in this regard, although it should be said that deconstructionist criticism uses it in a different way (Derrida 1993).

At the same time, Moore stated that this way of reading, resistant as it is to coherence, goes further than source criticism, giving what he called a “synchronic twist” to the diachronic moves of historical criticism. It enables the reader to listen more attentively to the undercurrent of difference and cacophony in the Gospels and in the process teases out what Barbara Johnson in *Critical Difference* called “the warring forces of signification within the text itself” (quoted in Moore 1989, 166). While narrative criticism blocks out disruptive data in the Gospels, deconstructionist criticism feels for the fault lines and elucidates the revelatory power of these ruptures. While in some hands this could be used to undermine the Fourth Gospel, in other hands it can be used to value it all the more.

Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* remains a justly celebrated work. At the time of its publication, *Anatomy* provided the most thorough example of narrative criticism to date. It was a masterful introduction to the art of narrative criticism in Fourth Gospel research and set the course for many future studies (which were, in some respects, footnotes to *Anatomy*). At the same time, Culpepper’s work, brilliant though it was, needs to be taken further. In describing the Fourth Gospel as “magnificent but flawed,” Culpepper exposed the magnificence but obscured the flaws.¹⁵ Had he included a chapter on “structure,” these flaws or *aporias* might well have

15. Culpepper’s perspective is clearly summed up in the following statement: “One can identify multiple editions, stages in the composition of the Farewell Discourse, and even a displacement at one time of chapters 5 and 6, but overall the gospel makes sense in its present order and form. It is the work of a skilled author, and it generally defies reconstruction of the wording of its sources” (2005, 42).

been given more prominence. But he did not, a fact that is all the more striking when one recalls that *Anatomy* is subtitled *A Study in Literary Design*.

One of the tasks for the future is to integrate the diachronic or historical methods of interpretation with the more synchronic methods (such as narrative criticism), which tend to focus exclusively on the final form of the text. Another task is to explore how some of the more recent methods, such as deconstructionist criticism, can work alongside a method that so reveres “narrative unity.” These and other adventures are imminent, if not already upon us. One thing is certain, however: we look into the future standing on the shoulders of the giants of our past. One of these giants is Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, and it is a privilege to be a part of a volume honoring that work and its esteemed author.

THE WORD OF BARE LIFE: WORKINGS OF DEATH AND DREAM IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Tat-siong Benny Liew

Jacques Lacan has famously declared that “it is not enough to decide on the basis of its effect—Death. It still remains to be decided which death, that which is brought by life or that which brings life” (2001, 341). Of course, for Lacan, whose psychoanalysis has much to do with one’s relations to death and the dead (Luepnitz 2003, 232), there is a difference between biological and psychic death, and hence between mortality and vitality. Nevertheless, his statement does highlight, in a delightfully ironic way, how talk about death can—or should—be both specific and ambiguous at the same time. This is, in short, my proposal for reading Jesus’ death in the Gospel of John. The more specific one gets, the more complicated and, yes, ambiguous it becomes in relation to Jesus’ life and his offer of life.

To elaborate on my reading of Jesus’ death in John, I will begin—in accordance with the rationale and goals of this volume—by situating and clarifying both my methodological assumptions and my chosen topic of study vis-à-vis R. Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983). I hope that the subsequent directions that this essay will take will also become more understandable in light of this opening discussion.

BEYOND ANATOMY AND BEFORE AUTOPSY

It is by now well known that Culpepper’s “classic” study is a formalist analysis that focuses on how the Fourth Gospel as a whole makes sense through the internal workings of its literary parts. Imaging or imagining John’s text as a body, Culpepper’s choice to call, and thus categorize, his own study as an “anatomy” is most apt. Knowing that Culpepper’s book burst into a critical landscape that was more or less dominated by historical-critical methods and that it did so before all the readings with a “post-” prefix further altered the field, I want to be clear that what I have to say should in no way be read

as a devaluation of its moment. As I hope the rest of my essay will show, formalism's emphasis on close reading continues to play an important role in my own work. Since, however, formalism is for me "an *approach*, not an allegiance" (Spillers 2003, 85, emphasis original), let me address *Anatomy's* limits.

Focusing on the structure or design of an anatomy, it becomes easy to forget that a body, whether textual or biological, is more than bones, muscles, nerves, organs, veins, and how each part functions in relation to the others. More than that, a body functions in context(s). In other words, a focus on anatomy can fall prey to what may be called the "autonomy fallacy," the misconception that a body can be taken in isolation from or independent of its environment, its surroundings, or other bodies. The assumption of autonomy leads, then, not only to anatomy but also atomization. Zeroing in on the anatomical features of a solitary body out of site means that numerous relations that may exist around this body are also out of sight. When relations are overlooked, anatomy and—or *as*—atomization turn(s) easily into objectification, and questions of ethics and politics become the concerns only of those who toil outside the (scientific?) laboratory.

Stephen D. Moore has made similar criticisms of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* by comparing Culpepper's formalism to an "eye-agram," for which issues of context and ideology are peripheral—hence the blind spots of Culpepper's reading practice (Moore 1996, 57–58). Moore goes on, however, to compare Culpepper's exegetical method to prosection, or anatomization of cadavers, and reads *Anatomy* as an autopsy (1996, 58–72). Moore does this not only to link Culpepper's formalist analysis with the critical dissection or amputation that historical-critical practitioners perform on biblical texts but also to question the effects of modern biblical scholarship through its development. I would, however, like to direct Moore's insights and incisions toward a related but different direction.

Whether it is John's corpus as corpse or Jesus' corpse in John's corpus, Moore reveals that Culpepper's ocular obsession is also a postmortem preoccupation. In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida uses the word "exorbitant" to talk about the need to "open" a reading, and hence the need to go beyond the necessity of and respect for "commentary" (1976, 157–64). With this word, which implies what is outside the orbit of the eye ("ex-orb-itant") or off the beaten track, Derrida seems to suggest—especially in light of his later writings (e.g., Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000; Derrida 2001)—a reframing of one's reading with the purpose of being excessive or extravagant in opening up to the vulnerable other. My reading of death in the Gospel of John, then, is not only set within an ideological and a sociopolitical framework but also pursued out of a concern for the other, particularly the displaced or

colonized, both past and present. Instead of a formalist fascination with the postmortem in and of the Fourth Gospel, this essay will look at John's production and politics of both life and death within a larger colonial frame. For lack of a better term, it will consider the "extraformal," or what is historical and contingent—particularly the displacement and movements of colonized bodies—to destabilize reading anatomies.

DEATH THREATS AND DEATH BOUND

Johannine scholars have long observed that John's Jesus is very conscious of his impending death and that he seems to have come to this consciousness very early. After a couple days of recruiting disciples and before he performs his very first sign at Cana, Jesus already talks about his coming "hour" (2:4). As John will make crystal clear, Jesus' "hour" is none other than his time of crucifixion (see, e.g., 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1). While the mortality rate was significantly higher in the Greco-Roman world of the first century C.E. than in today's geopolitical West, it is also well known that life expectancy became relatively "decent" for those who managed to survive the first five or ten years of life (Frier 1999, 86–88; Kelly 2006, 102–6). If death was most threatening to infants and children, why do we find John's (adult) Jesus being so conscious of, or obsessed with, his own death? Instead of the theological responses conventionally given by Johannine scholars—whether in terms of Jesus' divinity and/or soteriology—I will follow Derrida's suggestion and attempt an exorbitant reading.

Frier, in his essay on Roman demography, correctly points out that the so-called law of averages must not blind us to the differences that existed within Roman society (1999, 90). Although Frier himself focuses on class difference—or how the Roman elites generally enjoyed a longer (and better) life than the lower classes—one should keep in mind that while class/status and race/ethnicity are not collapsible, they do have a tendency to intersect. This is particularly so in colonial situations, in which an entire population may be put into a limbo zone of "included exclusion" or "excluded inclusion." That is to say, the colonized, being generally impoverished and/or racially/ethnically marked, are a part of but also apart from the empire. They form and belong to a somewhat separate but surely secondary social stratum. Being "secondary," as I will now proceed to argue, they are also more vulnerable to death.

The paradox of being simultaneously included and excluded—or, more accurately, being included on the premise of exclusion—is precisely how Giorgio Agamben characterizes what the Romans categorized as the *homo sacer*, or "sacred person" (1998). Pointing to a reference to one "who may be killed but not sacrificed" in Pompeius Festus's second-century C.E. Roman

text *De verborum significatione*, Agamben locates not only an act that is beyond law and sacrifice but also a zone where rule and “exceptions to the rule” become indistinguishable. This zone is that of the sovereign, where power can suspend the very judicial order that it itself establishes. The powerless subjects within that same zone, being liable to the whims and under the threats of the sovereign, are all potentially excludable or killable without recourse to law or sublation to the sacred. As such, they also reside in a zone of indistinction as *homo sacer*, which Agamben further glosses as “bare life.” Putting sovereign power and bare life as two sides of the same coin or as uncanny doubles within the same zone, Agamben aims not only to show how sovereignty is always already reliant on its death threats and executions but also to stress that more and more people are falling into the category of *homo sacer* or “bare life” today. Rather than thinking that “bare life” is the state or fate only of, say, Holocaust victims, political refugees, or those imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay, Agamben points to the comatose patient—one who is kept in a zone of indistinction between life and death by contemporary medical technology, yet subject to the fluctuating criteria of death given by the medical and legal establishments—to suggest that “today there is no longer any one clear figure of the sacred man ... because we are all virtually *homines sacri*” (1998, 115).

Agamben’s argument about the widening or expansion of the “bare life” zone should not, however, lead one to forget that historically some people have indeed been more vulnerable as bare life than others. Writing about the experiences of African Americans, Sharon Patricia Holland has suggested, for example, that blacks in the United States have been living in a “space of death”—a death zone, if you will—for five hundred years and that the story of African Americans is basically one of “death-in-life” (2000, 3–5). Citing John Edgar Wideman’s mournful assertion that “black lives are expendable, can disappear, click, just like that,” Karla FC Holloway argues that untimely deaths among African Americans in the twentieth century were so pervasive and persistently “color-coded” that what she calls “black death” has become nothing less than a “cultural haunting” within African America (2002, 1–3, 7–8). This kind of haunting is arguably best expressed by Richard Wright, who writes that by the time he was eleven, “[although] I had never in my life been abused by whites, ... I had already become as conditioned to their existence as though I had been the victim of a thousand lynchings,” because he knew that “there existed men against whom I was powerless, men who could violate my life at will” (1969, 83–84). Using Agamben’s work as a lens to read the writings of Wright, Abdul R. JanMohamed, in a thesis that resonates with the work of both Holland and Holloway, presents Wright as one who writes *as* and *about* a “death-bound-subject” (2005). JanMohamed uses this term to

describe a black subjectivity that is “formed, from infancy on, by the imminent and ubiquitous threat of death” (2005, 2).

Within an empire, whether that of ancient Rome or that of the modern United States, a particular segment of the population under colonial “sovereignty” tends to become particularly vulnerable to death, and such a susceptible segment is often singled out on the basis of class/status and/or race/ethnicity. For these groups, being who they are and being dead are almost always one and the same, because their vulnerability to death—whether in the form of fear or of direct experience—is not only known but also deeply internalized (Holloway 2002, 58–59). The applicability of this theory across time and locations can be seen in the early work of Frantz Fanon, where he described black men in the Caribbean and Africa under French colonization as living in “a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region” (1967, 8; see also Gilroy 2005, 11, 22, 48, 50). Later in the same work, Fanon stresses that his fellow blacks are colonized with “a sense of nonexistence” rather than one of inferiority (1967, 139). He also specifically mentions in a footnote that he began working on *Black Skin, White Masks* with a view to writing about “death wish among Negroes” (1967, 218 n. 6).

Following Agamben’s argument that sovereignty turns more and more people into “bare life” should not lead one to forget that there have always already been specific groups or communities that are more exposed than others. In fact, Agamben himself states that “the Jews are the representatives par excellence and almost the living symbol of the people and of the bare life that modernity necessarily creates within itself, but whose presence it can no longer tolerate in any way” (1998, 179). Keeping in mind, however, that (1) Agamben traces *homo sacer* back to the Roman Empire of the second century C.E. and (2) that Jews and their land were colonized by the Romans during this same period of time, I would contend that the treatment of Jews as bare life should not be conceived as only a *modern* phenomenon. Since codification generally lags behind lived reality, I would go further to argue that what Agamben identifies, highlights, and explains in terms of bare life is helpful in thinking about Jewish life within the Roman Empire of the first century C.E. If so, John’s portrayal of Jesus’ death-consciousness may be inseparable from John’s awareness of the “bare life” status of most Jewish people.

JEWES AND JOHN WITHIN THE DEATH ZONE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

As illustrated by its gladiatorial combats, the Roman Empire was capable not only of violence but also of cleverly combining punishment with entertainment for the sake of empire building. While Rome was never shy in executing its own when “treasonous” or “rebellious” acts were involved, gladiator shows

and other similar “game[s] of death” (Plass 1995) generally doubled as, and perhaps had their origins in, the empire’s machinations to rid itself of its enemies and captured aliens. According to Polybius, the Roman parades of booty and captives known as the “triumphs” were basically recreations of military victory (*Hist.* 6.15.7–8). Such a parade could be performed, however, only if the victory had registered five thousand enemy casualties, and parades specifically included, as part of the performance, the public execution of the enemy’s captured leader (Kyle 1998, 42). By the time Julius Caesar hosted his “mock battle” in the Circus in 46 B.C.E., the pretend fighting had become the occasion in which captives were actually executed in mass (Dio Cassius 43.23.3–6; Suetonius, *Iul.* 39.4; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.102). Captives, along with criminals and slaves, were also condemned to be the “original” gladiators, though later on other persons desperate for a chance of fame and fortune were also recruited to perform voluntarily in this kind of “indirect” death sentence (Coleman 1990, 54–56, 61–62). As Seneca points out, gladiators were not necessarily armed, armored, or trained; as feeble and pitiful victims of mass murder, they brought out the entertainment-seeking crowd’s frustration and even rage rather than compassion (*Ep.* 7.3–5). In addition, the Roman Empire employed a variety of “direct” death penalties, such as decapitation, crucifixion, or immolation. Not all direct death penalties were equal, however. By the time of Hadrian, the difference between “simple death” (*capite puniri*) and “ultimate punishment” (*summa supplicia*) was clearly articulated, with the latter—which would include crucifixion and immolation—generally reserved for those who had low or no status, particularly noncitizens (Garnsey 1970, 122–36).

In other words, the Roman Empire not only made torturous and aggravated death a routine (see also Glancy 2005) but also targeted foreign victims of Roman military conquests and colonial enterprise for such a routine. It is important to point out also that there was nothing routine about these deaths, since the Roman Empire made it a point to “ritualize” them into public and stylized displays, or what Donald G. Kyle tellingly calls “spectacles of death” (1998). Like Fanon’s “Look, a Negro” (1967, 111–12) or Pilate’s “Behold the man” (John 19:5; see also 19:14), these performative sights simultaneously assailed and confined the colonized. While the spectacle nature of indirect death penalties such as the gladiatorial shows is obvious, even direct death sentences in the Roman Empire—like crucifixions—were rarely, if ever, executed without an audience. This is clear in the Fourth Gospel’s references to persons near Jesus’ cross (19:25–27), the proximity of Golgotha to the city, and the number of people who read the trilingual inscription (19:20). Killing, especially of aliens, was a “satisfying spectacle” (Seneca, *Ep.* 95.33) because it was a ritual that revealed and reinforced Rome’s imperial power (Martial,

Spect. 5.65). While many in the Greco-Roman world joined voluntary associations to partly ensure a proper burial (Kloppenborg 1996, 18–21; Klauck 2003, 47–48, 52), imperial Rome would deny the bodies it executed a proper burial as a sign of deep disrespect or disdain for these often-alien bodies in life *and* in death. Again, John seems to be alluding to this when he has Joseph of Arimathea ask Pilate for permission to give Jesus' body a proper Jewish burial (19:38–42). The torment, torture, and finally death suffered by the victims functioned, then, as threatening object lessons and as a kind of visual terror that a similar fate would await anyone who dared to question or challenge the empire; as such, these spectacles were vital to its order and security.

To put the discussion above in Agamben's vocabulary, Rome's imperial sovereignty was built upon the definition of its subject populations—particularly its colonized populations—as bare life. Seeing the colonized as disposable byproducts, damaged goods, or abject leftovers of its imperialist projects, Rome placed them under a death sentence that might be commuted at will and at any time, without legal or religious consequence. Like the lynchings Wright witnessed as he was growing up, the public display of death is—but also is more than—a trauma for the colonized and a simultaneous “gala” or even a “gallery” for the colonizers. The display actually also positions bare life as both victim and spectator; or, more accurately, it victimizes bare life also *as* spectator (Marriott 2000, 4–6, 14; see also Holloway 2002, 62–64). That is to say, “death-bound” subjectivity comes into being precisely in the move from looking *at* to looking *away from* these various spectacles of death, when these spectacles turn into specters of death. Roman spectacles of death were, in other words, ritual acts that interpellate subjectivities on both sides of the colonial divide.

Jews of the first century C.E. were no strangers to Rome's imperial sovereignty. They were, in other words, bare life that was readily or always already killable. Unlike Plato, who famously declared philosophy as a necessary means to practice death (*Phaed.* 64a, 80e), Jews of the first century C.E. seemed to live almost necessarily under death threats and executions. Philo, for instance, says that in 38 C.E., under the governorship of Flaccus, Alexandrians were given free rein to take Jewish homes, shops, and lives (*Flacc.* 6.41–43; 8.53–57; 10.73–75). Philo goes on to report that even during the celebratory season Jews were flogged, hung, run over, tortured, and executed at a theater (*Flacc.* 81–85). Of course, things were not much better in Judea. Pilate, as the procurator of Judea from 26 to 36 C.E., killed many Jews who protested his use of resources from the Jewish temple treasury for public works (Josephus, *A.J.* 18.60–62). When a Roman soldier “flashed” himself during one Passover in front of, and thus enraged, the gathering Jewish pilgrims flocking into Jerusalem for the festival, another procurator, Cumanus (48–52 C.E.),

decided to send in the Roman troops as a precaution. The mere sight of these troops caused so much panic and pandemonium that twenty thousand Jews died in a stampede (*A.J.* 20.105–122).

Perhaps one can say, on the evidence of Philo and Josephus, that the Romans basically adopted a “kill deal” as their default policy with Jews during the first century C.E. Whenever there was any sign of unrest—even when it involved a conflict between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors, not to mention any form of disrespect or challenge of Roman authority, including any prophecy or promises that stirred up popular imagination or yearning—the Romans would tend to respond with a military crackdown to ensure or enforce the so called *pax Romana*. Cumanus, for instance, did so more than once. Immediately after the Passover debacle noted above, he unleashed a military show of force when a slave of Caesar’s was robbed outside Jerusalem and again when a conflict broke out between the Samaritans and some Jews of Galilee (*A.J.* 20.113–114, 118–122). But Cumanus was hardly unique. According to Josephus, procurators such as Fadus (44–46 C.E.), Felix (52–60 C.E.), Festus (60–62 C.E.), as well as Roman officers who had jurisdictions beyond Judea, such as Quadratus (Syria) and Catullus (Libyan Pentapolis), all employed the mighty Roman armies to kill and threaten Jewish lives (*A.J.* 20.2–4, 97–98, 125–133, 167–178, 188; *B.J.* 7.443–446). Of course, the best-known mass killings of Jews happened during the First Jewish-Roman War in 66–72 C.E. (Josephus, *B.J.* 2.457–468, 487–498; 5.446–451; 6.403–406, 418–420; 7.23–24, 37–40, 96, 142–157, 407–419; see also Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13).

These threats and realities of death are particularly significant in view of the general scholarly convention to date the Fourth Gospel near the end of the first century, which effectually situates John between the two Jewish-Roman Wars (66–72 and 132–135 C.E., respectively). While Louis H. Feldman and Meyer Reinhold are surely correct that there were various attitudes toward the colonized Jews not only at any given time but also over time (1996, 306), the fact that there were three major Jewish revolts against the Romans within a seventy-year period—the two Jewish-Roman Wars plus the Lukkas-Andreas Rebellion or the “War of Quietus” in 115–117 C.E.—certainly indicates that things were particularly tense during this time span. Perhaps the death anxiety with which first-century Jews lived was analogous to that articulated by the late Norman Mailer for modern Jews in his post-Holocaust manifesto, “The White Negro.” According to Mailer, “we will never be able to determine the psychic havoc ... upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years.... [W]e have been forced to live with the suppressed knowledge that ... we [are already] doomed to die” (1959, 338). Under the Roman machination of death threats and executions as a result of “games,” penalties, and

wars, the Jews of John's time can be understood to have lived within a collective experience that became increasingly similar to Mailer's description.

Writing about the slave trade to the so-called New World, Hortense J. Spillers states that "flesh," rather than "body," is a particularly helpful term for registering and reflecting on the violence suffered by African Americans (2003, 206–7). "Flesh," Spillers's moniker for the "cultural *vestibularity*" of being captured, displaced, colonized, violated, and always already vulnerable, is related or comparable to Agamben's "bare life" (2003, 207, emphasis original; see also JanMohamed 2005, 10). John, of course, famously introduces Jesus with the phrase "the Word became *flesh*" (1:14). How may John's story of this "flesh" or "bare life" that straddles between "worlds" come across in light of Rome's colonization of Jews in general and Rome's "spectacles of death" in particular? Is there a space to talk about Jesus' death in John *as* a human condition (*pace* Koester 2005)? Is there room to read the Fourth Gospel without making close reading and history—and I mean here the historical contexts of both John and his twenty-first-century interpreters—mutually exclusive?

DYING, DREAMING, AND DREAMREADING

In addition to Jesus' obsession with his "hour," other references to death appear in the Gospel of John. In fact, keeping in mind that John presents Jesus' death as the slaughtering of the Passover lamb (19:13–16, 31–37), one may say that death already makes its appearance in the Gospel's very first chapter, when the Baptizer presents Jesus as "the lamb of God" (1:29, 36). After Jesus' first reference to his own "hour" before the performance of his first "sign" (2:1–11), he later heals—as his "second sign" (4:54)—a royal official's son who is about to die (4:47, 49). In the aftermath of yet another of Jesus' signs, he will contrast his living bread that leads to eternal life with manna that cannot keep one from dying (6:49–50, 58), while his dissenters will accept death as an inevitable reality even for Abraham and the prophets (8:53). In light of the protracted trial and controversy over the healing of the one born blind (9:1–41), John's Jesus will talk about how thieves and robbers, in contrast to a good shepherd who dies for his flock, come to steal, kill, and destroy, as well as how wolves snatch and scatter the sheep (10:10–18). Then, of course, John narrates the story about Lazarus (11:1–44) to transition to the last week of Jesus' life (13:1–19:42). Even in the epilogue, one finds a "prediction" of Peter's martyrdom (21:18–19; see also 13:36–38) and an "explanation" of the Beloved Disciple's death (21:20–23). One can say, then, that John's Gospel or "good news" ironically begins and ends with death, or that it moves from Jesus' death to the deaths of his followers.

Instead of thinking that the Gospel of John is a direct and unproblematic reflection of a historical situation—after all, Derrida makes it a point to distance his exorbitant reading from the referential fallacy (1976, 3)—I would like to see the Fourth Gospel as an ideological product *and* production that comes out of, as well as seeks to act upon, the ideological structure of its time (see also Conway 2002). Catherine Edwards, in her book on death in Rome, has suggested that literary accounts of deaths were popular inspirational readings in the first two centuries C.E. and that gladiatorial combats were not only spectacles of death but also occasions of “death as spectacle” (2007, 20–21, 46–77, 131). That is to say, these literary and live performances of death taught and disciplined Roman citizens how to face death as military men, which explains why, for instance, the first gladiator shows were connected with aristocratic funerals before they became monopolized by the imperial family (Edwards 2007, 47, 49, 52–53). What if we treat the threat and reality of death that we have identified thus far as an ideology that works its way into the Gospel’s structure like (or better yet, *as*) both a nightmare that haunts and a dream that works out Mailer’s “suppressed” or repressed “knowledge” (1959, 338)?

To unpack the relations between death and dream in the Fourth Gospel, I will need to look at how its changing narrative pace correlates with its changing narratives about death, as well as how this narrative unfolding—in terms of both speed and complexity—is a manifestation of the unconscious in dreamwork.

It has been well recognized in Johannine scholarship that time slows down in the Fourth Gospel. While it takes only eighteen verses to move from a time beyond time to the time of the Baptizer (1:1–18), John spends the first half of his Gospel moving through three Passovers (1:19–12:50) and almost the entire second half on the last week of Jesus’ life (13:1–20:31). This slowing down of time is, I propose, accompanied by a heightening depiction of death that not only gives coverage to the death of more characters but also becomes more nuanced about the causes of Jesus’ death. As noted above, in the first ten chapters of the Gospel, John refers to (1) Jesus’ awareness of his coming but not yet arrived “hour” (2:4); (2) unfulfilled desires or attempts to kill Jesus (7:1, 19, 25; 8:37, 40, 59; 10:31–33); (3) Jesus’ discussions and debates that bring up the reality, inevitability, or finality of death (5:21, 24; 6:49–50, 58; 10:10–18); and (4) the near-death experience of the royal official’s son (4:47, 49). Henry Staten has suggested that Jesus’ earlier signs, in comparison to his raising of Lazarus, “do not concern the bestowal of life directly but rather the preservation and repair of a life already in existence” (1993, 38). Moreover, these references tend to be isolated, and, perhaps more importantly, Jesus and the royal official’s son are able to avoid death.

In contrast, beginning with the story of Lazarus in John 11, John will have different characters actually experience death (Lazarus and Jesus) or be “foretold” of their deaths (Peter and the Beloved Disciple). Not only are the narratives about death—especially those of Lazarus and Jesus—lengthy and detailed, but they are also given in explicit relation to one another. For instance, John’s narrative literally goes for overkill in stressing that Lazarus is dead (11:4, 13–14, 17, 21, 32, 39, 44), but in the process of doing so John also weaves in Thomas’s statement to the disciples that they should accompany Jesus to die with him (11:7–8, 16). Similarly, the prediction of Peter’s upcoming martyrdom leads to the question surrounding the death of the Beloved Disciple (21:18–23). In spite of, or in contrast to, Jesus’ statement that Peter should not be concerned with the fate of another (21:22), Jesus’ own death is presented as closely tied to that of Lazarus. Lazarus’s death and resurrection renew the determination of some to kill Jesus (11:46–53), and Jesus’ raising him from the dead leads to a desire to kill Jesus as well as to rekill Lazarus (12:9–11). There is therefore a kind of ripple effect in this latter part of the Fourth Gospel, where death becomes more like a chain reaction than just an individual experience.

Since John, unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke, has Jesus cleanse the temple early (John 2:13–22) rather than late in his Gospel, some scholars describe his raising of Lazarus as the last straw that causes the Jewish authorities to resort to murder. This description is, however, not very accurate, since John has narrated desires or attempts to kill Jesus before chapter 11 (7:1, 19, 25; 8:37, 40, 59; 10:31). What is strategic about Jesus’ raising of Lazarus is thus not the desire or even determination to murder Jesus but a new revelation of what is behind this desire to murder. Previously, the desire to murder Jesus had something to do with an inability or unwillingness to accept Jesus’ words (8:37), because those words sound blasphemous (10:32–33). But after Jesus’ raising of Lazarus, John suddenly introduces—if one does not count the ambiguous “royal official” (4:46–54)—a new set of characters into the narrative: the Romans (see also Moore 2006, 54). We learn from Caiaphas that the Jewish authorities need to keep the Jewish people calm and under control so as not to arouse suspicions and bring about preemptive strikes from the Romans (11:47–53). In other words, the high priest and the authorities want to eliminate Jesus to protect not only their own privilege but also the Jewish people and nation. Obviously, in Caiaphas’s estimation, Roman attention and intervention must be avoided at all costs, since the Romans are bound to engage in a “shock-and-awe” operation if they detect any smell of trouble. Not only is Caiaphas’s reasoning repeated in 18:14, but Roman characters—from the cohort that arrests Jesus to Pilate who tries him—also begin to play a more direct and explicit role in the Gospel. Their appearance leads, in turn, to the

open acknowledgment—not once, but twice—that the sovereign right to kill belongs to the Romans and them alone (18:31–32; 19:10). This sequence of two different reasons for killing Jesus—first, because his words offend the sensibilities of certain Jewish authorities; second, because of the need or desire of some Jewish leaders to demonstrate their loyalty to Rome—is repeated in a condensed form in 19:7–16, after an indirect and ironic allusion to the exclusive Roman right to crucify (19:6).

I would suggest that these two movements—(1) from scattered and isolated references to death to more pervasive and connected descriptions of death, and (2) from describing Jesus' death as a result of an intra-Jewish power struggle to framing it within Roman colonialism—are comparable to the movement in dream-work, in which a latent content struggles to work its way through the unconscious to manifest itself. Fanon has suggested that the muscles, emotions, and psyches of the colonized are paralyzed during the day but can run free in dreams at night (1963, 52). The latent content here is a Roman ideology of death that formed, informed, and deformed Jewish existence, especially in the period between the two Jewish-Roman Wars. While J. B. Pontalis (1978) makes a connection between the workings of death and dream in Sigmund Freud, and Said makes a distinction between a latent and a manifest content in colonial ideology (1978, 201–25), I would like to talk about how death can become a latent, nightmarish structure that haunts colonial subjectivity (see also JanMohamed 2005, 22–27). This structure is latent not only because being “death bound” is, as Mailer points out in “The White Negro,” a “suppressed knowledge” (1959, 338), but also because manifesting one's own station as “bare life” involves a complicated spec(tac)ular crossing on the part of the colonized (Spillers 2003, 397). As W. E. B. Du Bois points out in *The Souls of Black Folk*, colonized or displaced people live with a “double consciousness,” or “this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others” (1953, 2–3). Seeing oneself as a “spectacle of death” means that living as “bare life” may become what Pierre Bourdieu calls *habitus* (1977), those socialized actions and reactions that one acts out more or less unconsciously or subconsciously. To articulate or explain this *habitus*, one will need to go beyond Du Bois's “double consciousness” to develop a third eye: one will need to see oneself seeing as one is seen. This need for the third eye may also help to explain why John slows down his narrative and devotes a total of nine chapters (12–20) to the last week of Jesus' life. These chapters not only follow his raising of Lazarus but also contain a significant amount of soliloquy on the part of Jesus. They can be read as the site or the process through which John works out and clarifies his understanding of (Jesus') death.

Just as this complicating of the spec(tac)ular may be helpful or even necessary to manifest a latent structure, reading John's manifest content as

a struggle to express a latent content can also help to complicate—or even make a different sense out of—passages that would otherwise seem rather anti-Jewish. When one reads Jesus' accusation that his Jewish opponents have a devilish human-killer as their "father" (8:44), one may well detect a latent or veiled reference to none other than Rome, given that (1) John gradually comes to articulate killing as exclusively a Roman prerogative (18:31–32; 19:10); (2) John nuances the move or motive to kill Jesus beyond blasphemy to the threat of Roman interventions (11:47–53); and (3) Roman ideology presented Caesar as the empire's paternal patron or even *paterfamilias* (Agamben 1998, 88–89). In addition, John shows, although in the circuitous ways of a dream, that Roman imperialism is not only (following Agamben) contingent upon turning colonized Jews into bare life or potential victims of its machination of death but also (supplementing Agamben) relies on making them extensions of that machination, or living appendages of its killing machine. For the sake of self-preservation—whether the "self" here is referring to a personal or a collective life—subjects who are themselves "death bound" may end up binding others to death. Put differently, the desire to live in a colonial situation can easily turn into a desire to kill even one's own. The perverse logic of colonialism means that it is often through murder that a colonized person or people may concretize their own desire to live. The Roman machination of death, then, "not only shapes one's view of things but demands an endless response" that predisposes relations between Jews and Romans as well as poisons relations among Jews (Spillers 2003, 378). Imperial death threats and sentences can make the colonized collaborate in oppressing their own and hence in their own oppression. In other words, it is tunnel vision or short-sighted to see John's depiction of some Jews—particularly their attitudes and actions toward Jesus—as "anti-Jewish." One must not fail to see the Roman Empire always already looming and lurking in the background.

JOHN'S IMPROVISATIONS AND INVENTIONS OF DEATH

If one reads the Gospel of John in terms of both death-work and dream-work, one must remember that, according to Freud, every dream is also a wish (1953–74, 4:124). That is to say, the Fourth Gospel is not only a site through which John works out and makes manifest—no matter how laboriously or obliquely—the latent structure of death that binds the colonized, but also the representation of a desire to get out of the "death zone" to which the colonized have been confined. Hence, one finds in John's Gospel no narrative of the Last Supper before Jesus' crucifixion, but only a postcrucifixion and postresurrection meal (21:1–14) to remember the dead and restore the living to life (see Lucian, *Luct.* 24; Morrison 1993, 142–43). Likewise, one finds more

than a Jesus returning to demonstrate the physical scars of his crucifixion, a show-and-tell that may be read as similar to Emmett Till's mother deciding to have an open casket during his son's funeral "so that the world could see what they had done to my child" (cited in Holloway 2002, 25; see also 130) and to "pass on" the "cultural haunting" of being African American (2002, 136). In addition, one reads in John—besides the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus—numerous promises of and references to "life," whether in terms of its resurrection, eternality, or abundance (2:19–22; 3:14–15; 5:21, 24–29; 6:39–40, 44, 54; 8:51; 14:19). Given John's portrayal of Jesus as the Passover lamb, it should also be noted (1) that the Passover sacrifice is not only about death but also *deliverance* from death (Koester 2005, 145) and (2) that this deliverance from death is set within a context of Israelites being displaced and enslaved in Egypt.

According to Michael Taussig, "the space of death is important in the creation of meaning and consciousness, nowhere more so than in societies where torture is endemic and where the culture of terror flourishes. We may think of the space of death as a threshold that allows for illumination as well as extinction" (1987, 4). Virgil, who also figures regions of the dead as places of revelation and inspiration, would have agreed (Edwards 2007, 17). It is important to point out here that even Bourdieu, in his theorization of *habitus*, insists on making room for improvisation within the socialized repertoire that one inhabits (1977, 79). I would suggest that John's Jesus, in a way that parallels those in gay communities who lived in the shadow of the AIDS epidemic at the end of the twentieth century, ends up improvising a subversive and threatening way of life. According to Judith Halberstam, many gay persons, as a result of and in response to the threat and reality of AIDS, improvise to produce a "queer time," or "alternative temporalities ... [and] futures [that] can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (2005, 2). They do this, Halberstam suggests, in spite or perhaps because of how often and how much they are considered to be expendable bodies whose premature deaths are taken for granted rather than taken seriously by mainstream society. Yet, "by rethinking the conventional emphasis on longevity and futurity, and by making a community in relation to risk, disease, infection, and death," there arises "the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" and one that "show[s] little or no concern for longevity" (2005, 2, 4).

Since I have already argued for reading John's Jesus as a colonized Jew who lives knowingly in the shadow of death, let me now point to his belief in the *productive potential* of death. John's Jesus not only looks at his life in light of his imminent death but also reinterprets death for the purposes of life.

The best expression of this theme is arguably when, in response to a group of Greeks who come looking for him after his raising of Lazarus and several days before his last Passover, Jesus makes the somewhat enigmatic statement that “unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:24). Immediately after this, Jesus gives what I take to be his key improvisation in making death productive. Like Halberstam’s description of those who live life with abandon in the shadow of AIDS, John’s Jesus suggests that “the one who hates his life in this world will keep it into life eternal” (12:25). In other words, if imperial sovereignty controls its subjects via a threat of death, one way to begin resisting this control is to let go of one’s fear of death and be willing to die. Is this why John says that this dying and resurrecting Jesus is “the truth” and that “the truth will make you free” (8:32; 14:6)? Is this what Fanon is referring to when he talks about Vietnamese who had an “Asiatic attitude toward death” that confounded Europeans (1967, 227)? Not only does John present Jesus’ crucifixion as glorification (3:14; 8:28; 12:32)—and thus as Jesus’ “triumph” in a sense (Koester 2005, 141–42)—but John also surprises many Johannine scholars by presenting Jesus as one who seems to remain in control during his arrest and passion (Ashton 1991, 489).

I think Helen C. Orchard is onto something when she suggests that John’s Jesus is not only a victim of violence but also a colluder or conspirator in his own betrayal and death (1998). But rather than following Orchard in pitting these two views as mutually exclusive, I would propose that what is in fact most impressive is how John implies a change of Jesus from “bare life” to one who is in control of his own death and life. Midway through the Gospel, Jesus announces that he will willingly lay down his life “on his own accord and in his own authority” (10:17–18). Instead of stopping Judas from betraying him, Jesus lets Judas go from his “light” (1:4–5, 9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46) into the “night” (13:27–30; see also 11:9–10; 12:35–36) even though he is fully aware of Judas’s intentions (13:21–26). During his arrest, Jesus not only stops Peter from attempting to fight back with a sword (18:10–11) but also seems to welcome rather than avoid his coming captors. John says that Jesus, “knowing everything that was coming upon him, *went out* and said to them, ‘Whom are you looking for?’” (18:4). As if this were not enough to emphasize Jesus’ agency and initiative, the Johannine Jesus “surrenders” himself in this fashion not once but twice (18:7–8). I put “surrender” in quotes here because it is really an inaccurate description of what happens in light of the strange phenomenon that occurs between 18:4–5 and 18:7–8. When Jesus voluntarily identifies himself as the very one whom the Jewish delegates and Roman cohort are coming for, John tells us that these captors, despite their “lanterns, lamps, and weapons” (18:3), “withdrew backward and fell to the ground” (18:6).

This dramatic or even unrealistic contrast of Jesus stepping up to speak and his captors stepping back to fall is in line not only with what Norman R. Petersen has called the “special language” or “anti-language” in John (1993) but also with the often expressionist or fantastical characteristic of dream-work (JanMohamed 2005, 27). Whatever else this strange event may signify, it shows how Jesus gains control over the “death zone” set by the Romans by being willing to step right up to and into death. A similar instance appears at 14:25–31. While the reference to the Holy Spirit—particularly its function in reminding and elucidating—intimates the dynamics of the Gospel in terms of dream-work (14:25–26; see also 15:26; 16:13–15), Jesus’ emphasis that “the ruler of the [Roman?] world ... does not have any power over me” (14:30) shows that at issue in John is not just the affirmation and the gift of life but also the ownership of death. Jesus’ consistent claim that he himself is laying down his own life is nothing less than a declaration of choice and agency. John’s Jesus is not only detached but also *deliberate* in death.

In contrast to reading the Fourth Gospel as providing some kind of “pie in the sky” to overcome death (e.g., Reinhartz 2001a, 113–15), JanMohamed’s work on what he calls the “death-bound subject” is particularly helpful here. Linking Agamben’s bare life with Orlando Patterson’s work on slavery as a form of powerlessness, natal alienation, and social death (1982), JanMohamed suggests that bare life signifies social death. Even if such a person is physically alive, the fact that he or she can be killed at any time and for any reason means that such a person does not really count and has no legitimate place in the social body (2005, 16). JanMohamed goes on to propose that bare life, or the life of a “death-bound subject,” is “*defined by the need to avoid the possibilities of life as well as the possibility of death*” (2005, 19, emphasis original). Feeling the threat of death and not wanting to die, a “death-bound subject” ends up controlling or repressing his or her desires for a fuller life. As a result, he or she stays within this death or deathly zone of “neither quite alive nor quite dead” (2005, 19). I think John can be read as alluding to this position also in a dream-like—that is to say, an indirect and inexact—manner. John says adamantly and repeatedly that Jesus comes to give (eternal) life (1:4; 3:15–16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:21–26, 39; 6:27–68; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 14:6; 17:2–3; 20:31). John also says, however, that some Jewish persons who come into contact with this giver of life decide to keep a certain distance because they are fearful of being “put away from the synagogue” (9:22; 12:42; see also 16:2). The reason for this fear can be seen in the comparison that Patterson makes between what he calls the slave’s “natal alienation”—that is, being socially dead with no rights or claims of birth—and a “secular excommunication” (1982, 5). Being separated from a synagogue was a particularly severe form of social death for a Jew living under Roman colonization, since, as noted earlier, living under Roman rule

in the aftermath of the First Jewish-Roman War was in itself already a form of social death. Yet, being distant from Jesus—ironically, for John—is itself death (8:21, 24). John is therefore pointing to a situation in which certain Jews are choosing one form of death to avoid another form of death.

This situation is, in effect, what JanMohamed describes as the conundrum of a “death-bound subject” or bare life. One settles for living a social death in order to avoid a physical death, since one knows that one tiny step out of the circumscribed “death zone” will result in a literal death. To break out of this conundrum, a “death-bound subject” must become aware of this nonchoice but then proceed to choose to fight back with a counterthreat. If sovereignty’s control over bare life is contingent upon a threat of death, what may break that control is the threat on the part of the bare life to “‘actualize’ his [*sic*] potential or postponed death” (2005, 17; see also Agamben 1998, 184–85). JanMohamed calls this willful counterthreat—this willingness on the part of bare life to risk actualizing the death threat of the colonial master—“symbolic death” (2005, 17). More specifically, JanMohamed defines this “symbolic death” as being “constituted by the death of the slave’s subject-position as a socially dead being and his *rebirth* in a different subject-position” (2005, 17, emphasis added). It is a switch from “living within death” to “dying within life” (2005, 128, 275) or to making a life out of re/signing death. By “re/signing death,” I mean here the doubled sense of resigning to die and deconstructing the death zone in terms of Agamben’s connection between sovereignty and bare life.

JanMohamed’s work provides not only a mirror to a strand of Greco-Roman philosophy that seeks to embrace death as a response to or cure of one’s fear of death—like Lucretius by way of Epicureanism or Seneca through Stoicism (Edwards 2007, 78–112)—but also a different lens to read and think about John’s emphasis on being “born anew” or “born from above” (3:1–8), as well as the two resurrections that are recorded in the Fourth Gospel. The symbolic nature of Lazarus’s resurrection is, in my view, particularly pertinent. While most Johannine scholars would read Lazarus’s resurrection as a symbolic foreshadowing of Jesus’ resurrection, I would suggest doubling its symbolic function to include the sense that is being proposed by JanMohamed. Put differently, Lazarus’s death and resurrection may signify a change of subject position rather than something literal, and this may be the case not only for Lazarus but also for Jesus. Thus, John’s Jesus clarifies from the beginning of the episode that Lazarus’s sickness does not lead to death (11:4) and refers later to Lazarus’s state as “having fallen asleep” (11:11). Although it is conventional within Johannine scholarship to read these as references to Lazarus’s resurrection, it is important to keep in mind that John also makes a specific reference to a desire to (re)kill Lazarus after his resurrection

(12:10–11). In other words, Lazarus can die (again). If so, his (first) death *and* resurrection may well be symbolic in the way JanMohamed describes it, especially if one considers the workings of death in terms of and through dream.

This altering of subject position is an improvisation, or even an invention, like a discovery produced by death. It is so decisive, important, and influential that one can only compare it to a new birth. Death, in other words, is understood by John as actually a ground for being, or a new being who cannot be easily recognized (20:14; 21:4). Derrida has made a similar suggestion in *Aporias* (1993), where he further compares death to border: both, for Derrida, are figures of passage and nonpassage involving a certain “step” and “not” (1993, 3–11). John will likewise present Jesus’ death and resurrection as involving his passing of numerous borders. John’s Jesus passes from the “world above” to the “world below.” He also crosses the Jordan back into Judea to raise a dead Lazarus, a crossing that is in many ways a “step” into his own death despite his disciples’ initial “not” (10:40–11:16). These “steps” that Jesus takes into death will ironically, according to John, also provide Jesus a ticket back to the “world above” and his followers a path or a way through the death zone (13:1; 14:2; 16:5, 7). Instead or in protest of being circumscribed to a death zone—a state of “living within death” that is also a liminal space between life and death—John dreams and writes of a Jesus who cannot only defy death but who can also travel between worlds and go through closed doors (20:19, 26). Since part of the rationale for providing a proper burial has to do with safeguarding the realm of life from that of the dead (Klauck 2003, 72), Jesus’ resurrection and his ghost- or phantom-like appearances seem to suggest that—the good intentions of Joseph and Nicodemus notwithstanding (19:38–39)—nothing can secure a space from Jesus’ intrusions and egressions. Mark Stibbe (1991) has helpfully pointed to John’s Jesus as an elusive character, since other Johannine characters often find themselves playing “hide and seek” with Jesus (1:38; 5:13–14; 6:15–25; 7:1–11, 30, 44; 8:20–22, 59; 9:12, 35; 10:39–40; 11:1–6, 46–57; 12:36; 18:4, 7; 20:15). There is a politics of mobility here that must not be overlooked. Jesus will continue to haunt the world below with his return, whether in his own bodily form, the form of the Holy Spirit (7:39; 14:15–27; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22), or the bodies of his disciples (16:16–22).

Derrida is, of course, known for suggesting that writing spells both the death of *and* the resource for *logos* (1976, 73). Linking, then, death with resource or invention, one may further point to Derrida’s understanding of invention as an opening to the other (1989) and ask if the death of the Word in John functions also inventively as such an opening. John’s Jesus has declared himself a “gate” or “door” (10:9). I have argued elsewhere that building community is one of John’s purposes and that Jesus, while dying on the cross, facilitates a new adoptive relation between his mother and the Beloved

Disciple to signify the coming together of such a community (19:25b–28; Liew 2002, 195–96). If one can read Jesus' so-called high priestly prayer before his suffering and death (17:1–26) as his will, and if Seneca (*Ep.* 26.6) and the Younger Pliny (*Ep.* 8.18.1) are correct to suggest that one's will tells the truth of a person's character and commitment, then the community of his followers is of utmost importance to John's Jesus. He sees his life and his work continuing in the community that survives him.

Jesus prays for his community in John 17 because it is not enough for Jesus to be reborn or resurrected from the death zone alone. As shown by both Lazarus and the Beloved Disciple, re/signing oneself to death—or “symbolic death”—does not necessarily mean that one will not literally die. Jesus needs to create and continue a community to keep his fight against the colonial master alive. According to the late classics scholar Nicole Loraux, funeral oration had a role in the “invention of Athens” (1986). Loraux argues that, as a didactic speech, the funeral oration “does not so much console as it explains and exalts” heroic deeds, militaristic virtue, and, most of all, fidelity to the *polis* (1986, 48). In doing so, the funeral oration provides the crucial bridge or transition through which a person's primary loyalty would move from one's family to the city of Athens: “When the mothers, as members of the family, are moved away from the funeral pyre, they are integrated for the first time into the civic universe. Referring to their sons as *kleinotatous en Argeiois* (the most illustrious of the Argives), they recognize at last the rights of the city over the children whom they had wanted entirely for themselves” (1986, 49).

Loraux's work not only provides another perspective to read the new relation that the crucified Jesus facilitates between his mother and his Beloved Disciple (19:25b–28) but also reinforces a political reading of Jesus' death in John. It is as if John is insisting, through his writing of Jesus and Jesus' death, that despite threats of social death, physical death, and even genocide, a new community will come into being and keep generating and regenerating. By embracing his impending death, John's Jesus ends up reentering life in the “world above” and regenerating life as well as conceiving a fictive family in the “world below.” Again, given the fluidity between the deaths and resurrections of Lazarus and Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, one may say that Jesus' death and resurrection function to “unbind” the (biological) bindings—and hence also the imperial ties—that keep Lazarus (socially) dead, entombed and separate from other human beings, family, and community (11:44). This exchange of adoptive love and relations over social death through symbolic death can also be seen in the conversation between Jesus and Peter after Jesus' resurrection (21:15–19). Love for Jesus after his resurrection is expressed by caring for others, but doing so necessitates one's awareness or acceptance of one's own death in the manner of Jesus.

Community, or caring for one another *within* the community (John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17), is another well-recognized theme in Johannine scholarship. Again, I would suggest that reading John in the colonial framework that I have outlined here provides a distinctive rationale for this emphasis. As intimated earlier, the Roman machination of death could turn bare life into extensions of that machination and thus poison relations among the colonized. This reality is evident in the desire of some Jewish authorities to kill Jesus, perhaps for the sake of pacifying their Roman masters. James Baldwin seems to be alluding to a similar dynamic when he writes, “For who has not hated his black brother? Simply *because* he is *black*, *because* he is brother” (1967, 213, emphasis original). Something similar to this transference of what David Marriott calls “negrophobic fantasies” by blacks to other blacks (2000, 82) may also have taken place among late-first-century Jews, given what Peter Schäfer calls “Judeophobia” in the Greco-Roman world (1997). When the African American author and gay activist Joseph Beam “dare[s] *us* to dream that we are worth wanting each other” (1986, 239, emphasis original), he is writing to counteract two hostile fronts simultaneously: heterosexism within the black movement and racism within the gay movement. In other words, Beam’s *dream* is not unrelated to the intracommunal love commanded by John’s Jesus. In emphasizing how the “world” will hate him and his followers (15:17–16:3; 17:14), Jesus’ love command for his community may well have something to do with his recognition that hate can be both internalized and transferred. Fanon has repeatedly alluded to this dynamics of “projection” and “transference” (1967, 190–91) with what he calls “the racial distribution of guilt” (1967, 103), particularly how Antilleans would not only distance themselves from but also denigrate other blacks, particularly Senegalese (1967, 26, 38, 101–3, 113, 148, 162–64 n. 25, 180–83; see also Marriott 2000, 82–84). Competing for the colonizers’ recognition and possessions, colonized people often end up committing violence against one another (Fanon 1968, 307–9; see also Willett 2001).

It is, in this light, significant that Jesus’ community of followers in John is made up of not only Jews but also Samaritans, Greeks, and potentially many others. The (potentially?) wide base of Jesus’ community in John, however, does not invalidate my suggestion that Jesus’ love command is partly based on the need to address the psychic transference of and among “death-bound subjects.” While John acknowledges coverage limits (20:30; 21:24–25), he nevertheless devotes considerable space to detailing the relations between Samaritans and Jesus. Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman ends not only with many Samaritans coming to believe in Jesus (4:39–42) but also Jews mistaking Jesus himself as a demon-possessed Samaritan (8:48). Jesus’ inclusion of and identification with the Samaritans are even more striking

because John makes a point to say not only that Jesus is a Jew but also that “Jews do not associate with Samaritans” (4:9; see also 19:21). Instead of projecting or transferring the hatred of the (Roman) world toward Samaritans (as most Jews have supposedly done) or toward other Jews (as some Jews are doing to Jesus), John’s Jesus dies to bring the colonized into a unified and loving community (11:51–52), or what Holloway calls “a macabre fraternity” (2002, 57, 67).

DREAMING AMBIGUITIES

For John’s Jesus to build this community of love and resistance among the colonized, his dream or desire must be recognized. John seems to recognize the difficulty of this recognition, given his own repeated references to the teaching role of the Holy Spirit after Jesus’ departure (7:39; 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 20:22). John’s dream of life and death, or life through death, is difficult because it is full of complications and ambiguities. As noted above, community may allow one’s work of resistance to continue beyond one’s own death, as seems to be the case with the Beloved Disciple (21:18–24). At the same time, Jesus’ conversation with Peter about Peter’s upcoming death, as well as John’s somewhat veiled comments about the Beloved Disciple’s death, seem to indicate that one’s change of subject position—that is, one’s embrace of one’s own symbolic death—must be so pervasive and deep that one must, like Jesus, be ready to embrace even the deaths of one’s family, fictive *and* otherwise. If it is through willingness to die that one may live on an individual level, a similarly ironic and difficult dynamic is true on a communal level. One’s life may perpetuate through one’s “siblings” and “offspring” only if one resists the desire to protect them from dying.

While the potential efficacy of John’s invention can be seen in a couple of examples from Josephus, where the willingness of Jews to die actually caused Pilate and Petronius, a Roman governor of Syria, to turn back from carrying the image of the emperor into Jerusalem or the temple (*A.J.* 18.55–59, 261–283), there is no guarantee that what JanMohamed calls “symbolic death” may not entail actual or literal death. After all, some studies have shown that the border between the symbolic and the literal in the Fourth Gospel is far from stable—they leak, flow, and evolve into each other (Staten 1993; Moore 2003)—so one should not metaphorize the materiality in John’s narrative too quickly or too completely. In a sense, one may say that the proximity and fluidity between symbolic and literal death make community indispensable to the continuation of one’s life and work. John’s dreamy distinction between symbolic and literal death turns out, then, to be a disturbing one, for it implies also a very fine line between murder and suicide. If symbolic death

means being unafraid or even willing to die, and literal death is not only possible and probable in a colonial situation, then John's Jews actually have good grounds to read Jesus' action and articulation as an intent to commit suicide (8:21–22). When Thomas, in response to Jesus' decision to go to Judea for Lazarus despite the known danger ahead, suggests to the other disciples that they should accompany Jesus to die with him, he is in fact also reading Jesus' proposed action as suicidal.

Holloway, writing about "black death," points to a similar ambiguity that exists between suicide and accidental death or even homicide, because blacks who die in living risks or risking life may well be committing "suicide-by-other-means" (2002, 91, 94, 98). If Agamben sees death as political and not just biological, Emile Durkheim has shown years ago that suicide is social instead of merely individual (1951). Perhaps JanMohamed can help to pull all these threads together by explaining how Agamben's "bare life" is stuck with the choice of killing or being killed. Since a bare life cannot really kill the colonizer, one can only kill another colonized person, kill oneself symbolically or literally, or continue to live under the killing threats of the colonizer. That is why JanMohamed also sees rebellion, suicide, and murder as a mixed bag (2005, 21, 229, 277). It is noteworthy in this regard that Agamben himself, in discussing "bare life," also mentions suicide (1998, 136–37), although he insists on differentiating "bare life" from sacrifice in a ritual or religious sense (1998, 113–14). John shows, however, that sacrifice in a different sense may yet be factored into this already complicated and ambiguous mixture of rebellion, suicide, and murder. When Caiaphas suggests that Jesus "should die on behalf of the people rather than to have the entire nation perish" (11:49), he is in effect understanding the murder of Jesus as a sacrifice, in at least the sense of surrendering or destroying someone or something for the sake of a larger or higher goal. More disturbing is the fact that John not only supports Caiaphas's understanding but also proceeds to further enlarge this higher purpose from benefiting a single nation to the greater gathering of all God's dispersed children (11:51–52; see also 18:8). Durkheim would call this an example of "altruistic suicide" (1951, 217–40).

Paul Plass has interestingly compared Roman political suicides to game theory (1995). Like Jean Baudrillard, who links death with economic exchange (1993), Plass argues that Roman suicides, as political games, were governed by implicit rules and were hence uncertain or ambiguous in how things would turn out. With moves and countermoves, those who threatened suicide as a political protest against the emperor might actually find clemency, or they might end up paying the heavy price of losing their life. Plass's metaphors, whether game theory or gift exchange, underscore what John's Caiaphas and narrator both point to: the politics of death is often a matter

of mathematics. Whether the numbers are John's "one" against "many," symbolic death involves a calculation—and hence always already the possibility of miscalculation—of costs and returns. One may, of course, understand symbolic death, especially its "suicidal" or "sacrificial" aspect, as but a desperate means to make sense of bare life; it is done, in other words, out of an already passive rather than an active position in relation to life. However, even this absence of choice, nonchoice, or what looks like a number zero may itself be an inaccurate entry that will make all the difference on a balance sheet. As with challenge and compliance, there is an ambiguity between choice and coercion. The stakes are admittedly high when a miscalculation may lead to not only a literal loss of life but also a waste of death.

Starting with feminist voices, various scholars have articulated hesitations and reservations with this kind of ideology of sacrifice, particularly within the so-called Judeo-Christian traditions (for recent examples, see Boyarin 1999; Castelli 2004). To go back to Loraux's work, this ideology can be read in terms of what Jean François Lyotard calls the "Athenian 'beautiful death,'" which he glosses as the "exchange of the finite for the infinite, the *eschaton* for the *telos*: the *Die in order not to die*" (1988, 100, emphasis original). John's ambiguity between symbolic and literal death—or the fine line between dying well, being willing to die, and wishing to die—becomes even more questionable given the Romans' celebration of suicide as not only a heroic act but also a continuation of Rome's military and masculinist traditions (Edwards 2007, 1, 7, 32, 97). The problem then is more than just what John thinks but if and how his thinking may be duplicating the ideologies of his colonial master.

In addition, even Jesus' agency in embracing his own "hour," which supposedly signifies a change in his subject position from being a "bare life" to one that features will and choice, is ambiguous in light of his ubiquitous references to his "Father." While John makes it a point to distance Jesus' own choice from the desire of Jesus' mother in the wedding at Cana (2:3–4), the same cannot be said about the relation between Jesus and his Father. There is a sense, of course, that John's appeal to the Father may function to resist the power of imperial Rome. This is evident, for example, in Jesus' response to Pilate's claim that Pilate's own power is derivative of another (19:8–11). In addition to highlighting the guilt of Caesar and hence the entire Roman apparatus in 19:11, Jesus' reference to "from above" may also refer to the existence of an authority even above that of Rome (3:31; 8:23). A helpful picture here is the familiar one of the Roman magistrate with the *imperium* and the lictor who always accompanied and went before him. On one level, Jesus is pointing out that Pilate is but a lictor who executes the sentence in the power of Caesar; on another level, Jesus may be suggesting that the entire Roman Empire is but a lictor under the power of his Father (see also Moore 2006, 64). As good as

this latter meaning may sound to an anti-imperial ear, Agamben points out that the only reason why Roman custom would allow a son to place himself between the magistrate and the lictor is because the son was always already “subject to a power of life and death with respect to the father” (1998, 89). In other words, the son’s presence does not contradict but rather confirms the sovereign power of the magistrate as father or father as magistrate.

The Father’s role, then, not only makes Jesus’ own agency ambiguous but also doubles that of the Roman master. Aside from the Roman ideology of *paterfamilias*, John’s emphasis on a relation with this Father that is not based on blood and biology but on *obedience* makes it all the more troubling (1:12–13; 8:31–32, 51; 14:15–15:11; 17:6–9). Not only is such a paternalistic relation similar to the one that exists between colonizer and colonized, but it also, considering its emphasis on obedience, implies a view of others as infants at best and instruments at worst. John’s insistence on the Father’s invisibility (1:18; 5:37; 6:46) further implies that, unlike Jesus and Jesus’ followers, the Father is not flesh (4:24). This contrast implies an even more significant differential in power in light of Spillers’s and Agamben’s work, despite John’s characterization of the Father’s relation with Jesus and Jesus’ followers as one of love (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 14:19–23; 15:9–11; 16:26–27; 17:20–26). The politics of mobility referred to earlier is also framed in terms of a world of light above and a world of darkness below (1:9; 3:3–8, 18–21, 31; 8:12, 23–24; 9:1–5; 11:7–10; 12:44–50; see also Dube 1998). Therefore, John’s rhetoric and logic are, despite small doses of more horizontal or fraternal expressions (10:30; 15:15), hierarchically conceived, and, given Jesus’ emphasis on returning or going to the Father, vertically oriented.

Take, for instance, the intracommunal love command discussed earlier. Since John’s Jesus declares that laying down one’s life for another is love par excellence (15:13; see also Levinas 2000, 216), and since Jesus immediately specifies obedience to his commands as prerequisite of friendship with him (15:14), love and death seem to be always already mingled in John. More importantly, it is hard not to conclude that being willing to die is not a command performance, as seems to be the case with Jesus (10:18). If John’s Jesus, as well as those who follow John’s Jesus, are supposed to be fully subjected to the will of the Father to the point of death (6:35–64; 10:1–18; 15:1–16:4; 21:15–19), then are we not back to a scenario in which a Caesar-like head sits comfortably in a choice seat and watches bare life performing death for his purposes and his enjoyment? This is all the more troubling since John apparently feels no need to explain or account for this hierarchical relation between Jesus and his Father; in other words, John basically takes a hierarchical paternal function for granted. Similar to the way some Jews present Jesus’ challenge as a contest between a king and a Roman emperor (19:12, 15), John

seems to see his situation as a struggle between two paternal and paternalistic authorities who reward obedience with life and reprove disobedience with death (6:50; 8:21, 24; see also Moore 2006, 50).

READING ANATOMIES AND THE ART OF MOURNING

I think the mixture of rebellion, murder, sacrifice, and suicide in the Gospel of John points to the depth of death within John himself as a death-bound subject. He sees his choices as but different types of death: social, symbolic, and/or actual. These are severely limited choices, if they are choices at all. Not only is John “caught up in an infinite labyrinth of death” (JanMohamed 2005, 265) even in resistance, but the structure and logic of imperial sovereignty and bare life also seem to be so pervasive and deep-seated that John is consciously and unconsciously subjected to them even as he dreams of a different subject position. Perhaps more accurately, John’s dream of a changed subject position is possible or thinkable only within the structure and logic that bind, subjugate, and “subjectify” him. To use a vocabulary familiar to both Johannine and Derridean studies, John’s “aporias” or inconsistencies actually—and ironically—reveal the consistent and constitutive power of colonial sovereignty. It must be remembered that John, just like his Jews, is a colonized—thus victimized—agent, even or especially when we point to the inadequacies of his invention of or intervention over death. At the same time, as the term “victimized agent” implies, John is not only a victim: his invention or intervention not only shows that others, including the colonial masters, are constitutive of his own subjectivity but also points to the need to remain open to the other. After all, John reminds us that there are not only many deeds of Jesus that he has failed to record or tell but also that even all the books in the world cannot contain every act of Jesus (21:25). Since this concluding statement is given right after references to the death of both Peter and the Beloved Disciple (21:18–23)—the latter of whom is also credited as the source of John’s book about Jesus living and giving life in the shadow and experience of death (21:24)—I would suggest that John ends by foregrounding his corpus as but traces of the departed. Like the wounds and scars that Jesus shows his disciples after his resurrection (20:19–28), John also makes visible the cuts that he has performed on his Gospel. In a sense, then, one can say that even his Gospel emerges as a corpse; it is declared an aborted text immediately upon its birth. Our attention is thus turned away from the corpus back to, shall we say, the corpses. Instead of seeing reading as anatomizing or analyzing the corpus, perhaps it is more appropriate to think of “reading [the Fourth Gospel] ... as an ... interminable and unforclosable work of mourning” (Michaud 2002, 83).

In retelling Jesus' story, John honors and portrays the struggles of one colonized and departed Jew or Jewish community. Earlier I referred to Derrida's exorbitant reading; let me now point to his suggestion of mourning as "a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generation" (1994, xix, emphasis original). This memory or mourning politics must involve, for Derrida, both a respect and a betrayal of the other, since betrayal is necessary to welcome and to make room for what this other has been awaiting (see also Derrida 1999; Krell 2000). What John awaits is life beyond bare life. In memory of John's memory of Jesus, we must not only recall but also rework what John has written.

After all, learning about one who has departed or seeing another's corpse may remind one of one's own mortality as well as one's vitality. In other words, knowing that you are, unlike the departed or the corpse, still here and alive can become a moment of empowerment. As John 20:30–31 indicates, we are empowered or at least asked to think about our own life and perhaps even to rehearse our own death. If so, then John's Jesus is, like a Roman gladiator, dying for an audience, and John is performing the role of a master of ceremonies. Since John's Jesus needs witnesses and John needs readers, so John's portrayal of Jesus' life and death is every bit as spectacular as other Roman spectacles of death. But how will his audience respond? Will they mourn as Derrida suggests, and/or will they objectify the departed or the dead as passive and hence feminized (Bronfen 1992, 30, 65, 102, 120; Edwards 2007, 43–44)? What may this second potential response imply about female readers of John? All these questions must remain open and the responses ambiguous. This element of ambiguity should not be surprising if one considers not only John's own specialization in double-speak but also the agency of the reader or spectator. Just like John, who internalizes and improvises on the death-bound subjectivity given to him by his colonizers, we who live under the "effective history" (Gadamer 1994, 301–2) of colonialism and the Fourth Gospel can also invent a different future. While we are grateful that John's Jesus does not say anything about "letting the dead bury their own dead" (Matt 8:22; Luke 9:60), we also need not be stuck in John's accounting or algebra of life and death in our own understanding and practice of living, reading, and writing.

As Friedrich Nietzsche suggests, critical students of the past "must possess the strength, and must at times apply this strength, to the destruction and dissolution of the past in order to be able to live" (cited in de Man 1983, 149). To mourn the dead is to keep engaging, including disagreeing with them. After all, to reanimate the dead is to give them "new," and hence at least a partially different, life. Agamben, in his work on bare life, mentions in passing the difference between "anatomy" as a description of inert organs by dissecting a dead body and "physiology" as an explanation of functioning

organs in a living and moving body (1998, 186). Likewise, John's text is for me a mediating zone of intersubjective interaction that is sociohistorically based rather than an autonomous or isolated aesthetic object. In and through the Fourth Gospel, I find and participate in movements between worlds so as to be in touch with others—including the memory, mourning, and betrayal of the dead—for the hope of life.

RESURRECTION DYSFUNCTION,
OR ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF CINEMATIC
ATTEMPTS AT RAISING A STIFF (JOHN 11:1–46)

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Seymour Chatman's structuralist communication model of narrative is foundational to R. Alan Culpepper's narrative analysis in *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, and despite the fact that Culpepper cites Chatman's *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* a total of twelve times, Johannine scholars have been slow to dissect cinematic representations of the Fourth Gospel. This lethargy is not simply the result of belated twentieth-century technological developments. Video tapes began to be mass marketed in 1976, and by the early 1980s a number of Jesus films were already available in VHS format. But it took Philip Saville's 2003 "literal" rendering of the Fourth Gospel (*The Gospel of John* [Visual Bible International]) to bring Johannine scholars into serious conversation with visual media. Saville's film was previewed at the 2003 AAR-SBL meeting in Atlanta, and the 2004 AAR-SBL meeting in San Antonio devoted an entire panel discussion to Saville's film.¹ Yet the Fourth Gospel had dominated cinematic portrayals of Jesus for nearly one hundred years. A list of Jesus' miracles portrayed in film reveals that the raising of Lazarus ranks at the top, with nine out of nineteen Jesus films depicting this uniquely Johannine episode (11:1–44). The healing of the paralytic (Matt 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26) ranks second with eight depictions but, unlike the raising of Lazarus, that story is found in three

1. S21-106: Bible in Ancient and Modern Media (Sunday, 21 November 2004). Richard Walsh has also devoted a chapter of his book *Reading the Gospels in the Dark* to an analysis of the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (Walsh 2003, 147–71). More recently, Philip Esler and Ronald Piper have dealt with the Lazarus story in Christian art in their book *Lazarus, Mary and Martha: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Gospel of John* (2006, esp. 131–45).

Gospels instead of just one.² Furthermore, Johannine Christology, with its memorable “I am” sayings, plays a central role in almost every portrayal of Jesus on the silver screen.

Okay, I have a confession to make right up front. I still have my original, cloth-bound edition of Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, and I return to it from time to time as though calling on an old friend. But I donated my copy of Seymour Chatman’s *Story and Discourse* (1978) to a St. Vincent DePaul Thrift Store a number of years ago, after Powell’s Bookstore in Portland, Oregon, told me that my copy was too marked up to have any resale value. At the time I was getting rid of books in my library to make room for a growing collection on postcolonial theory. Nevertheless, I can still remember reading Chatman’s *Story and Discourse* in graduate school and sitting in one of Chatman’s graduate classes at UC Berkeley. At the time I was struck by the fact that some of his most original and useful insights seemed to emerge from his juxtaposition of narratives in the two media forms of “fiction” and film. But back then I wasn’t interested in film theory. I just wanted to finish a dissertation on the Gospel of John and get on with my life.

The purpose of this essay, then, is to take seriously the *and Film* part of Chatman’s subtitle, to go back and explore the ways in which the raising of Lazarus has been depicted in cinema, comparing those renderings to one another and to the “anatomy” of the story in the Fourth Gospel.³ My goal is to use these “dysections” (that is, dissecting the dyad of film and canonical Gospel) as a means to uncover the ideologies of the films and to expose the ideological connects and disconnects between the cinematic renderings of the Lazarus story and the canonical version (John 11). At this point in my career I am no longer concerned with whether Culpepper’s narrative-critical analysis is anatomically correct (see Staley 1995, 1–23), and I really am not interested in haruspicy; I find the politics of necromancy more to my liking. I am wondering whether the cinematic attempts to reconfigure the Lazarus story fix the dysfunctional male of the canonical tale and render him alive, erect, and no longer (s)mothered by his sisters’ words and wraps. Or do the cinematic versions kill off the sisters in the process of outing their zombie-

2. In *Jesus, the Gospels, and Cinematic Imagination*, Richard Walsh and I develop a Gospel harmony for eighteen Jesus films available on DVD. We only list seven films with the healing of the paralytic, but that is because we omit from our discussion van den Bergh’s *The Gospel of Matthew* (2004). Van den Bergh’s film is a literal rendering of the entire Gospel of Matthew and thus includes the healing of the paralytic.

3. I proposed an anatomically deviant, gendered reading of the raising of Lazarus a number of years ago in my chapter “Designing the Seventh Sign: John 11 and the Resistant Reader” in *Reading with a Passion* (Staley 1995, 55–84).

like brother? What if moving pictures became serious conversational partners with printed texts? If the Martha of George Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* sat down and talked with the Fourth Gospel's Martha, could they walk away as friends at the end of the exchange? Would both be enriched by the serendipitous meeting?

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead has offered film directors one of their most dramatic visual scenes for telling the story of Jesus, and because John 11:3 and 11:5 state that Jesus "loved" Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, while Luke 10:38–42 recounts a conversation between Jesus and Martha about her sister Mary (Culpepper 1983, 140 n. 81, 215), film directors are presented with more than one Gospel tradition from which to construct three of the most fully developed characters in Jesus movies. But despite the possibilities that these stories offer for cinematic characterization, Mary and Martha rarely fare as well in film as they do in the Fourth Gospel itself. Generally, the sisters on film are one-dimensional, flatter and less vocal than they are in the canonical text (Culpepper 1983, 102–4, 140–42). They can move across the screen, but they rarely speak. So perhaps my proposed two-way conversation between film and text is doomed from the very outset, and the fact that film technology began silently does not bode well for my little social experiment.

There are three films from the silent era that make use of the Lazarus story: Zecca and Nonquet's *The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ* (1905), Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), and DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927).⁴ Three films from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s also include the Lazarus story: Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), and Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). Finally, Lazarus is represented in the late 1990s and the early 2000s by Young's *Jesus* (1999), Hayes's *The Miracle Maker* (1999), and Saville's *The Gospel of John* (2003).

Except for Saville's literal rendering of the Fourth Gospel, most directors since the silent era have portrayed Jesus' relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus as a long-term friendship. Young and Hayes borrow heavily from Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) and from Scorsese (who follows the plot of Kazantzakis's 1960 novel, *The Last Temptation of Christ*), for their depictions of the Bethany siblings. As will be seen, Scorsese, Young, Hayes, and Saville also draw upon Stevens's directing skills for their choreography

4. My analysis only deals with those early films available on DVD. While Reinhartz 2007 does discuss a number of other Jesus films not available on DVD, her subject index does not have an entry for Lazarus (nor are there entries for his sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany). Thus, I do not know whether other films include the Lazarus story.

of Jesus' prayer before Lazarus's tomb and for their camera shots of Lazarus coming out of the tomb. To a lesser extent, they also find inspiration in Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*.

In order to compare these nine films to one another and more carefully to the Fourth Gospel, I have divided the Lazarus story into four plot segments based upon the structure of ancient miracle stories.⁵ In this schema, the first segment (from the account of Lazarus's illness/death to when Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb, 11:1–37) introduces the physical problem. The second segment (from when Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb to when Jesus calls forth Lazarus, 11:38–43a) focuses on the miracle worker, and the third segment (from when Jesus calls Lazarus forth to when Lazarus rises, 11:43b–44a) describes the miracle itself. Finally, the fourth segment (from when Lazarus rises to the end of scene, 11:44b–46) relates the audience's response to the miracle.

Besides the obvious cinematic differences of characterization, dialogue, and setting, the amount of time given to each story segment is a natural point of comparison between the films. Gérard Genette, in his *Narrative Discourse* (1980), coined the term "duration" for this phenomenon in literature. But sadly, my well-marked copy of Genette's book also ended up in St. Vincent's used book bin with Chatman's *Story and Discourse*. Now I have had to order both Genette's and Chatman's books through inter-library loan, and like Mary and Martha looking for Jesus, I am anxiously awaiting the books' arrival as the deadline for this essay fast approaches.

Ah, at last the books have come! And just a few days before I need to have this essay wrapped up. I was beginning to fear that my Lazarus essay might never see the light of day. Just as I remembered, Chatman's structuralist analysis of narrative duration borrows heavily from Gérard Genette's discussion (see Culpepper 1983, 250; the original French edition of *Narrative Discourse* [*Discours du récit: essai de méthode*] was published in 1972). But Chatman's definition is more succinct. He describes narrative duration

5. In the analysis that follows, I have slightly modified Edward Hobbs's three-step miracle story structure: (1) someone suffers from a dreadful condition; (2) the miracle worker enters; (3) the results are shown to be astonishing (1974). In my reading here, Hobbs's step 2 is expanded into two segments: introduction of the miracle worker; and the actual miracle itself. Although Hobbs's essay is now over thirty years old, it is one of the few, if not the only, that compares ancient miracle stories to modern television commercials. Hobbs's comparison is helpful for my film analysis, since most modern "miracle working" television commercials are very similar in length to most ancient Gospel miracle stories. Excluding the miracles of John 9 and 11, Gospel miracle stories can be read in less than a minute. Most television commercials are likewise less than a minute in length.

as “the relation of the time it takes to read out the narrative to the time the story-events themselves last” (Chatman 1978, 67–68; see also Genette 1980, 86–112). For example, the story events of the Johannine Lazarus story last a little over four days (see John 11:5, 39), but its narrative duration (the time it actually takes to read the narrative) is much shorter, since a normal reading of the story does not take four days to complete (Culpepper 1983, 71–73).

There is, of course, no way of knowing precisely how much time an ancient reader of Greek would have taken to recite the entire Lazarus story, and even though New Testament scholars have begun to explore the dynamics and dramatics of ancient reading habits (see Yaghjian 1996; Shiner 2003; Hearon 2006), without having access to first-century tape recorders or camcorders, any attempt to reconstruct the real-time experience of ancient readings must necessarily remain tentative and provisional.⁶ Thus, for the sake of comparing the duration of the Lazarus scene in Jesus films with the canonical account, I have simply counted the Greek words in the Lazarus pericope and then listed the percentages of words in each miracle story segment, using those as imperfect points for comparing “duration” in the Johannine account with duration in the cinematic representations of the Lazarus story.

In the UBS Greek text, John 11:1–46 is 739 words long, and the breakdown of each miracle story segment is as follows: (1) from Lazarus’s illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb, 11:1–37 (585/79%); (2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth, 11:38–43a (87/12%); (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises, 11:43b–44a (6/1%); (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene, 11:44b–46 (61/8%). A table that indicates the amounts of actual time (the duration of the scene segments measured in seconds) and the percentage of time that each film spends on the four segments (the amount of the time within the entire Lazarus scene that each individual segment occupies) may be found on page 219 below. The table also compares these film segments to the percentage of Greek words that the Fourth Gospel devotes to each segment. But most of this essay is devoted to comparing the nine different cinematic settings, the characters and their roles, and the visual and conversational components of the stories. With these formal introductions behind us, it is my hope that the films and the canonical text will spark a dialogue and friendship that spreads beyond this page and tome.

6. Ismail Talib (2007) makes the point that “In a cinematic narrative, the equivalence of *story duration* to *discourse* (or *text*) *duration* in a *scene* is more easily measured than in written narratives (which are affected by different reading times).”

The Gospel of John (SAVILLE 2003)

Although Saville's three-hour *Gospel of John* is the most recent cinematic version of the raising of Lazarus, it is useful to begin our analysis with this film, since it is a "literal" rendering of the Fourth Gospel's story. That is, every word is taken directly from the Today's English Version translation, and no words are added to the movie script. But Saville does add dramatic pauses to the Lazarus story and assigns some TEV words to specific characters where the Gospel itself does not specify the speaker. Saville's word-for-word rendering of the raising of Lazarus is eight minutes and nineteen seconds long. There is one notable silence in the miracle story: a seventeen-second pause⁷ between the narrator's statement that Jesus was "deeply moved" (11:33; following Stevens, Saville's Jesus manages to squeeze out only one lonely tear) and Jesus' words, "Where have you laid him?" (11:34).

John 11:1–4 is covered in the first minute of the story, with the camera focused on Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany (following the lead of silent films, Mary is dressed entirely in black, while Martha's robe is trimmed in white). The narrator speaks every word in these verses. The Beloved Disciple is the first character in the scene who speaks (words attributed to all the disciples in 11:8), with Peter responding to Jesus that "if Lazarus is sleeping, he will recover" (words attributed to all the disciples in 11:12). By giving these lines to Peter and the Beloved Disciple specifically, Saville prefigures an intra-community competition that does not actually appear in the Johannine plot until 13:21–31.

The duration of each of Saville's miracle story segments is as follows: (1) report of Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (5:57; 72%); (2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:19; 16%); (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:18; 4%); (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:42; 8%). Rather than portraying "some of them [going] to the Pharisees and [telling] them what he had done" (John 11:46), Saville chooses to have his leading Pharisee report the news of Jesus' miracle to the assembled Sanhedrin (see Staley and Walsh 2007, 147). Here Saville follows a long line of directors in attempting to mitigate the anti-Jewish proclivities of the Fourth Gospel while still retaining the Johannine account of the meeting of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (John 11:47–53; Culpepper 1983, 128; see also DeMille 2004; Stevens 2003; Young 2000; Hayes 2000).

7. Chatman defines a narrative pause as similar to a "narrative stretch," where "the discourse time is longer than the story time," except that in a narrative pause "story time is zero" (1978, 68; see also Culpepper 1983, 70–73).

When comparing Saville's depiction of the miracle with that of the Fourth Gospel itself, it is clear that Saville's four segments are quite similar in duration to those of the Fourth Gospel. However, in all other cinematic representations, the duration of segment 4 is greatly expanded (Young's *Jesus* [2000] is the closest to Saville and the Fourth Gospel in this regard). This is in keeping with film tradition's interest in highlighting the visually dramatic elements of Jesus' miracles. Of course, what makes the Johannine account of the raising of Lazarus particularly intriguing is precisely the opposite. The Fourth Gospel puts all its emphasis on the events and conversations *leading up to the miracle*, while the miracle itself functions almost as an anticlimactic afterthought.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS IN THE SILENT FILM ERA

Zecca and Nonquet's *The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ* (1905) reflects a period in the history of cinema dominated by experimentation. In the early twentieth century, directors were not sure if moving pictures would ever be more than simply a curiosity, so the special effects of the new technology were a major attraction in drawing audiences. Zecca and Nonquet's portrayal of Jesus thus exploits the wonderworking power of cinema. Their Lazarus scene is found at the 22:16 mark of the forty-four-minute film, just prior to the transfiguration, which is the climax of Jesus' miraculous ministry and the audience's visual confirmation of Jesus' divine nature. The entire Lazarus scene is fifty seconds long, and there are no intertitles denoting dialogue. Instead, one intertitle introduces the scene with the words, "The Raising of Lazarus." The camera is stationary throughout and begins by focusing on a tightly constricted visual frame where all the action takes place.

The scene opens with Mary and Martha weeping at Lazarus's tomb as Jesus and his disciples approach, followed by a large group of people. Mary and Martha rush to Jesus and kneel at his feet, begging for his help. Jesus does not weep but simply responds to the sisters' request by praying and pointing to the tomb in order to have the stone removed from the cliff-side cave. After the stone is moved, Jesus gestures to the crowd to stand back. He points to heaven, and then Lazarus rises from the dead. The scene ends when Lazarus comes out of the tomb, unwraps himself, and kneels in prayer at Jesus' feet. Lazarus is then reunited with his sisters and talks to them as they and the crowd follow behind Jesus, who walks off camera. Like the miracle of cinema itself, Zecca and Nonquet's rendering of the raising of Lazarus evokes faith from all those characters who witness it. There are no unbelievers in their scene.

The duration of each of Zecca and Nonquet's miracle story segments is as follows: (1) Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (0:12; 24%);

(2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (0:14; 28%); (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:02; 4%); (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:22; 44%). Prefiguring the future of Jesus film storytelling, the duration of Zecca and Nonquet's fourth segment is significantly longer than the same segment in the Fourth Gospel itself and in Saville's literal rendering of the story. Zecca and Nonquet's fourth segment comprises nearly six times the 8% of space that the Gospel itself devotes to the same segment. But if Zecca and Nonquet's portrayal of Jesus is understood as an exploration of the wonderworking effects of cinema, then the emphatic emphasis on the effects of Jesus' miracle is quite logical. Celluloid and Jesus are interchangeable signs of the divine.

Olcott's Lazarus scene is found at the 37:57 mark of his seventy-one-minute 1912 film entitled *From the Manger to the Cross*. The entire scene is 3:02 in length, including the opening intertitle, which lasts twenty-five seconds. The film was shot on location in Palestine, but it is not clear whether this scene was actually filmed in Bethany near Jerusalem, the traditional site of the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. However, since the scene is followed by Jesus departing from Jericho and healing blind Bartimaeus (Matt 20:29; see also Mark 10:46), one might surmise that Olcott imagines the entire Lazarus story taking place in Bethany "beyond the Jordan" (John 10:40; see also 1:28). Olcott's Jericho scenes are then followed by an unnamed woman who anoints Jesus (head and feet) in an unnamed locale (the intertitle references Matt 26:1–12).

Although Olcott's film is episodic in its plot, the fact that Mary and Martha appear just one minute before the raising of Lazarus (in the scene from Luke 10:38) and are named in that scene and in this Lazarus scene makes it clear that the Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus is also understood to be Lazarus's sister. Interestingly, the scene between Mary at the feet of Jesus and at the raising of Lazarus depicts Jesus teaching in the temple (John 8:20–58)—but without any reference to the woman caught in adultery (7:53–8:11).

There are four intertitles connected with the raising of Lazarus, and these simply emphasize the overall plot of the story, quoting John 11:1, 17, 40, and 43. Despite the film's notable emphasis on the role of women in the ministry of Jesus, none of the intertitles quotes the words of Mary or Martha, and Jesus' words are quoted only twice: when he reprimands Mary for her lack of faith (see 11:40)⁸ and when he commands that the stone be removed (11:43).

8. In John 11:40 these words are addressed to Martha, but in the film Jesus is clearly speaking to the black-veiled Mary rather than to the white-veiled Martha, who kneels closest to the camera on the right.

In Olcott's film it is the dark-veiled Mary who comes to tell Jesus about her brother's death.⁹ She points to heaven, apparently recalling Martha's words in 11:22 ("But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him"), then kneels and kisses Jesus' legs and feet as her body heaves in deep sobs. Jesus begins to pray but then breaks down and weeps uncontrollably (11:32–33; Culpepper 1983, 110). In the background one of Jesus' disciples sways back and forth in prayer or grief. When Jesus and his disciples arrive at the tomb, Mary reacts apprehensively to Jesus' command to remove the stone, but all the mourning, praying (swaying) bystanders listen attentively to Jesus as he prays (11:41–42). When Lazarus comes out of the tomb, he first turns toward a group of men on the left (perhaps "the Jews" of 11:45) who back away, cowering; then he unbinds himself and falls at the feet of Jesus in worship. When Lazarus stands up, his two sisters come forward and embrace him.

Olcott does not follow the Lazarus scene with the Sanhedrin plot to kill Jesus (John 11:46–53). This episode is perhaps alluded to instead at the end of the preceding scene (8:20–58), with Jesus' opponents clenching their hands in an obvious, symbolic gesture of their plans to seize him. Thus, like Zecca and Nonquet before him, Olcott's rendering of the Lazarus miracle seems to assume that moving pictures can only evoke a response of faith. There are no disbelievers in this postresurrection, joyous family reunion, despite the Fourth Gospel's insinuation to the contrary.

DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927) breaks with earlier Jesus films by presenting viewers with a more integrated plot that revolves around Judas and Mary Magdalene.¹⁰ As a result, Johannine traditions are not well represented in the film until the passion week. In the original 1927 version, DeMille's Lazarus scene (6:28 in length) is found at the 45:37 mark of the 150-minute film.¹¹ It is preceded by an invented scene depicting Jesus' interactions with children, where he mends a child's broken doll. The raising of Lazarus is followed by the story of the woman caught in adultery, which functions as

9. Mary's hair is not covered in this scene as it was in the earlier Lukan scene, but her black veil is draped around her neck and shoulders. Interestingly, Young's 1999 television miniseries also emphasizes Mary's role in the story over that of Martha.

10. Jeannie MacPherson wrote the screenplay for DeMille's film, and she seems to have drawn her opening scene, with its love triangle between Jesus, Judas, and Mary, from Paul Heyse's play *Mary of Magdala*. The theatrical production of Heyse's work ran on Broadway from November 1902 through February 1903, with Tyrone Power playing the role of Judas. Paul Heyse would go on to win the 1910 Nobel Prize for literature.

11. The 1927 version of the film is over thirty minutes longer than the 1928 theatrical release from which the VHS was derived.

Caiaphas's second attempt to trap Jesus and leads directly to the events of passion week.

There are seven intertitles in DeMille's rendering of the raising of Lazarus. The first, which introduces the scene's first segment (Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb, 1:31; 24%) reads, "Whether with broken dolls or broken hearts, those who loved Him came to Him. So came Martha and Mary of Bethany—mourning their brother Lazarus." The second intertitle is Martha's opening statement of faith, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, He will give it to thee!" (11:21–22, KJV). Martha, the believer, is dressed like a nun with a white bordered veil, and she kneels in a prayerful pose before Jesus, with Mary standing beside her. The disciples, along with the child Mark (the future author of the Second Gospel), listen.

The third intertitle is John 11:23 ("Thy brother shall rise again!"); then, after Martha asks Jesus to follow her, an intertitle of 11:17 is shown. The screen turns to black, then Jesus is shown descending steps into the tomb (segment 2: Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth, 1:50; 28%). The stone lid of a sarcophagus is lit as the women, the young boy Mark, and the disciples descend into the tomb behind Jesus. As the tomb floods with light, Jesus commands that the stone (the lid of the sarcophagus) be removed, and Martha seeks to dissuade Jesus from having anyone lift it off. When Matthew and John move forward to remove the lid, the disbelieving opponents of Jesus enter the doorway of the tomb (a scribe, a temple guard, and a Pharisee).

As the two disciples remove the sarcophagus lid, the camera focuses on various people's responses to the revealed corpse of Lazarus. Finally, the camera turns to Martha and Jesus, who stand side by side. Jesus then begins to pray, and the fifth intertitle appears (John 11:25)—without any hint of Martha's testimony. Nor is there any evidence of Jesus being "deeply moved," even though the camera is centered on Jesus. Finally, the camera turns to focus on the reaction of Jesus' opponents/Caiaphas's spies (the disbelieving temple guard, scribe, and Pharisee).

As a penumbra appears around Jesus' head, the sixth intertitle commands Lazarus to "come forth" (John 11:43; segment 3: Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises, 0:15; 4%). Lazarus begins to move, like a butterfly slowly emerging from a cocoon, and once more the camera moves around the tomb, exploring the variety of responses of the eyewitnesses (segment 4: Lazarus rises—end of scene, 2:52; 44%). Caiaphas's spies leave, and the final intertitle appears (John 11:44, spoken to Martha). Lazarus sits up in the sarcophagus as Martha approaches to unwrap him. When his face is unveiled, Lazarus gazes rapturously at Jesus, looks at his bare arm, then hugs his sisters. The remaining witnesses in the tomb worship in awe, and Martha turns to worship at the

feet of Jesus. Lazarus grasps Jesus' hand, the boy Mark is drawn into Jesus' embrace, and the scene fades to darkness once again. Although three future authors of the Gospels are present in Lazarus's tomb (Matthew, Mark, and John), Caiaphas's spies have disappeared. Apparently unimpressed, they are missing from the final scene and do not end up believers.¹²

While DeMille's rendering of the miracle is truer to the Fourth Gospel's conclusion than earlier Jesus films ("But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done," 11:46), it doubtless also reflects the more jaded reaction of a new generation of Americans who had grown up with cinema. Moviemakers had lost their innate power to overwhelm and convince audiences with a few special effects and spectacles. Cinema viewers—like the variety of witnesses to Jesus' miracles in DeMille's film—were as likely to mock and ridicule film as to trust and believe what they saw onscreen. While the first two of DeMille's miracles happen to children (thus inviting viewers to experience a "childlike" faith), not surprisingly the most magical miracle in DeMille's film, the coin in the fish's mouth (Matt 17:24–27), is treated comically. By way of contrast, DeMille's most dramatic special-effects miracle is his psychologized version of the casting out of Mary Magdalene's "demons" (Luke 8:2), a miracle made visible only to the viewing (believing) audience. DeMille's portrayal of the raising of Lazarus, on the other hand, seems to draw more from the emergent horror film genre for its effect (see also Scorsese 2000 below).

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS FROM STEVENS, *THE GREATEST STORY
EVER TOLD* (1965), TO HAYES, *THE MIRACLE MAKER* (1999)

After DeMille, it would be nearly forty years before another Hollywood director portrayed the raising of Lazarus in film,¹³ and when George Stevens finally put Lazarus back on the silver screen in his 1965 epic *The Greatest Story Ever Told* he develops Mary, Martha, and Lazarus into round characters who have lives outside of the miracle of John 11. For the first time in cinema history, Lazarus is shown prior to his death in a setting where he actually talks. In Stevens's rendering, Jesus meets Lazarus and his sisters by chance,

12. Notably, Caiaphas's spies are nowhere to be seen when DeMille unveils his most dramatic special effects: the casting out of Mary Magdalene's seven deadly sins. Clearly, DeMille intends this miracle (and that of giving sight to the blind girl) to function as a hierophany, evoking awe and faith in the viewing audience.

13. The risen Lazarus is portrayed in Dino DeLaurentis's 1961 film *Barabbas*, where the unbelieving Barabbas asks a chalky-white, fresh-from-the-grave Lazarus what death is like.

shortly after Jesus has been baptized and after he has chosen his first disciples. In Stevens's imagination, Lazarus is the rich man of Mark 10:17–31 who welcomes Jesus and his disciples into his home (Stevens 2003, 1:49:22–1:49:35; 1:50:30–1:50:54; 1:51:55–1:56:03). Jesus teaches while Martha serves those who listen (Luke 10:38–42), and as they talk Lazarus's future tomb can be seen in the background.

Later in the film, an ill Lazarus travels with his sisters to Nazareth in Galilee to warn Jesus against going to Jerusalem (Stevens 2003, 1:41:50–1:43:28; 1:45:14–1:45:56). Despite the warning of Lazarus and his sisters, Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem for Passover. While he and his disciples are on the way, Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick and dying, but he puts off the sisters' request for him to come at once (see John 11:4) and continues on his journey. In the next scene, reminiscent of John 10:40, Jesus is with his disciples at sunset at the Jordan River. One of the disciples, probably Little James, asks him, "Master, are men like circles in the water? Do they just float away, and are lost? It was right there—where John the Baptist stood.... When the Baptist prayed, I felt good." Jesus then begins to recite the Lord's Prayer, and just as he finishes, Nathaniel approaches the disciples to tell them of Lazarus's death. The scene then cuts to Jesus' arrival at the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, omitting all of John 11:5–13.

Stevens's entire miracle scene is 17:49 minutes long, more than twice the length of any other filmed version. Like the Fourth Gospel itself, the raising of Lazarus is at the halfway point of Stevens's film, and it is followed by an onscreen intermission. The second half of the film opens with a few Jerusalem priests hearing a rumor of "the Galilean" raising someone from the dead, but there is no official meeting of the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas is in the scene, but he says nothing (see John 11:47–52). The duration of each miracle story segment and accompanying dialogue is as follows.

(1) Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (11:00; 62%)

Voice off camera: "Peter?"

Voice off camera: "What is it?"

One of the two messengers: "We came as fast as we could. We've lost Lazarus."

One of the two messengers: "Master—Lazarus is dead in Bethany."

Nathaniel: "You cured many people. Yet you did not help your friend."

Jesus: "I am glad for your sake that I was not there, Nathaniel. But that you may believe—let us go to Bethany."

Little James?: "If Lazarus is dead, what need is there to go now? Why? Why must you go?"

Jesus: "My Father's work is there."

- (2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:56; 10%)
 (Martha approaches Jesus. Mary Magdalene and Mary, Jesus' mother, are near the sisters of Lazarus. There are also many other mourners, representing a wide range of ethnicities. An emotional outburst by Martha.)
 Martha: "Have you come to bury the dead? Or have you come to feed the mourners? You made a leper well. You made a cripple walk. Was it too much to ask that you keep my brother from dying? Why do you come now that he is dead? When you could have come while he lived? When he needed you? Why?"
 (Mary runs to Martha's side.)
 Jesus: "Your brother will rise again."
 Martha: "Rise? Yes he will rise. On judgment day. At the resurrection of us all!"
 Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Do you believe this Martha?"
 (No response.)
 Jesus: "Do you believe this, Mary?"
 Mary: "If you had only been here, I believe that Lazarus would not have died."
 (As the sisters try to stifle sobs, Jesus turns to reveal a single tear trickling down his cheek. Jesus then leaves the crowd and walks up to the tomb alone. The tomb magically and silently opens. The camera shot is from inside looking out, as Jesus' raised arms choreograph his prayer—a prayer that no one but the viewing audience can hear.)
 Jesus: "Who is like thee, O Father in heaven? Majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders. There is none that can deliver out of thy hand. You wound, and you heal. You kill and you make alive. Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon this man, that he may live" (cf. Exod 15:11).
- (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:18; 2%)
 Jesus: "Lazarus. Lazarus. Come forth!" (echoes across the canyon)
 (Music starts; Judas begins to walk away, without looking at the tomb. Peter watches pensively—moving from shadows into the light. The healed blind man watches, as does the healed cripple. The camera turns to the two sisters, Mary Magdalene, and other disciples. In a distant camera shot Lazarus appears in the doorway of the tomb, with a clap of thunder.)

- (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (4:35; 26%)
 Judas to Peter: “What happened?”
 (Hallelujah music begins)
 Bystander: “Did you see? Jesus of Nazareth ...”
 Bystander: “I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes. Lazarus was dead. He is alive!”
 (Disciples begin to tell others as they run toward the walls of Jerusalem.)
 Peter: “The Messiah has come!”
 (Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus*)
 Peter: “The Messiah has come! A man was dead and now he lives!”
 Uriah, the formerly lame man: “I was crippled, and now I walk!”
 Aram, the formerly blind man: “I was blind, and now I see!”
 A voice from the walls of Jerusalem: “Who has done this?”
 Aram, the formerly blind man: “The man called Jesus!”

Intermission

Although the raising of Lazarus is one of only four miracles in Stevens’s 3.25-hour film, it is clearly intended to be the dramatic highlight of Jesus’ public ministry. Furthermore, Stevens’s choreographed prayer of Jesus and Stevens’s camera shot looking out at Jesus from within the tomb have functioned as the cinematic inspiration for nearly every subsequent director (see Zeffirelli 2000; Scorsese 2000; Young 2000; Hayes 2000). Only Saville’s directing seems to borrow more from Zeffirelli than from Stevens.

Finally, in Stevens’s most dramatic break from the Johannine account, Mary and Martha’s conversation with Jesus clearly reflects their *lack* of faith rather than their affirmations of faith. Although Stevens grants considerable dialogue to Martha, her words are not acclamations of trust but of reproach. Even when she exclaims, “Yes he will rise. On judgment day. At the resurrection of us all!” she is clearly not expecting anything special from Jesus, nor is she affirming any particular Christology. This perspective is confirmed when Jesus states that he is “the resurrection and the life” and that “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” For when Jesus asks Martha specifically if she believes this, she does not respond. Jesus then asks Mary the same question.

Martha’s silence and Mary’s “If you had only been here, I believe that Lazarus would not have died” are what affect Jesus most deeply in the scene. Jesus’ solitary, dramatic tear is thus a response to the sisters’ lack of faith, not a response to the death of his friend Lazarus (cf. John 11:35–36). Further, unlike the silent era films, neither Mary nor Martha is seen in the company of their brother immediately following his resurrection. For Stevens, the

raising of Lazarus is clearly neither a restoration of a family nor a dramatic affirmation of the sisters' faith; rather, it is the joyous acclamation of *men* to the world (and by extension, the viewing audience) that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Notably, it is Peter who first announces to the crowds that "the Messiah has come"—this at the very moment Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* begins to resound in the background. Thus, on an auditory level, the proclamation of Lazarus's resurrection recalls the opening and closing scenes of the film where the image of Christ as *pantocrator* is shown in the dome of a Byzantine church (Staley and Walsh 2007, 51, 54, 57). For Stevens, then, the raising of Lazarus from the dead is an expression of the worship experience of the Christian church, rather than being a historical event from Second Temple Judaism. The subsequent question of the four watchmen on Jerusalem's towering walls functions as a confirmatory allusion to the four Gospels of the Christian church. To Peter's joyous shout "The Messiah has come!" the watchmen respond in unison, "Who has done this?" Aram, the formerly blind man, responds, "The man called Jesus!" After a short intermission, the second half of the film opens similarly to the way the film began: with four trumpeters on Jerusalem's ramparts heralding the dawn of a new day. Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* and the four trumpeters will resound their reprises early Easter morning, when Lazarus (without his sisters) is found grieving with the disciples.

After Lazarus is raised and Caiaphas hears of "the Galilean's" latest miracle, Stevens follows the Fourth Gospel by including the anointing of Jesus in the home of Lazarus and his sisters (Stevens 2003, 1:47:41–1:59:39; 2:03:35–2:07:40). But while the silhouettes of Lazarus and his sisters appear briefly in the anointing scene, they do not speak, nor will the sisters appear again in the film. Notably, it is Mary *Magdalene* and not Mary of Bethany who understands Jesus' mission and thus anoints him for burial. In Stevens's rendering, neither Mary of Bethany nor Martha have moved beyond the lack of faith they had expressed earlier at their brother's gravesite.

The raising of Lazarus in Zeffirelli's 6.5-hour *Jesus of Nazareth* can be found at the 38:10 point of the second DVD, and it is 5:44 minutes long. The scene is preceded by Jesus' lengthy trip from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he is accompanied by crowds singing excerpts of the Psalms of Ascent (Pss 120–134). As Jesus and his disciples approach Jerusalem, Peter and Judas reflect on what might happen in the city. Suddenly, a man on horseback gallops through the Jerusalem-bound pilgrims to tell Jesus of Lazarus's illness. Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, have sent a messenger with the news of their brother's illness. Curiously, there has been no previous hint in the film of Lazarus's existence nor of Jesus' relationship to Lazarus's sisters.

The duration of each miracle story segment and accompanying dialogue is as follows.

- (1) Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (2:45; 48%)
 Unidentified person: "Master, master, the sisters of your friend in Bethany have sent me here to find you. Lazarus is very ill. Near death."
 Jesus: "Go. Tell them I'll be there."
 (When Jesus arrives in Bethany, the sisters run toward him.)
 Mary and Martha: "Master, master!"
 John: "Master is coming!"
 Martha (hugging Jesus in public view): "Lord. Lord! If you had been— with us, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you because I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who has come into the world to give us eternal life."
 Jesus: "Where have you laid him?"
 Martha: "Come and see." (She takes Jesus by the hand, and a faint smile lightens her face).
 (Then Mary comes.)
 Mary: "Lord, Lord, I prayed and prayed for you to arrive. You could have kept Lazarus from dying." (Jesus holds her hand and looks toward the tomb.)
 Jesus: "Take away the stone" (he sheds no tears).
 Mary: "But he's been dead four days, Master! His body must already be decaying."
 Jesus: "Take away the stone."
 Jesus: "Give me a hand" (dramatic music).
 (Jesus walks down toward the tomb, where three men remove the stone.)
- (2) Jesus arrives at the tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:47; 31%)
 (Jesus continues to walk down to the tomb. The view is from inside looking out [borrowing from Stevens].)
 (Shadows of bystanders can be seen. Jesus kneels to pray.)
 Jesus: "Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. Now those that stand around me may believe that I am the resurrection and the life. And those who believe in me shall never die." (No one is close enough to hear this.)
 John: "I went down into the countries underneath the earth; to the peoples of the past, but you lifted my life from the pit; Lord, my God" (Jonah 2:6; the camera zooms into the black void of the tomb).
- (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:09; 3%)
 Jesus: "Lazarus, come forth!"

(People run forward to Jesus and Lazarus.)

(4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (1:03; 18%)

(Jesus' shadow, with hands dropping, is beside Lazarus's shrouded figure.)

Jesus: "He that believes in me but he were dead, yet shall he live"

(A head shot of Jesus, speaking directly into the camera.)

Interestingly, Zeffirelli's television miniseries is the only film that comes close to accurately portraying Martha's faithful response to Jesus. In fact, Martha's words, "I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who *has come into the world to give us eternal life*," are more representative of Johannine Christology than are the words that the Evangelist actually gives her ("I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world"; 11:27; Culpepper 1983, 141). Moreover, Zeffirelli's Martha does not make her confession of faith in response to anything Jesus has said. Notably, Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life. And those who believe in me shall never die" (11:25–26), are spoken in prayer at Lazarus's tomb, far removed from the hearing of any mourners and long after Martha has made her bold confession.

Zeffirelli follows the raising of Lazarus with a scene of Jewish pilgrims entering Jerusalem and arguing in the temple over the price of Passover lambs. There is no hint of any witnesses to Lazarus's resurrection going to the Pharisees and "telling them what he had done" (11:46). Nor is there an anointing by Mary in Bethany. In this respect, Zeffirelli's made-for-television miniseries returns to the early days of silent film. Like Zecca and Nonquet and Olcott before him, and like the meant-to-be-believed commercials that would normally intercut his television miniseries, Zeffirelli's celluloid miracles are meant for the viewing "faithful."¹⁴ Like Martha, Zeffirelli's viewers have already testified to a conventional (consumerist) Christian faith (Staley and Walsh 2007, 81). As a consequence, there are no unbelievers in Zeffirelli's Bethany.

Scorsese's 1988 rendering of the Lazarus story relies heavily on Nikos Kazantzakis's novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Like the novel, Scorsese has Jesus meet Mary on his return from his desert temptations (Scorsese 2000, 1:01:40–1:04:13), but unlike the novel, there is no evidence at this point that

14. Although there were no commercial breaks during the first showing of Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* during Holy Week 1977, the numerous fadeouts to black are clearly intended for commercials (Tatum 2004, 144–45).

Mary and Martha have a brother. In Scorsese's 2.75-hour film, the Lazarus scene is preceded by Jesus' rejection in Nazareth and by Jesus' rejection of his mother. But there are no messengers who tell him of Lazarus's illness, and consequently there is no conversation about whether Jesus should go immediately or later to Bethany. The duration of each of Scorsese's miracle story segments with accompanying dialogue (beginning at 1:19:22) is as follows.

- (1) Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (0)
- (2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:23; 33%)
 (Mourners come forward, then Mary and Martha meet Jesus, kneel, and kiss his hand.)
 Jesus: "When was he buried?"
 Mary: "Three days ago"
 Jesus: "Roll away the stone."
 (People hold their noses because of the stench.)
 (Jesus walks forward [the camera view is from inside the tomb, looking out; see Stevens].)
 (Jesus uses powerful hand motions as though he is pulling death itself into his own body.)
- (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (1:08; 27%)
 Jesus: "Lazarus. Lazarus! In the name of the prophet, in the name of Jeremiah and my father, in the name of the Most Holy God. I call you here. I call you here! Lazarus."
 Jesus kneeling: "Lazarus."
 (There is a black screen, then Lazarus's hand thrusts out of the tomb toward Jesus.)
- (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (1:42; 40%)
 (Jesus grasps Lazarus's hand as birds begin to chirp. Jesus is nearly pulled completely inside the tomb by Lazarus.)
 (Lazarus hugs Jesus.)
 Jesus: "Adonai."
 Jesus (internal monologue): "God, help me."

In Scorsese's film, the raising of Lazarus from the dead is the penultimate revelation *to Jesus* of his own power and special relationship to God. Scorsese's use of North African Muslim lamentation rituals, coupled with Jesus' Jewish prayer, dramatically undercuts Christian audiences' sense of familiarity with the story and accentuates the otherness of the scene. Although Jesus' hand

movements at the tomb of Lazarus are clearly modeled on those of Stevens's Jesus, the differences are significant. Stevens's Jesus moves his arms upward in prayer, but Scorsese's Jesus thrusts his arms straight forward from his mid-section, then pulls them back to his side. He literally sucks Lazarus's death into himself. Thus, the battle to control the revived Lazarus foreshadows Jesus' own struggle with his imminent death (Culpepper 1983, 94). Scorsese's Lazarus is a zombie, and Jesus is very nearly swallowed up by it/him (cf. DeMille). Borrowing from Zeffirelli, Scorsese immediately follows the raising of Lazarus by cutting to the Jerusalem temple with its exploitation of the bloody sacrificial system. But here Scorsese ironically juxtaposes Jewish temple ritual with a statue of the Roman emperor before which clouds of red incense burn.

Following Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* by ten years, Scorsese's raising of Lazarus is as much a radical departure from the Johannine account as Zeffirelli's rendering was a hyper-Johannized account. Like Zeffirelli, Scorsese has no anointing in Bethany and no consultation with the Sanhedrin (see John 11:45–53; 12:1–8). Instead, Scorsese turns the high priest's plan to put Lazarus to death (12:10) into the Zealot Saul's murder of him (2000, 1:29:05).¹⁵ Still later, Lazarus's family role is usurped (in Jesus' death-throe vision) by a virile Jesus who fathers a brood of children by the dead man's fertile sisters (Scorsese 2000, 2:18:19). In Scorsese's film, Jesus is thus literally the re(s)-erection and the life; he offers the sisters what their brother could not. There is no delayed "parousia" here. Scorsese's coming of Jesus is fecund and lively, producing purely physical (but ultimately phantasmal) offspring.

In Roger Young's *Jesus* (1999), a nearly three-hour, made-for-television miniseries, Lazarus and/or his sisters appear in four different scenes (Young 2000, 11:24; 25:21; 1:48:56; 1:51:24). The miracle of the raising of Lazarus itself is 6:16 minutes long and is preceded by Jesus' Passover journey to Jerusalem (cf. Zeffirelli). But Young gives the journey an inclusive emphasis by placing within it the story of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30) and an extended conversation between Jesus and the ex-prostitute, Mary Magdalene. The raising of Lazarus is followed immediately by Nicodemus's faithful report to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin regarding his friend Lazarus's resurrection (John 11:45–53).

As in Stevens's and Scorsese's films, Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus are introduced early in the film. But in Young's rendering, it is clear from the very beginning that Jesus and his father Joseph have known the

15. Lazarus is murdered by the future apostle Paul, who later says to Jesus, "If I have to crucify you I will, and if I have to raise you from the dead, I will do that too."

Bethany family for a long time. When Jesus and Joseph stop in on Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to do a little carpentry work (Young 2000, 11:24), their conversations reveal that the two families are related and that Mary is in love with Jesus. When Jesus visits the family again (Young 2000, 25:21), it is at the beginning of his spiritual quest. But here he sees Mary and Martha before he goes to the desert, not on his return (cf. Scorsese). It is in this setting that he finally tells a bewildered Mary that he cannot marry her. They will not see each other again until they meet in the context of Lazarus's death.

The duration of each of Young's miracle story segments with accompanying dialogue is as follows.

- (1) Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (4:18; 68%)
 - (On the road to Jerusalem [cf. Zeffirelli], a man on horseback rushes up to tell Jesus that Lazarus is dying and that Mary and Martha have sent him to find Jesus.)
 - Jesus: "Thank you Zerah, thank you for the message.... Go ahead ... go ahead. I'll come when the time is ready."
 - Zerah: "They said you were their friend!"
 - Andrew: "You've spoken of Lazarus many times..."
 - Peter: "If you need to go to him, you must!"
 - (Jesus just continues to walk, without responding.)
 - Thomas to Judas: "He heals strangers, but does nothing for his friends."
 - (There is significant narrative duration before Jesus finally arrives in Bethany and enters the home of Mary and Martha.)
 - Voice in the crowd: "Lazarus was a good man, Mary..."
 - Mary: "Yes, he was."
 - Voice in the crowd: "This is a great loss."
 - (Jesus finds Mary, and Mary puts her head on Jesus' shoulder.)
 - Jesus: "Your brother will rise again."
 - Mary: "Resurrection day?"
 - Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me will live. Do you believe this?"
 - Mary: "I know who you are now" (cf. Olcott).
 - Martha, angrily: "Jesus! If you had been here, Lazarus would not have died."
 - Jesus: "Where have you laid him?"
- (2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (0:40; 10%)
 - Jesus: "You! Take this stone away."
 - Mary: "Jesus, it has been four days!"
 - Jesus: "Take the stone away!"

(Inside view looking out of the tomb [cf. Stevens])

Jesus: "Father, I thank you for having heard me...."

- (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:32; 8%)

Martha: "He mocks us with a show."

Mary: "Trust Jesus, Martha."

Anonymous bystander: "Someone should stop this. It's a cruel joke."

- (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:54; 14%)

Anonymous bystander: "He's alive!"

Anonymous bystander: "It's a miracle!"

Jesus: "Unbind him."

Nicodemus: "God be praised!"

(Thomas unwraps Lazarus, and the two sisters rush forward to hug Lazarus.)

Richard Walsh writes that "Jesus' miracles are perhaps more important in this movie than in any other. They induce belief in Jesus as 'The One,' the Messiah" (Staley and Walsh 2007, 204 n. 11). It is not insignificant that the two made-for-television movies emphasize the faith-evoking capability of Jesus' miracles more than any other. Yet Young's Mary is not quite the equivalent of Zeffirelli's Martha. Like Zeffirelli's Martha, Young's Mary expresses her trust in Jesus prior to the raising of Lazarus, but she does not couch it in hyper-Johannine terms. She merely says, "I know who you are now." There is no Johannine "confession" (John 11:27). Like the other two Marys in Young's film (Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene), Mary of Bethany "knows who Jesus is" because of her deep, intimate friendship with Jesus—a friendship that has weathered the crises of normal human relationships. As a result, Young's Mary of Bethany stands closer to Olcott's Mary than to any other cinematic character.

Finally, unlike Zeffirelli's Lazarus scene, Young allows his characters to express doubt and resistance. Mary encourages Martha to trust Jesus despite her anger and misgivings, and others (an anonymous bystander; Caiaphas) express more radical skepticism. Nevertheless, by giving "doubting Thomas" the honor of unbinding Lazarus (cf. DeMille), Young reasserts a conventional Christian (and television) faith. In this medium, "seeing" is believing (Hobbs). Thus, Young's characters lie on a continuum somewhere between Stevens's faithless women and Zeffirelli's models of (consumerist) discipleship.

Derek Hayes's eighty-seven-minute stop-action puppetry and animated film *The Miracle Maker* borrows heavily from Stevens and Zeffirelli for its portrayal of Lazarus and his sisters. In many respects, it is a collage of earlier Jesus films. Lazarus appears early in the film, just after Jesus' baptism (Hayes 2000,

13:06; 48:09). He rushes up on a donkey and catches Jesus by surprise (cf. the way that Jesus first hears of Lazarus's illness in Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*). Lazarus says that his sisters had seen Jesus at the Jordan. Jesus then visits with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (cf. Stevens). Lazarus is not heard from again until a man (Reuben) gallops up to Jesus (cf. Zeffirelli) to say "It's Lazarus—he's so sick. Martha and Mary—they're begging you. Please, if you don't come now—"

The raising of Lazarus is then told retrospectively as a flashback, by Asher ben Azarah (Hayes's invented priestly character), who is recounting the event to the Sanhedrin (John 11:46–47). The miracle is preceded by Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, where he tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to his disciples and a group of pilgrims (cf. Zeffirelli). At the end of Asher ben Azarah's account, Caiaphas is shown in a pensive posture, contemplating his next move. But before he can say anything (e.g., 11:49–53), the scene cuts to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The flashback of the raising of Lazarus is 3:22 minutes long, and the duration of each of Hayes's miracle story segments with accompanying dialogue is as follows.

(1) Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (1:45; 52%)

(Reuben gallops up on a donkey, all out of breath).

Reuben: "Teacher!"

Jesus: "Reuben!"

Reuben: "I've ridden all night..."

Jesus: "What's happened?"

Reuben: "It's Lazarus. He's so sick"

Jesus: "Lazarus..."

Reuben: "Please! You must come to us.... Martha and Mary ... they're begging you. Please! If you don't come now..."

Jesus: "Reuben, tell Martha and Mary I will come. I will come soon."

Reuben: "Please!"

Tamar (Jairus's daughter): "Why didn't you go? Why? If your friend—"

Jesus: "There is a purpose in our grief."

Jesus: "Tamar, everything that's happening will be to the glory of God."

(Cut to the temple, where Caiaphas the high priest is interrupted. Asher ben Azarah tells the rest of the miracle retrospectively [now in animation] to Caiaphas.)

Asher ben Azarah: "My Lord Caiaphas—my Lord, there is danger. I have seen this Jesus. With my own eyes I have seen him.¹⁶ A story you

16. This is essentially a quote of what Jairus had said earlier in the film when Mary

will not credit. I followed him to the grave of some dead friend—
outside Jerusalem. The man's sisters were grieving."
(Mary and Martha weep—but say nothing coherent except "Lord.")
Jesus: "Where have you laid him?"

- (2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (0:49; 24%)
Jesus: "Take away the stone."
Martha: "The stone? Lord there will be a stench—he's been in the grave
for four days."
Jesus: "Did I not tell you if you would believe you would see the glory of
God?"
(The stone is removed.)
Jesus: "I thank you father ..."
Asher ben Azarah: "His father?"
Jesus: "Because you have heard me. I know that you always hear me. But
I have said this for all the people here, so they will believe that you
sent me."
- (3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:07; 4%)
Jesus: "Lazarus! Come!"
(Jesus goes inside the tomb, reaches out his hand and Lazarus takes it.)
- (4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:41; 20%)
(Jesus takes the shroud off Lazarus's face.)
Lazarus: "Master."
Jesus: "Unbind him, let him go."
(The two sisters do this and hug him.)
Asher ben Azarah: "It was a trick. It must have been some dark
deception, but the multitude believed it. Now they are ready to
follow their Messiah to the holy city."

Hayes's stop-frame puppetry film reserves animation for flashbacks and inner states of mind (Staley and Walsh 2007, 136). Surprisingly, nearly the entire Lazarus story was produced in low-budget animation. Other animated sequences in the film include the temptations of Jesus, Mary Magdalene's demonic possession, Judas's dreams of power, Jesus' parables, and the birth narratives. By recasting the raising of Lazarus as a *remembered* (animated)

Magdalene washed Jesus' feet with her tears. Interestingly, Asher ben Azarah was also in that scene.

event, Hayes raises challenging questions about the fundamental nature of this—and perhaps all—Gospel miracle stories. In a film entitled *The Miracle Maker*, Hayes has stitched together a patchwork of scenes from earlier Jesus movies and presented them as the revelation of Jesus' power (Staley and Walsh 2007, 137). But in the presentation of Jesus' penultimate miracle, viewers are not confronted with the faithful perspective of Matthew, Mark, and John (DeMille), or of Peter (Stevens), or of a doubting (but now believing) Thomas (Young), or of John the Beloved Disciple (Saville), or of Martha (Zeffirelli), or of Jesus himself (Scorsese). Instead, viewers are confronted with the perspective of an unbelieving priest and spy (Asher ben Azarah) who relates to Caiaphas (John 11:46) what he believes was a "dark deception." Perhaps because it is Asher ben Azarah's story, neither Mary nor Martha make any confession of faith in Hayes's film. It is ironic that the most troubling cinematic questions regarding the relationship between religious faith (showing the miracle onscreen) and ideology (relating the miracle through a character's words) are raised in an animated and stop-frame puppetry Jesus film made for children.

CONCLUSION

R. Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* raised a number of new and important issues for students of New Testament narrative—(t)issues into which many Johannine doctors have barely stuck their scalpels. Surely among the most significant of these issues were Culpepper's discussions of narrative time, narrator and point of view, and the implied reader. My summary analysis of the nine cinematic representations of the raising of Lazarus builds upon Culpepper's *Anatomy* and reveals the following important narrative restructurings of the Johannine account.

(1) With respect to *narrative time*, the comparative chart on the following page reveals that film directors tend to turn the Johannine Lazarus story into a traditional miracle story by greatly extending the duration of the fourth sequence (the audience's response to the miracle) far beyond the 8% of time devoted to this sequence in the Fourth Gospel itself. This change has important implications for issues of point of view and the implied reader.

(2) With respect to the categories of *point of view* and *implied reader*, Hobbs's 1974 essay comparing Gospel miracle stories and modern miracle stories (television commercials) raises important questions that can be related to the temporal changes in cinematic representations of John 11. To paraphrase Hobbs's questions: Are the Hollywood representations of the Lazarus miracle merely literal renderings of the same phenomenon found in Hellenistic miracle stories in general and in the modern television commercial, where Jesus

Segment	John 11	Saville	Zecca	Olcott	DeMille	Stevens	Zeffirelli	Scorsese	Hayes	Young
Segment 1: Lazarus's illness—Jesus' arrival (John 11:1–37)	79%	5:57 72%	0:12 24%	0:35 22%	1:31 24%	11:00 62%	2:45 48%	0 —	1:45 52%	4:18 68%
Segment 2: Jesus arrives—Jesus calls Lazarus (John 11:38–43b)	12%	0:40 16%	0:14 28%	0:55 35%	1:50 28%	1:56 10%	1:47 31%	1:23 33%	0:49 24%	0:40 10%
Segment 3: Jesus calls Lazarus—Lazarus rises (John 11:43b–44a)	1%	0:22 4%	0:02 4%	0:14 9%	0:15 4%	0:18 2%	0:09 3%	1:08 27%	0:07 4%	0:32 8%
Segment 4: Lazarus rises—end of scene (John 11:44b–46)	8%	0:39 8%	0:22 44%	0:53 34%	2:52 44%	4:35 26%	1:03 18%	1:42 40%	0:41 20%	0:54 14%
Totals (words/minutes)	739	8:19	0:50	3:02*	6:28*	17:49	5:44	4:15	3:22	6:16

* = elapsed time not counting intertitles

is substituted for the company or product in today's pitch, or is the Fourth Gospel's account of the raising of Lazarus in fact critical of such use of the miracle story? As I have argued elsewhere (Staley 1995, 70–76), I believe the (canonical) Johannine “signs” are more antimiracle stories—more multivalent parable—than miracle. If this is correct, then it is truly ironic that in the one-hundred-year history of celluloid Lazaruses, only Hayes's “fifth gospel for children” (Staley and Walsh 2007, 141) comes close to depicting the Johannine challenge to Hellenistic (or television or cinematic) miracle stories. Moreover, the reasons why film versions of the Lazarus story extend the duration of segment 4 can be related directly to the nature of that medium and its “implied reader.” For example, it makes perfectly good sense that the most “believable” renderings of the Lazarus miracle are to be found in made-for-television miniseries (Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* and Young's *Jesus*), which continually cut into the Jesus story to sell their sponsors' products. Here, Jesus “sells” (evokes faith) in the same way that Chevrolet and Coke sell (evoke faith).

(3) With respect to *characterization*, the renderings of the Lazarus story in film largely reflect uncritical gender stereotypes of middle-class America. Yet Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1983), Sandra Schneiders (2003), Ingrid Rosa Kitberger (1998), I myself (Staley 1995), and many others have argued that John 11 is, in fact, a liberating story for women. One can easily argue that the nine films analyzed here confirm these scholars' point of view. John 11 portrays women as positive models of faith, in contrast to almost all the film versions. The celluloid women of John 11 are nearly voiceless—seen, but rarely heard. When they do speak, they tend to voice grief, doubt, reproach, and anger rather than strong faith.

Yet I do not mean to imply by my assessment of one Johannine miracle story that the Fourth Gospel's voice—or voices—must always be read over against cinematic versions of the Gospel or that the Fourth Gospel must always have the last word when carrying on conversations with its cinematic versions—that paper and parchment trump celluloid at every turn. To take up a different issue in the Lazarus story, the canonical Gospel could learn a thing or two about anti-Semitism through extended conversations with Johannine film traditions, which tend to be more nuanced in their portrayals of the after-effects of Lazarus's resurrection. But I do hope that this essay shows that it is high time the celluloid Marys, Marthas, and Lazaruses gather together at the operating table with their paper counterparts and open up an exploratory conversation on the topic of *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. My “dysection” of just one Johannine miracle story shows that such a conversation can be revealing—in the best sense of the Johannine word. Perhaps, in the end, Johannine *Anatomy* will morph into cinematic necromancy.

SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN JOHN AND HIS READER: THE GARDEN SYMBOLISM IN JOHN 19–20

Ruben Zimmermann

Within a narrative reading of the Gospel of John, the communication between the (implied) author and the (implied) reader may be highlighted. One aspect of this communication is the enigmatic and ambiguous quality of language. In chapter 6 of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, Alan Culpepper focused on several forms of this so-called “silent communication” between author and reader. The reader should become aware of many overtones of the text’s language, by which one is led to another level of understanding. Culpepper explicitly explored three forms of this reader-oriented dialogue—misunderstandings (1983, 152–65), irony (165–80), and symbolism (180–98)—but also noted that these three devices have only an exemplary character and stand for many more forms of implicit communication.

All these textual styles function, according to Culpepper, in the same way as an “implicit commentary” for the reader.

What seems clear and simple on the surface is never so simple for the perceptive reader because of the opacity and complexity of the gospel’s sub-surface signals. Various textual features, principally the misunderstandings, irony, and symbolism, constantly lead the reader to view the story from a higher vantage point and share the judgements which the “whispering wizard” conveys by means of various nods, winks, and gestures. It is the discovery of subsurface signals which had previously escaped the reader’s notice that allows the gospel to be read again and again with pleasure and profit. (Culpepper 1983, 151)

Since the publication of *Anatomy*, the investigation of the enigmatic or figurative character of the language of John has gone further. Following various examinations of individual instances (see Schwankl 1995; van der Watt 1992; 1994; 1998; 2000; Busse 1997; 2002), first attempts are now being made to systematize the “imagery in the Gospel of John” (see Zimmermann 2006).

In addition to the metaphoric approaches, the paradigm of the “symbol” continues to play a central role. Admittedly, the understandings and uses of the term symbol within Johannine scholarship are as diverse as the efforts to reflect on the concept of the symbol in the many different academic disciplines.¹ Larry Jones offers the following, very elementary definition of “symbolism” in the Gospel of John: “A symbol stands for something other than, or at least more than, what it immediately is and also participates in that for which it stands” (1997, 14; see Wheelwright 1982, 6). On the other hand, Craig Koester, in his important *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, limits the manifestation of symbolism in the Gospel of John to three areas: “A symbol is an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance. In Johannine terms, symbols span the chasm between what is ‘from above’ and what is ‘from below’ without collapsing the distinction” (2003, 4 n. 9). Others bring the aspect of participation or representation to the fore and speak of the “sacramental character” of the Johannine symbols.² Wai-yee Ng differentiates the various positions into “metaphorical symbolism,” “narrative symbolism,” “double meaning,” “misunderstanding and irony,” “sacramental symbolism,” “representational symbolism,” “thematic symbolism,” and “scriptural symbolism” (2001, 5–21). Dorothy Lee understands the Johannine narratives as “symbolic narratives” that, for the reader, fulfill a pragmatic function (Lee 1995, 24, 231; 2002). For the most part, these studies examine individual symbols such as “water” (Jones 1997; Ng 2001) or the “temple” (Rahner 1998; Coloe 2001; Kerr 2002).

In this essay I would like to go a step further down the path and, in addition, offer several fundamental remarks on the perception and analysis of symbols in the Gospel of John. For purposes of application, I will take a closer

1. An instructive introduction to the concept of “symbol” can be found in Meier-Oeser 1971–2007, 10:710–23. On the concept of symbol in Johannine research, see the overviews in Jones 1997, 14–28; Ng 2001, 5–43.

2. In this case, however, various problems must be discussed. First, was John the Evangelist familiar with the sacraments of “baptism” and “Eucharist,” and is he referring to them in his use of “water” and “bread” or “wine”? Such knowledge is affirmed, for example, by Schnackenburg (1985, 83–86) and Frey (2000a), while Kysar (1975, 108) and Berger (1997, 208–17) challenge in particular John’s familiarity with the Eucharist. Second, which (implicit) understanding of the sacraments does the Fourth Gospel betray? For example, is the washing of feet (John 13) to be understood as a sacrament? Niemand (1993) assumes here a “postbaptismalen Initiationsritus” (postbaptismal rite of initiation). Or does the entire Gospel have a “sacramental character” (see Kysar 1975, 259; Schneiders 1977; Paschal 1981)? For an initial orientation to the issues, see Brown 1962; Moloney 1982; for a reflection on the intersections with symbolism, see Koester 2003, 301–9; Jones 1997, 26–28; Ng 2001, 14–16.

look at a much-neglected symbolic domain in the Fourth Gospel, the “garden symbolism.”

SYMBOLISM IN JOHN

Figurative language is characterized by a surplus of sensation or, as Ricoeur said, a “surplus de sens.”³ This means that a linguistic expression—a motif or a segment of text or, linguistically speaking, a *semanteme*, a symbol carrying meaning—represents something else. While the word “symbol” is sometimes employed in this way as a generic term that covers all figurative linguistic forms in the Fourth Gospel, I consider it useful at least to distinguish between “metaphor” and “symbol.” Since the development of the interaction theory of Black and Richards, it has been recognized that a metaphor can never exist in only one word or lexeme but always includes a framework of text (see Richards 1936, 89–101, 115–37; Black 1954; 1977; Weinrich 1976, 295–316). Within this text framework a semantic tension is created between two parts. The so-called “impertinent predication” or “calculated absurdity” of the statement shows the reader that she has left the literal meaning and should now search for a figurative meaning (see Zimmermann 2000; 2003, 10–18). The term “symbol,” however, is used to describe a different phenomenon of figurative language. Unlike the metaphor, the surplus of meaning of the symbolic image is not created through the interaction of two domains of meaning on the level of text. The symbol appears in the text as a single item (e.g., “water,” “light,” or the “cross”), and that for which it stands or what it indicates must be filled in or “thrown in” (thus, etymologically, the Greek *sym-ballein*) by the recipient, as Culpepper pointed out (1983, 182–83).

A motif, an action, or a person in a narrative can thus be understood as a symbol only by the reader. In cases where the actions and people in the Gospel of John obtain symbolic meaning through narrative elements, I prefer to speak of “narrative *Bildlichkeit*” (“narrative imagery”; see Zimmermann 2004a, 197–217). However, in the analysis of symbolism, the thematic symbolism of linguistic convention is at the forefront. This symbolism cannot really be taken out of its literary surroundings (e.g., the narrative and speeches of the Fourth Gospel) but can be dealt with separately in a heuristic sense.

3. Ricoeur defines “symbol” as “Region des Doppelsinns ... wo die Sprache Zeichen verschiedenen Grades produziert, in denen der Sinn sich nicht damit begnügt, etwas zu bezeichnen, sondern einen anderen Sinn bezeichnet, der nur in und mittels seiner Ausrichtung zu erreichen ist” (1988, 19, also 29). Ricoeur makes his definition of symbol more precise by distinguishing it from the “too broad” definition of E. Cassirer (as a symbolic form) and the “too narrow” one of Plato (as an analogy).

Because this point is important to my argument here, I will discuss the issue more precisely before proceeding.

In a successful communication, the reader already knows the symbolic codes in a text from the linguistic conventions held in common with the author and thus can understand the symbolism. However, problems may arise in the interpretation of “symbolic” passages of the text. In the particular case at hand, the symbolic conventions of the linguistic community of the author and addressee of the Fourth Gospel are only available in a limited way to present-day readers. How, then, can a modern reader know if a person, action, or motif should be given a symbolic meaning or not? For example, should the geographical detail that John was baptizing at Aenon (John 3:22) be understood symbolically? Is the miracle of the wine (2:1–11) a symbolic occurrence? Is the “bread of life” (John 6) a symbol for the eucharistic bread? Are even some characters, such as Jesus’ mother (2:1–11; 6:42; 19:25–27), depicted symbolically? Many more examples could be given. The variety of interpretations of these texts and topics seems to demonstrate that it is nearly impossible to come to a consensus as to whether certain passages should be considered “symbolic” or not. In order not to leave the discovery of symbols completely to the arbitrary assessment of exegetes, interpretation should work toward greater methodical clarity in the description of symbols.

As a methodological stimulus toward symbolic analysis, I would like to suggest that the identification of symbols should follow two criteria. If it is correct that symbols are only defined by way of the conventions of a linguistic community, then a text must be connected back to this symbolic tradition in order to be understood in its deeper meaning. Whether a symbolic tradition really forms the background of a particular text, however, can only be recognized through evidence from the text itself. Thus, I consider the differentiation of two criteria to be helpful: (1) conventional plausibility; (2) textual plausibility. Both criteria will be briefly defined here.

With regard to the criterion of *conventional plausibility*, if a motif such as “light,” “shepherd,” and the like holds a great deal of religious meaning within a linguistic community due to a *Bildfeldtradition* (traditional semantic field) that can be substantiated by means of older and contemporary texts, then there exists a high level of plausibility that the motif is being used symbolically, in line with conventional usage (see Weinrich 1976, 276–90; Zimmermann 2004b, 97–99). Here we may speak of evidence for plausibility *outside* the text. The criterion of *textual plausibility* would hold that the way in which an author identifies a motif within a text as a symbol will be made clear by clues in the text. Thus I would speak here of evidence for plausibility *within* the text. The symbolism of a text can be identified from the specific interaction between social-traditional convention and the actual textual evi-

dence. In order to identify a certain portion of the text as “symbolic,” one may apply the following rule: as the evidence from the perspective of convention increases, the need for textual evidence decreases, and vice versa. For example, because the term “grapevine” was understood symbolically in early Judaism, one may plausibly assume that the motif was taken up in the Gospel of John (15:1–8) as a symbol on the basis of this common convention, even if the text itself does not show any clear allusion to biblical tradition (see Zumstein 2006a).⁴ Similarly, John 6 links the “bread” to the biblical tradition of manna, appealing to conventional understanding (see Maritz and van Belle 2006).

Of course, there is also a conventional symbolic tradition in motifs such as “garden” or “lamb,” but in an agricultural society not every example of these lexemes must be symbolically loaded. Therefore, clues in the text are required in order to clarify whether the term is being used symbolically. In this way, a symbolic meaning for “lamb” can be demonstrated through clear textual signals (such as the quotation from the Passover lamb tradition in John 19:36), which, regardless of which traditional parallels are being considered, is not disputed in the research on John. On the other hand, symbolic references to the “garden” in John 19 and 20, taking up the tradition of the garden of paradise (see Elsen-Novák and Novák 2005), or to the “fishing” in John 21, taking up the early Christian fish symbolism (see Culpepper 2006a), are generally not perceived. Even if the act of clearly defining the symbolic content of a Johannine text stands in opposition to the recipient-oriented understanding of the symbol, it is necessary within exegetical research to identify plausibilities.⁵

A further differentiation on the level of the content of the text helps to clarify the perception of symbols in the Gospel of John. To simplify, we can distinguish two relevant domains of symbolism in the Gospel of John. First, there are basic symbols of human life, such as light, water, and birth, which were prominent throughout the ancient world. Borrowing from Jung’s terminology, one could call these “archetypal symbols.” Second, there are specific

4. “Wir können weder ein Zitat aus einem alttestamentlichen Buch noch einen Verweis oder eine unbestreitbare Andeutung auf eine bestimmte Passage aufweisen” (Zumstein 2006a, 154). Zumstein considers it probable, however, that this particular text is a reference—in the sense of (in Genette’s terminology) “hypertextuality”—to Old Testament symbolic traditions.

5. Another approach is taken by Paul N. Anderson, who defines different “gradations of symbolization” and examines them in terms of historical and theological function. Anderson differentiates four levels of symbolization: explicit, implicit, correlative, and innocent (2006b, 157–58).

symbols from the Jewish tradition, such as temple, grapevine, and heaven. These might be called “religious symbols.”

The actual use of both types of symbols demonstrates a principal characteristic of symbolic language, which can be defined by the terms *traditio* and *innovatio*. This characteristic applies not only to Johannine symbolic imagery but also to imagery in general: the Johannine images are linked to existing *Bildfeldtraditionen*, while at the same time they renew, sharpen, and go beyond these traditional images. Johannine symbols provide especially clear indications of the way figurative speech (*Bildrede*) depends on tradition (note the bread speech of John 6 or the “shepherds” discourse in John 10). In many cases in the Fourth Gospel, symbolic traditions have been renewed and revised by being applied to Jesus. This “Christologizing of symbols” takes place when, for example, the deeper meaning of Jewish temple celebrations is transferred to Jesus or is surpassed by him, as in the promise of water at the Sukkot celebration (John 7:37; see Zimmermann 2004a, 149–53). Harold Attridge calls this way of overdetermining the significance of recognized symbols and reinterpreting an image from different symbolic angles the “Cubist Principle in Johannine Imagery” (2006). Of special importance is the manner in which symbols that were traditionally reserved for God are employed for Jesus, such as “walking on water” (John 6:16–21) or the claim to be “owner of the flock” (10:1–18).⁶

GARDEN SYMBOLISM

I would now like to look at a specific domain of the symbolic language of the Fourth Evangelist that is usually neglected but that at the same time brings to light the problems of symbolic communication: garden symbolism (see also Zimmermann 2004a, 154–63).

Gardens are often spoken of in the final chapters of the Gospel of John. After his farewell speeches, Jesus goes to a garden across the Kidron (John 18:1: ὁπου ἦν κήπος, εἰς ὃν εἰσῆλθεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ), where he will not only be arrested but also will identify himself with three ἐγὼ εἰμι sayings (18:5, 6, 8).⁷ Not until after the crucifixion does the garden motif appear

6. In the symbol tradition, the title “shepherd” was granted only to YHWH himself as the “owner of his flock.” See here Hunziker-Rodewald 2001, 15 *et passim*; Zimmermann 2004b, 110–16.

7. 18:5: λέγει αὐτοῖς	ἐγὼ εἰμι
18:6: εἶπεν αὐτοῖς	ἐγὼ εἰμι
18:8: ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι	ἐγὼ εἰμι

again. Jesus' tomb is located in a garden near the site of crucifixion (19:41),⁸ and the first narrative of the resurrection in the Gospel of John also occurs in this garden. Mary (Magdalene; 20:1) is crying in front of the tomb when she sees two angels sitting in the tomb. She tells them that she believes that Jesus' body has been stolen. Without waiting for a reaction from them, she turns around and sees Jesus, whom at first she does not recognize but rather takes to be the gardener: ἐκείνη δοκοῦσα ὅτι ὁ κηπουρός ἐστίν (20:15).

The text segment 20:11–17 is, in any case, a passage that is complicated in several aspects,⁹ so that the confusion with the gardener is generally not given any consideration in exegetical discussion. Because of the location of the scene, Mary sees in the unknown person the gardener belonging to the garden (Dietzfelbinger 2001, 331).¹⁰ This simple explanation for the mention of the gardener may at first seem plausible within the narrative world of the Fourth Gospel. However, the question remains, on the level of the Evangelist's conscious narrative composition of the resurrection scene, whether the mention of the garden really can be understood only as a historical or novelistic detail. It is striking that the Synoptic reports of the passion and resurrection, which show, in the location of the tomb, a relatively close parallel to John, do not mention anything about a garden.¹¹ Could, then, the garden and the

8. John 19:41: ἦν δὲ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὅπου ἐσταυρώθη κήπος, καὶ ἐν τῷ κήπῳ μνημεῖον καινὸν ἐν ᾧ οὐδέπω οὐδεὶς ἦν τεθειμένος ("Now at the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, not yet used for burial").

9. The judgement of Dietzfelbinger is typical: "es handelt sich um einen in mehrfacher Hinsicht komplizierten Text" (2001, 333). The following should be mentioned as concrete problems: the differentiation, suggested in 20:17, in the process of glorification between "resurrection" and "ascension to the Father"; the fact that Mary "turns around" twice (20:14, 16); the prohibition to touch the resurrected one (in contrast to John 20:27; see Matt 28:9; Luke 24:39). See the analysis in Ruschmann 2002, 64–95.

10. See without any discussion Wengst 2001, 283–84. Ruschmann asserts that "Das Motiv des Gärtners kann nur damit erklärt werden, dass sich nach joh Überlieferung das Grab, in welches Joseph von Arimathäa und Nikodemus Jesus legten, in einem Garten befand (19,41)" (2002, 88).

11. See Mark 15:46 (tomb cut out of the rock); Matt 27:60 (in his own new tomb, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea); Luke 23:53 (in a tomb cut out of the rock, in which no one had been laid before). John thus shares—although with a different syntax (Matthew) or choice of words (Luke: ἐν μνήματι λαξευτῷ οὐ οὐκ ἦν οὐδεὶς οὐπω κείμενος)—with Matthew the "new tomb" (μνημεῖον καινόν) and with Luke the relative clause "in which no one had been laid before" (ἐν ᾧ οὐδέπω οὐδεὶς ἦν τεθειμένος). Mark 14:32 (cf. Matt 26:36) mentions the so-called "Garden of Gethsemane" (ἐρχονται εἰς χωρίον οὗ τὸ ὄνομα Γεθσημανί), but the Greek word used here, χωρίον, is not a *terminus technicus* for a "garden" in the biblical tradition, but rather a general designation for a field or piece of land (see 1 Chr 27:27; 2 Macc 12:21; Acts 1:18–19; 4:34; 5:3, 8; 28:7; John 4:5), or even a

scene with the gardener have been consciously added by John in order to make use of the (Jewish) garden symbolism for his report on the resurrection? Following this, one could reason that, because John had an interest in bringing in the confusion with the gardener, the mention of the garden had been important to him previously (19:41; see 18:1). Symbols understood in this sense are already shaped by linguistic convention and can be recognized and interpreted by participants in the communication who participate in the same current of tradition. In order to verify whether the mention of the garden and gardener in John 19 is pursuing a symbolic meaning, it is first necessary to outline the symbolic tradition of the garden in order to ascertain its “conventional plausibility.”

SYMBOLIC TRADITION OF THE GARDEN

In Greek, three terms are used for “garden.” Κήπος is the most common word for an unspecified garden; ἔρκος (literally, “the enclosure”) is used for a enclosed garden; a word borrowed from ancient Iranian, παράδεισος, describes a large, park-like garden in the Persian style (see Schneider 1972, 8:1048–50; Bremmer 1999, 17–19; Jeremias 1964–76, 5:765–73). In Eccl 2:5, however, the terms κήπος and παράδεισος are used synonymously.¹² Both terms are also used in Canticles (παράδεισος here as a metaphor for the lover; Cant 4:13). Looking at John 19, it should be noted that the garden was a customary burial site (2 Kgs 20:2; Neh 3:16; 2 Chr 33:20; Josephus, *A.J.* 10.46). Within John’s symbolic tradition, then, it is necessary to differentiate two fundamental areas: (1) the garden as a symbol of love (Canticles); (2) God’s garden of paradise. In view of the interests of the present study, I will limit my remarks to the second of these.¹³

Within the Jewish tradition, “Eden,” the garden of paradise as described in Gen 2–3, is of central importance. God planted it himself (Gen 2:8: ἐφύτευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς παράδεισον) and, as the gardener, cultivated it (2:9). He put animals and people in it and took walks in it (2:15). In other texts in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish tradition, one finds the expression “God’s garden” (ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ; Gen 13:10 LXX; Ezek 28:10; 31:8) and

part of a city (2 Macc 12:7). The Christian history and linguistic convention may have been determined by John, who designated the piece of land in Gethsemane as a “garden” (κήπος) across the Kidron Valley (see John 18:1).

12. Eccl 2:5: ἐποίησά μοι κήπους καὶ παραδείσους καὶ ἐφύτευσα ἐν αὐτοῖς ξύλον πᾶν καρποῦ (“I made myself gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them”).

13. See Jeremias 1964–76, 5:763–71; Schneider 1972, 8:1048–61; see also Morris and Sawyer 1992; Luttikhuisen (1999).

“garden of the Lord” (παράδεισος κυρίου; LXX Isa 51:3; Pss. Sol. 14:3), and God is explicitly described as a “gardener” (Num 24:6; 4 Macc 1:29).

In early Judaism, based on the sacredness of the garden of Eden (Jub. 3:12; 4:26; 8:19¹⁴), the garden of paradise was used as a symbol of the temple and the sanctum of the temple (Jubilees; Qumran).¹⁵ According to the Jewish halakah, entrance into the garden (Gen 2:15¹⁶) is particularly connected to the motif of birth. Both Jubilees and the Qumran texts deal with the impurity of a woman after the birth of a boy or girl (T. Levi 12); this state of impurity is connected to a period of waiting before she may again enter the sanctuary, that is, the temple.¹⁷ It was once assumed that the imagery of the correlation of Eden and the temple even found expression in Jewish iconography, for in the Herodian temple the walls were decorated with motifs of paradise. Most of the texts that connect Eden with the temple, however, deal with a future temple.¹⁸ Reflected in this is the early Jewish anticipation, above and beyond the temple, of the return of the garden at the end of time. Before and around the time of the exile, the hope for historical times of blessing was repeatedly enhanced with motifs from the paradise narratives.¹⁹ Ezekiel compares, *expressis verbis*, the anticipated apocalypse with the paradise of the beginning (Ezek 36:35) and takes up the motif of the torrents of paradise in his vision of the new (eschatological) temple (Ezek 47). Definitive for the eschatological paradise are the removal of the death penalty and the giving

14. “For this (garden of Eden) is holy in all the land” (Jub. 3:12); see also Teez Sanb 38:25; T. Levi 18:6–10. See Ego 1997, 211–15.

15. Thus in Jub. 3:27, Adam is described as the self-sacrificing priest. On Jub. 3, see particularly van Ruiten 1999a; on the Qumran texts, see Tigchelaar 1999; García Martínez 1999. On the relationship between Eden and the temple, van Ruiten says that the “Garden of Eden is not seen as identical with the temple ... [but] as a sort of symbolic representation of one by the other” (1999a, 76).

16. Jub. 3:8–14 interprets Gen 2:15 in such a way that man and woman were created outside the garden and then find entrance into the garden or “sanctuary.” See van Ruiten 1999a, 75.

17. See, e.g., 4Q265; also Jub. 3:10, 13: “She shall not touch anything sacred, nor shall she enter the sanctuary until the days for a male or female are completed” (trans. Berger 1981). According to Jubilees, the waiting period after the birth of a girl is two weeks (for a boy only one) because Eve was created in the second week of creation (see Baumgarten 1994; García Martínez 1999; van Ruiten 1999a, 77).

18. Thus 1 En. 24–27; T. Levi 18:6; T. Dan 5:12; Apoc. Mos. 29:1–6; 4Q174 III; 4Q265 frag. 7.2 11–17. See van Ruiten 1999b.

19. The blessings include, e.g., fertility (Isa 51:3), abundance of water (Isa 35:1–7; Ezek 47:1–12; Ps 46:5), no death (Isa 25:8; 26:19), and fellowship with God (Hos 2:21–22; Jer 31:31–34).

of knowledge through God.²⁰ According to T. Levi 18:10–11, the Messiah opens the sealed gates to paradise: “He himself [the priestly Messiah] will open the gates of paradise, remove the sword that threatened Adam and give the saints to eat of the tree of life; then the Holy Spirit will rest on them.” The idea that the Messiah will re-create the original paradisaical state is also reflected in the Adam-Messiah typology, which originated in early Jewish and rabbinical writings²¹ and was then taken up into the Pauline tradition of the New Testament as an Adam-Jesus typology (1 Cor 15:22, 45; Rom 5:12–21).

JESUS THE GARDENER AND THE GARDEN IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Greek symbolic term παράδεισος, customary in Jewish tradition, is found in the Johannine Literature only in Rev 2:7 and otherwise only in two other places in the New Testament (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4). At the same time, John consistently uses the word κήπος, consistent with the fact that the frequent reference in ancient Christian writing to the stories of paradise is not tied to the term παράδεισος (see Jeremias 1964–76, 5:766). Viewed within this general framework, two aspects of the “garden” terminology in John 20 are particularly striking.

First, it is striking that John—if one assumes a familiarity with the Synoptic passion tradition (as with Lang 1999; Frey 2003)—consciously introduces the motif of the garden and then centers it in the narrative of the revelation to Mary. Within the horizon of the otherwise subtle composition of the Fourth Gospel, it seems improbable that this is simply a novelistic detail or a mere reminiscence of historical information. Certainly the nonrecognition of the resurrected one is a repeated motif in narratives of resurrection appearances, which one sees also in John 21:4.²² However, in the Gospel of John, the motif of nonrecognition frequently introduces a step-by-step process of recognition (see John 4; 6), in which images and symbols can become decisive keys.

20. 4 Ezra 7:36: “And the furnace of hell will be revealed and opposite it the paradise of delight”; 4 Ezra 7:123–124: “and that a paradise shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing, but we shall not enter it, because we have lived in unseemly places.” See Tigchelaar 1999, 56–57: “It is remarkable that several texts referring to the Eden narrative state that God gave knowledge and insight to Adam (4Q 305 2; 4Q 504 8 recto 5).”

21. Thus the opinion of Jeremias (1964–76, 1:141–43) with regard to Life of Adam and Eve and 2 Enoch.

22. See Luke 24:13–35 (the Emmaus disciples), particularly 24:16: μὴ ἐπινῶναι αὐτόν (“he was not known to them”).

Following this pattern, could the garden motif in John 20 give an indication of christological meaning? Remaining for the moment on the level of the narrative itself (20:14–17), can we recognize clues in the text that would make it seem plausible that John wants to call into consciousness, for his readers, symbolic traditions of the garden, or at least relations to Gen 2–3?

The entire garden scene in John 20 is dominated by the problematic of knowledge. The motif of knowledge also plays a central role in the paradise narratives in Gen 2–3. The fruits of the tree of knowledge should not be eaten under punishment of death (2:17; 3:3), and in Gen 3:5, 6, 7 even the metaphor of the “opening of the eyes” is used for knowledge (διανοιχθήσονται ὕμῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί). Mary recognizes Jesus only after he calls her by name (John 20:16). Thus the close relation to John 10:3, 27, where the followers identify themselves by “listening to the voice” of the shepherd, is often perceived (see Wengst 2001, 284; Dietzfelbinger 2001, 332). Also in Gen 3:8 (LXX), the “listening to the voice” of the Lord (καὶ ἤκουσαν τὴν φωνὴν κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ) plays a decisive role in the process of recognition (above all of the sin) of the first people. He whose voice is heard is either God, who in Gen 3:8 is walking in the garden (περιπατοῦντος), or Jesus, who in John 10:23 is walking in the temple (περιεπάτει).²³

The second striking feature of John 20 is the prohibition to touch the resurrected one. Although deliberations up to now have been limited to the possibility that the Evangelist is making a subtle scripture reference, the symbolic tradition of the garden of Eden could here indeed fill a prohibition that is so difficult to understand with a deeper meaning. In Gen 3:3 it was forbidden to touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge (οὐδὲ μὴ ἄψησθε αὐτοῦ ἵνα μὴ ἀποθάνητε), and the prohibition against touch was transferred in the symbolic tradition to the new mother who is impure because of the curse of birth.²⁴ Thus, in Jub. 3:10 and 13, “she shall touch nothing sacred. She shall not enter the sanctuary.” But is Mary Magdalene in childbed? Who has just been born? In what way is the resurrected one holy, so that he may not be touched?

Depending on the reader’s knowledge of the symbolic tradition and his or her willingness, the meager facts of the text leave much open that can be pulled together. In any case, the introduction of the garden in John 18:1

23. In view of other occurrences of περιπατέω in John (5:9; 6:66; 7:1; 11:54; 21:18—with Jesus as the subject only in 7:1 and 11:54), one should not overrate this detail.

24. Various commentators have suggested the translation, “Halte mich nicht fest”/“Do not hold on to me” (e.g., Barrett 1990, 542; Dietzfelbinger 2001, 332, 334; Schnackenburg 2001, 371, 375–79; Wengst 2001, 286). This reading, however, is scarcely covered semantically by the verb ἄπτω.

makes it clear that cross-references from the garden scene to the remainder of the Gospel may have been consciously intended by the Evangelist. In the following, I would like to demonstrate the possible—and certainly bold—lines of connection that could be drawn without the symbolic exegesis laying claim to internal necessity. Even though concrete allusions to garden symbolism remain meager in John 20, we can recognize throughout the Gospel various references to the narrative of creation and thus to the garden scenario in Gen 2–3.

It has been mentioned several times that the narrative structure and many individual features of the Gospel of John (e.g., the programmatic beginning ἐν ἀρχῇ, the counting of days) can be understood as conscious allusions to the creation narrative (see Trudinger 1972; Carmichael 1980; 1996; Frey 1998, 192–96). Furthermore, there is no doubt about the importance of the temple metaphor in the Gospel of John, in which Jesus is characterized as the new eschatological temple (see Zimmermann 2004a, 355–71; more extensively, Rahner 1998; Kerr 2002). In 2:19–22 the appearance of the new temple is expressly connected with Jesus' resurrected body. Because the anticipation of the eschatological temple was, in early Judaism, explicitly connected to garden symbolism (see above), one can conclude that the Evangelist in John 20 has created a conscious connection between the garden symbolism and temple metaphor. From 2:21, it becomes clear that Christ is the new eschatological temple, and this understanding must inform the scene of the first meeting with the resurrected one in the garden (John 20).

In view of this connection, the question noted above may be restated: Why is Mary not permitted to touch the sanctum of this bodily temple? A certain tradition of exegesis on the paradise garden (Jub. 3; 4Q265) could be linked here to the metaphor of birth, which is decisive for John (see van der Watt 2000, 166–67). In Gen 3:16 the pain of birth is identified as a punishment for women—a motif that without doubt has been taken up in John 16:21.²⁵ The analogy in 16:21, however, promises joy after the labor of birth as soon as the child is born, which, in the context of the farewell speech, refers to a reunion with Jesus after he departs (see Frey 2000b, 215–18). Exactly this departure, the ascendance to the Father, is still to come, according to John 20:17. The birth from above (John 3:3) has been completed, but the afterbirth pains are clearly not over. Thus Mary could not throw off the chains of the

25. The painful aspect is emphasized by the characteristic use of λύπη in the context of childbearing. See Gen 3:16: καὶ τῇ γυναικὶ εἶπεν πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὰς λύπας σου καὶ τὸν στεναγμὸν σου ἐν λύπαις τέξῃ τέκνα; John 16:21: ἡ γυνὴ ὅταν τίκῃ λύπην ἔχει ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα αὐτῆς. A connection between John 16:21 and Gen 3:16 is also recognized by Feuillet 1966, 171–73.

curse of paradise (16:21) and enter into the sanctuary. The symbolic tradition of the garden-temple (Jub. 3), above all, claims different times of purity for men and women, which may help to explain why Mary, in contrast to Peter and the favorite disciple (20:6, 8), does not enter the tomb or why Thomas, as a man, is permitted to touch Jesus—after fulfilling the week's waiting period (John 20:26–27).

These proposals gain plausibility when one considers how allusions to the motifs of paradise are otherwise handled in the Fourth Gospel. Abundance of water was always emphasized in the symbolic tradition of the garden of paradise, and, in this way, the paradise motif could also play a role within the water symbolism in the Gospel of John (see above).²⁶ In John 7:37–38, the water of life promised by Jesus is explicitly connected to the motif of the torrents of paradise (Gen 2:10–14), which in tradition was additionally linked to the anticipation of the eschatological temple (Ezek 47).

A further parallel of motifs can be seen in the close relationship between eating bread and dying. The punishment by death announced in Gen 2:17 and 3:3 is explicitly connected, in Gen 3:19, to the eating of bread: ἐν ἰδρώτι τοῦ προσώπου σου φάγη τὸν ἄρτον σου ἕως τοῦ ἀποστρέψαι σε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐξ ἧς ἐλήμφθης ὅτι γῆ εἶ καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσει (‘‘You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground; for from it you were taken. Dust you are, to dust you shall return’’). The eating of earthly bread is a meaningful image of earthly life that inevitably leads to death (back to the earth). In John 6:58 (cf. 6:50), exactly the opposite is stated analogously: the eating of heavenly bread leads to life. Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, οὐ καὶ ὡς ἔφαγον οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἀπέθανον· ὁ τρώγων τοῦτον τὸν ἄρτον ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (‘‘This is the bread that came down from heaven, and it is not like the bread that our fathers ate: they are dead, but whoever eats this bread shall live for ever’’; 6:58). If it is correct that the curse of the woman (Eve) from Gen 3:16 has been adopted and overcome in John 16:21, then it seems probable that the punishment of the man (Adam) from Gen 3:19 has also been consciously taken up and, in the person and promise of Jesus, annulled.

Jesus not only gives the bread of life but also breathes the spirit of life into it. In this way, the ‘‘breathing on’’ (ἐνεφύσησεν) by which the resurrected

26. Gen 13:10 (LXX): ‘‘well-watered ... like the garden of the Lord’’ (ὅτι πᾶσα ἦν ποτιζομένη ... ὡς ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ); according to Num 24:6 (MT) it is YHWH who plants the gardens by a river (ὡσεὶ παράδεισοι ἐπὶ ποταμῶν); Isa 1:30: ‘‘like a garden without water’’ (which is clearly a *contradictio in adjecto*). In Sir 24:30 (LXX), the proverb characterizes itself as a torrent from paradise: κἀγὼ ὡς διώρυξ ἀπὸ ποταμοῦ καὶ ὡς ὑδραγωγὸς ἐξηλθὼν εἰς παράδεισον (‘‘I am like ... a torrent that comes out of the garden of paradise’’).

one gives his disciples the Holy Spirit in John 20:22 can be regarded as an allusion to the giving of the breath of life, just as the creator gave life to the first person (Gen 2:7 LXX: ἐνεφύσησεν) before setting him in the garden of Eden.²⁷ Further, the motifs of “path” and, above all, “door” from John 10:7, 10 could allude to the opening of the gates of paradise that, according to 4 Ezra 8:52 and T. Levi 18:10–11, characterizes the end of time and even the age of the Messiah (see above).²⁸ According to b. Sanh. 59b and L.A.E. 4, meals were prepared for Adam in paradise by angels, evocative of the secret meals of Jesus in John 4:32–34 (“I have food to eat of which you know nothing”). Further, even if the serpent mentioned in John 3:14 is a direct reference to the tradition of Moses (see Frey 1994), a connection to the serpent in Gen 3:1–8, 10 should be considered as well, especially against the backdrop of the many references to Gen 2–3 and the frequent accumulation of motifs in John. As it is, the serpent who promises knowledge without being able to fulfill this promise in Gen 3 is also the “glorified serpent,” Jesus, who, according to John, truly brought knowledge (John 17:7–8).

CONCLUSION

In closing, some fundamental observations arising from the use of garden symbolism in John are in order. Certainly, it cannot be denied that allusions to the creation narrative and thus especially to the garden of paradise can be found in the Gospel of John. However, how compelling and illuminative are these allusions? The problems that the language of symbolism lay before exegetes who aim at clarity and compelling derivations are not only characteristic, but in fact the very strength, of this form of theological discourse. That which is expressed symbolically cannot simply be accepted without question or passively received. The discovery of the meaning of the symbolic requires the active involvement of the reader from the beginning. It is only through symbolic communication between John or the text of the Gospel and a reader that meaning can be discovered through subtle and implicit clues.

In this way, a reader can notice, especially if one is familiar with the symbolic code of the tradition of Israel, that Jesus is shown in the Gospel of John

27. A tradition that was also carried on in early Judaism. See 4 Ezra 3:5–6: “and you breathed into him the breath of life, and he was made living before you. And you led him into paradise, which was planted by your right hand before ever the earth came forward.”

28. 4 Ezra 8:52: “For unto you is paradise opened, the tree of life is planted, the time to come is prepared, plenteousness is made ready, a city is builded, and rest is allowed, yea, perfect goodness and wisdom.” See also T. Levi 18:10–11: “He himself [the priestly Messiah] will open the gates of Paradise.”

in the image of the Messiah, who, according to symbolic tradition, opens the sealed gates to the apocalyptic paradise (T. Levi 18:10–11) and pours out the water of the torrent of life. However, Jesus does not just open the gates; John also names him the “door” (John 10:7, 9). Jesus not only gives the bread of immortality; he himself is the “bread of life” (6:25, 48), and he gives knowledge just like the fruit of the tree of paradise. Even that does not go far enough: as has been shown above, Jesus has traits of the new Adam, fulfills the promise of the serpent, is identified, in the form of the new temple, with the entire garden of paradise; ultimately, he is seen as the gardener (20:17)—just as God was portrayed in the symbolic tradition—who lifts the curse of the exile of man and woman and, in the act of re-creation, breathes the breath of life into his disciples (20:22).

However, a critical exegete might ask: Are these connections truly compelling? Precisely because the oldest meaning of the word σύμβολον indicates that the missing part of the meaning must be provided by the reader, the identification and interpretation of symbols cannot be finally verified. The reader cannot expect to find any clear correlations in the text, nor will one be handed a linear/logical reading manual by the Evangelist. Accordingly, no final judgment can be made as to whether the Evangelist intended for the reader of the gardener scene to see an allusion to the symbolism of the garden of paradise. Instead, a reader can detect only latent references to the paradise tradition, which one can then assemble in various combinations into a symbolic theological statement. How faithful this reader’s imagination is to the text and subject can only be examined through the demonstration of probability.

Mary’s meeting with the risen Jesus may do credit to the symbol of the boundaries of interpretation: Mary thinks she sees the gardener, which is neither affirmed nor denied in the text. More decisive, however, is the fact that the presumed gardener calls her by name and thus identifies himself as the resurrected one. However, she is not allowed to touch him, just as symbols cannot be tied down. Modern interpreters will have to live with this openness (see Culpepper 2006a, 394, 402).

JOHN 21 AND THE JOHANNINE STORY

Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B.

I have a vivid memory of my first appearance at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in Philadelphia in 1995, a little over a decade after Alan Culpepper's groundbreaking *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* appeared (1983). In my own first flush of excitement over the possibilities of narrative criticism, I was interested in seeing how the discourse material in the Fourth Gospel responded to this methodology. I tested the waters in Philadelphia with a study of John 13–17 (Moloney 1998a; see also 1997, 129–48 [on John 6]; 2002b, 155–72 [on John 7:1–8:59]). During the question session after the presentation, an enthusiastic young doctoral candidate, who seemed to think that Culpepper's approach held the interpretive key to all the problems generated by this proverbially difficult text, asked me about my views on John 21. He was shocked that I could still suggest that this chapter was added to a narrative that originally ended at 20:30–31. His words, uttered with some passion, could well have been the title to this essay: "You cannot call yourself a narrative critic and still suggest that John 21 was added to the Gospel!"

Is this true? Is it possible to approach the Fourth Gospel as a unified narrative while still suggesting that John 21 was added later? It is with a sense of privilege that I return to this question in a volume that commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the groundbreaking study of my friend and colleague Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. As one would expect, Culpepper's own position on John 21 has remained consistent. Since he has written often on the Fourth Gospel, one can follow a careful articulation of his thought from 1983 until 1998. In 1983, he traced the role of the narrator, uncovering the implied author as the Beloved Disciple by means of a reading of John 1–21. Culpepper closed this chapter of *Anatomy* with a careful footnote: "In its present form, if not in its origin, the gospel text must be approached as a unit, a literary whole" (1983, 45–49, here 49 n. 65; see also 66, 120–21, 197). In *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (1994) Culpepper stated that "John 21 is widely regarded as an epi-

logue to the Gospel. The Fourth Gospel seems to reach a natural conclusion at the end of chapter 20, only to reopen the narrative in John 21" (1994, 56).¹ He expanded further on this point in his briefer but perceptive *The Gospel and Letters of John*: "The Gospel of John was apparently composed in several stages over an extended period of time..., and John 21 was probably added late in the Gospel's composition by a member of the Johannine school drawing on Johannine tradition" (1998, 245; see also 1975).

Since 1998, however, Culpepper has devoted two recent studies to John 21. He does not commit himself to a change of position on the historical relationship of this chapter to John 1–20 but claims a greater sense of continuity between them than is often suggested. In "Designs for the Church in the Imagery of John 21:1–14," he argues that the claim that the ecclesiology of John 21 differs from that of John 1–20 is overstated (2006a, 369–402). All the ecclesiological imagery of 21:1–14 (catch of fish, the number 153, the fish on the fire as eucharistic, the meal itself, and the emphasis on unity) is no more ecclesiological than John 1–20. In an as yet unpublished paper, "John 21:24–25—The Johannine *Sphragis*," he reflects upon the intimate relationship that exists between the witness to interpreted history that is told in the light of the resurrection and the Scriptures and under the guidance of the Spirit (see 2:22; 12:16; 20:19), and the certification of that witness by the community for whom and from whom he speaks. He concludes: "The Beloved Disciple, therefore, bore witness, and the Johannine school affirmed that his witness was true."²

THE DEBATE SINCE ANATOMY

Culpepper's insistence in 1983 that the Johannine text must be read as a whole, in a narrative approach to the Gospel, has spawned a number of attempts to show that there is no literary or theological hiatus between John 1–20 and John 21. Many scholars had argued for the unity of John 1–21 long before *Anatomy* appeared, and their work should not be overlooked (see, e.g., Lagrange 1927, 520–21; Hoskyns 1947, 550–61; Robinson 1962–63, 120–29; Minear 1983, 85–98; Morris 1995, 757–58). As exegetical fashions come and go, scholars must avoid "reinventing the wheel." What follows is a brief presentation of some of the arguments for the unity of John 1–21 that have arisen

1. See Culpepper 1994, 297–325, for a full discussion of who may be responsible for John 21.

2. I am grateful to Dean Culpepper, who made this manuscript available to me even though, as he writes "The Johannine *Sphragis* is still a rough draft." The citation above comes from p. 13 of Culpepper's typescript. See also Zumstein 2007b, 301, 315–16.

since the publication of *Anatomy* and that reflect a narrative-critical approach similar to Culpepper's.

Some scholars who take a literary-critical approach have drawn attention to points of indeterminacy, or "gaps," in the narrative of John 1–20 (on "gaps," see Iser 1978, 182–87). Many of these problems are resolved if one reads John 21 as a strategy on the part of the author to resolve those "gaps." For example, after believing and seeing in John 20:9, the Beloved Disciple disappears from the scene in 20:10. This problem is resolved by his several important reappearances in 21:7, 20–23, 24 (e.g., Carson 1991, 666–67; Hartman 1984, 37–39; Schneiders 1989, 73–74; Segovia 1991b, 173–74; Stibbe 1993, 206–15; Heil 1995, 154–56).

Another element lacking in the Fourth Gospel, when compared to the Synoptic Gospels, is a sense of mission for the Christian community. It is well known that there is little sense of hierarchy and very few commands in John 1–20. The believer is asked to follow the commandments of Jesus (14:15, 21), but these are few and can probably be reduced to Jesus' commands to love (13:34–35; 14:23–24; 15:12, 17) and to believe (14:11–12, 29; 16:27–28; 30–31). John 21, however, presents the church as the barque of the risen Christ: gathering many into its net; reading the story of Jesus as handed on by a trustworthy witness, the Beloved Disciple; watched over by its pastor, Peter (Stimpfle 1990, 248–72; Segovia 1991b, 183; Thyen 1992, 273–99; Tolmie 1995, 45–46). The institutional nature of the Christian community, and its mission, is spelled out by the establishment of Peter as the shepherd (John 21:15–19) and the Beloved Disciple as the witness (21:24). The story of the great catch of fish (21:4–18), where 153 fish are drawn into one boat, is also often read as an indication of the mission of the church to the whole world (e.g., Hartman 1984, 41–42; Segovia 1991b, 176–82; Okure 1988, 194–95; Brodie 1993, 579–91), and Jesus' sharing of a meal with the disciples on the shore (21:13) is seen as a hint of the eucharistic mission of the Christian community (Heil 1995, 156–59). Important also for the future of the Johannine community as a unified institution is the need for a resolution of the apparent tension between the Beloved Disciple and Simon Peter in John 1–20 (see 13:24–26; 20:2–10). This resolution is supplied in John 21 by Jesus' appointment of Peter as the shepherd of the flock, and thus its pastor (21:15–17), and by the indication that the story of Jesus that the community has received and now passes on by means of the narrative comes from the best of all witnesses, the Beloved Disciple (21:24; see also 19:35). There is only one pastor, just as there is only one witness whose testimony cannot be questioned (see Stimpfle 1990, 248–72; Segovia 1991b, 183; Tolmie 1995, 45–46).

More specifically literary issues have also been raised in defense of the unity of John 1–21. Following the suggestion of Paul Minear, some have claimed that John 20:30–31 does not conclude the Gospel as a whole but rather pertains only to 20:1–29. Thus, the claims of the author in 20:30–31 do not close the narrative but rather take it further, opening the final chapter of the Gospel of John (Minear 1983, 85–98; Vorster 1992, 2217–21). Fernando Segovia, who has done much work on the literary genre of “farewells” (Segovia 1991d, 5–20, for a summary) has proposed that 20:30–31, followed by 21:1–25, allows the Gospel to close with 21:1–23, an example of the final farewell literary pattern common to the literature of the time (Segovia 1991b, 174–75; see also Breck 1992, 29). Charles Talbert draws a parallel between 20:30–31 and 12:36b–37. In both passages the narrative appears to be coming to closure, but the reader finds that the story goes further and must read on, despite an apparent “ending” that does not prove to be an ending (Talbert 1992, 258; see also Ellis 1992, 20–21).

A number of other proposals show links between events and themes in John 1–20 and the narrative of John 21. For example, Jeffrey Staley points to the literary contacts between the use of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in John 11:1–5 and 21:15–17. These links reach beyond the words used; there is also a close association between the geographical settings of 11:1–12:11 and 21:1–24, as both take place outside of Jerusalem (Staley 1988, 67–69). René Kieffer makes a different geographical link, pointing out that the Gospel, read in its entirety, closes in Galilee (21:1–25), just as it began in Galilee (1:19–51; Kieffer 1989, 90–95). Ulrich Busse argues that the coming of the Greeks in 12:20–22, set within the context of 11:55–12:36, looks for its resolution to the miracle of the 153 fish (21:1–14) and the establishment of Peter as the shepherd (21:15–19; Busse 1992, 2097–2100). Both Jeffrey Staley and Fernando Segovia locate 21:1–25 at the end of a series of physical and metaphorical journeys (Staley 1988, 72–73; Segovia 1991c, 50–51). A more speculative link between John 1–20 and 21 may be found in the work of Georg Korting, who outlines the Gospel on the basis of a threefold communication pattern. This “esoteric structure” of the Gospel as three major sections, each one of which has three parts, suggests that 20:1–21:25 forms the final (third) section of the third part of the Gospel (13:1–21:25; Korting 1994, 1:425–47, 2:72–76).

It has been argued that several elements in the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel—the account of Jesus’ first coming, the witness of the Baptist, Simon to whom the name “Kephass” is given, two unnamed disciples and the confession of Nathanael (1:19–51)—are brought to their conclusion in 20:1–21:25 (see Robinson 1962–63, 120–29; Smalley 1978, 92–97; Breck 1992, 36–39; Franzmann and Klinger 1992, 7–16; and especially Ellis 1992, 17–25). In a

striking recent book that establishes a close literary and theological relationship between the pattern and message of the Old Testament covenant theme and the Gospel of John, Chennattu has claimed that the relationship between Jesus and his disciples matches that of the Old Testament covenant relationships. The renewal of the covenant, lost by the failure of the disciples and especially Peter in John 1–20, is prepared in 21:1–14 and confirmed in 21:15–23 (Chennattu 2006, 168–79). Continuing a more classical approach to the Fourth Gospel, Thomas Brodie argues that the Gospel cannot be understood as a literary composition unless John 21 is read as an essential part of the narrative. In Brodie's view, this chapter forms the culmination of the theological argument as a whole. A mission of daily self-giving, especially in a church (21:15–19) watched over by a provident risen Lord (21:7, 12, 15–17, 24), brings the Gospel to a fitting conclusion (Brodie 1993, 579–82).

Because there are so many different suggestions, each one claiming to have found the key to the unity between John 1–20 and 21, the above summary might be taken to indicate that scholars protest too much. There must be a problem with the text if so much writing, some of it passionate, has been generated. The many studies approaching the same question but producing different solutions to the problem create a problem in their own right. The situation is a bit like a review of advertisements for hair restorers for bald men: if any one of them was indeed effective, then all others would disappear from the market! However, in matters literary and historical, one must be more careful. Despite the different solutions, several common issues emerge from a reading of this thoughtful scholarship, creating a certain consensus of opinion about the scope of the question. I suggest that there are two common threads that can be traced through almost all the proposals mentioned in the survey above. First, there are parallels between the themes, and the language used to express these themes, across John 1–20 and 21. Second, the reading of John 1:1–20:31 as a literary and theological unity leaves a number of questions unanswered, and answers are provided to those questions in John 21 (see Stibbe 1993, 207–8). Does a close reading of John 21:1–25 suggest a link between language and theme across John 1–21, and does John 1–20 leave unanswered questions that are resolved in John 21? I will consider these questions in the following section of the paper, under the heading “Continuity and Completion.”

While the apparent links between John 1–20 and 21 must be explained, the apparent tensions between John 1–20 and 21 must not be overlooked. Thus, a further question must be posed and subsequently answered: Does the unity of language and ideas and the resolution of unsolved questions require the interpreter to regard John 1–21 as a unified literary and theological whole, intended as such by the implied author? As Culpepper notes, the narrative of

John 1–21, as it stands, should be viewed as a unified whole (1983, 45–49). But as Culpepper himself later pointed out, that literary unity may be the result of a long compositional process (1998, 245). If that were the case, then is it possible that an original implied author may have had a particular “point of view” to communicate by means of the narrative as we now (largely) find it in John 1:1–20:31?³ There may have been an alteration of that “point of view” once the final implied author produced the Fourth Gospel as we have it now, John 1:1–21:25.⁴ I must be clear from the outset: John 21 is not an “addendum” to the Gospel of John; it is, rather, an integral part of the literary and theological unity of the Fourth Gospel as we now have it.⁵ However, I will suggest that an awareness of the “point of view” of the original implied author uncovers an evangelical message that has been lost through the emergence of another implied author whose presence is particularly strong in John 21. This tension between what I understand as two differing “points of view” will be evaluated under the heading “Discontinuity.”

CONTINUITY AND COMPLETION

Whatever one decides about the history of the association of John 21 with the rest of the Gospel, the author of this chapter clearly associated a number of events and characters with John 1–20. The further appearances of the risen Jesus found in John 21 continue the story of appearances found in John 20. The opening words μετὰ ταῦτα ἐφάνερωσεν ἑαυτὸν πάλιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (21:1) are very Johannine and form a close temporal and narrative link to the preceding chapters (see 2:12; 3:22; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 19:28, 38). The Fourth Evangelist tends to introduce major events and discourses by describing the time and place, gathering the characters who will play a role in what follows. At times there is also a succinct introduction to the theological theme that will emerge

3. I say “(largely)” because there are traces of the work of the person who added John 21 within John 1–20. These would include, most notably, the comment about the flow of blood and water from the side of the pierced Jesus in 19:35, and the present form of 1:1–18. However, it is not the concern of this paper to trace the tradition history of John 1–20, John 21, and 1, 2, and 3 John. Suffice it to say that the Johannine corpus grew over a long period of time. See the helpful “detective work” of Brown 1979.

4. For a similar suggestion, expressed in terms of *relecture*, see Zumstein 1990, 207–30; 1996, 394–411; and his essay in the present volume. I am using now-familiar “narrative-critical language” to describe the different “authors” identified in contemporary narrative criticism (see Culpepper 1983, 15–49; Moloney, 1998c, 13–20).

5. There is no point in discussing the established fact that there is no extant manuscript of the Fourth Gospel without John 21. On the basis of this evidence, we must accept that the Fourth Gospel has been read as John 1–21 (see Moloney 1998c, 546).

in a passage (see 2:1–2; 4:1–7; 5:1–9; 6:1–4, 22–24; 7:1–9; 9:1–5; 10:22–24; 11:1–4; 12:1–4; 13:1; 17:1–5; 18:1–3, 15–16, 28; 19:17–18, 38–39; 20:1–2). The same literary pattern introduces 21:1–25. In 21:1–4, the theme of the fishing journey and the characters, especially Simon Peter and Jesus, are introduced. Only the Beloved Disciple is not identified initially; he appears, unexpectedly, in 21:7. But once the reader has arrived at 21:8, all the ingredients are in place for the events to follow: the rich catch of fish, the establishment of Peter as the pastor, the Beloved Disciple as the witness, and the destiny of both disciples (21:9–24).

Nathanael, who made an important appearance earlier in the Fourth Gospel (1:45–51), reappears in 21:2. He is unknown to the Synoptic tradition. Similarly, even though Thomas appears by name in the lists of the disciples in the Synoptics (Mark 3:13–19; Matt 10:1–4; Luke 6:12–16), he is called Δίδυμος in John 11:16 and 20:24; the same name appears in 21:2. Another link with the Johannine tradition can be found in the steady use of the name “Simon Peter” across the Gospel as a whole, starting from Jesus’ giving Simon the name Κηφᾶς ὃ ἐρμενεύεται Πέτρος (1:42; see 6:68; 13:6, 9, 24, 36; 18:10, 15, 25; 20:2, 6). One also finds the simple use of “Peter” (13:6, 8, 37; 18:11, 16, 17, 18, 26, 27; 20:3, 4). The same variation of names is found in 21:2, 3, 7, 11, 15 (“Simon Peter”) and in 21:7, 17, 20, 21 (“Peter”).

A similar sense of continuity is found in the presence of an unidentified “other disciple” (ἄλλος μαθητής) in 18:15, 16 (perhaps also in 1:35–42), who is later described as ὁ ἄλλος μαθητής ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς in 20:2. The expression in 20:2 is clear evidence that an earlier practice of anonymity (“the other disciple”) has been modified in the tradition to a title of honor and respect (“the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”). This disciple is best known as “the Beloved Disciple,” an expression used at crucial moments in the narrative: in the intimacy of the supper (13:23), at the cross (19:26), and at the empty tomb (20:2). Interestingly, apart from the redactional addition of “whom Jesus loved” in 20:2, he is called “the other disciple” in the remainder of the account of the two disciples at the tomb (20:3, 4, 8–10). It is as “the other disciple” that he saw and believed (20:8). Similarly, in John 21, the unidentified disciple is known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:7, 20) and “this disciple” (21:23, 24).

Other literary and lexical links deserve our attention. Some are obvious continuations of the Johannine style into chapter 21, such as the use of the double ἀμήν in the formula ἀμήν ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν in 21:18.⁶ Others are more

6. The expression ἀμήν ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν is found only in the Fourth Gospel. It appears twenty-four times, including 21:18.

subtle. The expression used to communicate the theme of the darkness of the early morning when Mary Magdalene discovered the empty tomb (πρωῖ σκοτίας; 20:1) returns to open the description of Jesus' appearance to the fishermen "just as the day was breaking" (πρωῖας δὲ ἤδη γενομένης; 21:4). No doubt the Fourth Evangelist used "darkness of the early morning" as a first hint to the reader of the story that Mary Magdalene and the two disciples in the story have not read the signs that God has entered the narrative and that Jesus has been raised (cf. Mark 16:2: "And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen"; Moloney 1998b, 157–58; 2002a, 343–44). A connection is made by the use of the indeclinable πρωῖ in 20:1 (see also 18:28) and the alternative πρωῖας in 21:4 to show continuity between the promise of the empty tomb and the appearance of Jesus beside the lake early in the morning as the day was breaking. In the latter instance, the puzzlement and fear of the disciples is overcome by the faith of the Beloved Disciple: "It is the Lord!" (21:7). This play upon two words with the same root, and essentially the same meaning, to make two contrasting responses to the resurrection in John 20 and 21 is subtle but effective (see BDAG 892).

At the meal reported in John 13, the reader is given a first indication that Simon Peter's threefold denial will be resolved: "What I [Jesus] am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand" (13:7); "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow afterward" (13:36). At that meal, during which Jesus foretells Peter's denials (13:36–38), Jesus girds himself (διέζωσεν ἑαυτόν) with a towel (13:4); in John 21, after the Beloved Disciple's recognition of the person by the side of the lake as "the Lord," Simon Peter girds himself (διεζώσετο) with his clothes (21:7).⁷ Could this be a subtle reversal of circumstances? When Jesus "girded" himself (13:4), it led to Peter's misunderstanding and failure to embrace Jesus' example of self-gift. When Peter "girded" himself to move toward Jesus (21:7), it led to his acceptance of all that the risen Lord asks of him: to be pastor of the sheep and to experience a martyrdom that will result from Peter's following Jesus (21:15–19; see also the use of the verb ἀκολουθέω in 13:36 and 21:19). The verb "to gird" (διαζώννυμι) appears in the New Testament only in John 13:4–5 and 21:7 (see BDAG 228). Another possible link with the reversal of Peter's earlier failure might be found in the word used in John 21 to describe the "charcoal fire" that the disciples find when they come to land with their catch: ἀνθρακίαν

7. On the difficulty of explaining why someone who is not clothed must dress himself before leaping into the water (21:7), when one would expect the reverse, see Moloney 1998c, 552–53. A link with 13:5 would go a long way toward explaining this odd sequence of events.

(21:9). After Simon Peter's first denial in 18:17, he is described as joining those who had arrested Jesus (the servants and the officers; see 18:3). They had made a charcoal fire (ἀνθρακιάν) because it was cold (18:18), and "Simon Peter was standing and warming himself" with them (18:25). He denies Jesus twice more, and the cock crows (18:25–27). The man who denied Jesus three times as he warmed himself at a charcoal fire is now invited to join Jesus for a meal prepared at another charcoal fire (21:9–12).

A number of verbal links can be identified across John 1–20 and 21. The 153 fish should have torn the nets, as in Luke 5:6. But this is not the case: "although there were so many, the net was not torn" (John 21:10). Does this look back to the enigmatic report in 19:23–25a that the soldiers did not tear apart Jesus' seamless garment (see Moloney 1998c, 550–51)? In the New Testament, the Sea of Galilee is referred to by its other name, ἡ θάλασσα τῆς Τιβεριάδος ("the Sea of Tiberias") only at John 6:1 and 21:1. Formulae that recall early Christian eucharistic practices are found in the events that take place beside the lake in both 6:11 and 21:13 (6:11: ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ... διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένιοις; 21:13: ἔρχεται Ἰησοῦς καὶ λαμβάνει τὸν ἄρτον καὶ δίδωσιν αὐτοῖς). Other contacts between 6:1–15 and 21:9–14 suggest a shared eucharistic perspective across John 1–20 and 21 (see Brown 1966–70, 2:1098–1100; Shaw 1974, 12–26).

The miracle of the rich catch of fish has been a major source of material for scholars who argue that John 21 is non-Johannine in its language and thought (see especially Boismard 1947, 473–501; Mahoney 1974, 12–40), but the case should not be overstated.⁸ It is logical enough that there are words and turns of phrase found in John 21 that are not found elsewhere in the Gospel, as this is the only fishing episode in the entire account. But events in the fishing narrative itself look back to earlier parts of the Gospel. The major characters in the fishing trip, who recognize Jesus as the Lord, are Simon Peter (21:3, 7, 11) and the Beloved Disciple (21:7), the same two who were involved in the discovery of the empty tomb. In 20:3–10, Simon Peter follows the Beloved Disciple and leads the way into the empty tomb (20:6–7), but only the Beloved Disciple is described as seeing and believing (20:8). Nothing is said of the faith of Peter. In 21:7–11, Peter behaves in a similar fashion. The reader is not told of his faith, but rather of his energetic leaping into the water and dragging the net to the shore; here again, only the Beloved Disciple confesses that Jesus is Lord (21:7). Despite the very different narrative settings,

8. Rudolf Pesch (1969) suggested that the present account is a blending of two earlier units: a fishing tradition (21:2, 3, 4a, 6, 11) that had its origins in Jesus' ministry (see Luke 5:1–11); and a resurrection appearance (21:4b, 7–9, 12–13) associated with a meal (see Luke 24:28–32, 41–43). Many (but not all) have accepted this hypothesis.

there is a sense of continuity in the stories of the two disciples central to the resurrection experiences recounted in John 20–21.

Overall, the many literary and lexical links across John 1–21 show a strong sense of continuity. They can be summarized by way of a conclusion to this section of the paper as follows: (1) Peter, appointed by Jesus as “Kephas” in 1:42, appears to play a lesser role than the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel, especially when they are paired (John 13; 18; 20). Jesus’ appointment of Peter as “Kephas” is vindicated in Peter’s appointment as the pastor in 21:15–17. (2) The sudden disappearance of the Beloved Disciple in 20:10, after his initial act of faith in 20:9, is resolved through his important appearances in 21:7, 20–23, 24. (3) The teaching of the Fourth Gospel concerning the community of the church and its leadership is left vague in John 1–20. The believer is to follow the commandments of Jesus, which are to love and to believe (13:34–35; 14:15, 21, 23–24; 15:12, 17). This vagueness is overcome in John 21 as the church is presented as the barque of the risen Christ: gathering many into its net; watched over by its pastor, Simon Peter; nourished by the story of Jesus that has been written by the trustworthy witness, the Beloved Disciple (21:9–24; see 19:35). (4) A number of other narrative “gaps” from John 1–20 are filled in John 21. (5) Important figures such as Nathanael and Thomas, who make cameo appearances in John 1–20 but then disappear, return to enrich the story in 21:1–3. (6) Other oft-noted relationships, especially between John 1:19–51 and 21:1–25 (the characters and the place), and between John 11–12 and 21 (a continuation after an expected ending), can be given due attention. (7) A number of carefully strategized literary and lexical links cross John 1–20 and John 21.

The evidence sketched above, some of it original to this essay and some deriving from the work of others who have argued for the unity of John 1–21, makes it clear that John 21 has its roots in the Johannine tradition and a deep familiarity with the story as it is told in John 1–20.⁹

DISCONTINUITY

Despite the many links between John 1–20 and 21, problems remain. Indeed, while one can no longer speak of a consensus that John 21:1–25 is an addition to an original Gospel that closed with the narrator’s words to the reader in

9. Lagrange, citing Flowers, comments: “Si l’auteur n’est pas le même, celui qui a écrit xxi s’était saturé de la pensée et de la langue de l’autre” (“If it is not the same author, the one who wrote chapter 21 was ‘saturated with the thought and language of the other’”; 1927, 521). For a similar sentiment, despite his opinion that John 21 is an “epilogue,” see Zumstein 2007b, 301, who writes of the relationship being “de respect et de complicité.”

20:30–31, many scholars still maintain that position (e.g., Lattke 1987, 288–92; Wengst 1992, 25–26; Schnelle 1998, 314–15; Zumstein 2007b, 298–316). The following data might indicate that the story originally ended at John 20:31. (1) John 20:30–31 reads like a solemn conclusion to a story.¹⁰ (2) Even taking into account that there is only one fishing story in the Fourth Gospel, many words, expressions, and literary peculiarities are found for the first and only time in John 21 (Brown 1966–70, 2:1079–80; Schnelle 1998, 314). (3) Although listed above as an element of thematic “completion,” some scholars suggest that the concern for the community in John 21 is excessive and marks a break from the overarching concerns of John 1–20 (e.g., Ruckstuhl 1977, 339–62; Brown 1974, 433–45). (4) As noted above, another feature of John 21 that might be seen as a “completion” is the resolution of the tension between Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Recently, however, some scholars have argued that the presentation of these two characters in John 21 is markedly different from that in John 1–20 and thus marks a hiatus (see Schnelle 1992, 12–21). (5) When chapter 21 is included, the sequence of the story becomes confused. After the mission of Mary Magdalene to announce the resurrection (20:18) and the subsequent mandate given to the disciples by Jesus in 20:19–23, why do the disciples journey from Jerusalem to Galilee and return to their former occupations, seemingly uninspired by their present situation (21:1–3)? (6) After the joy and the gift of the Spirit in 20:19–23, there is an obtuseness among the disciples in chapter 21 that is hard to follow. After having seen the risen Lord in 20:19–23, 26–29, why do they fail to recognize him when he appears the third time (21:14)? (7) Is this “the third time” Jesus has appeared, as John 21:14 suggests? If one includes the appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:10–18), this is the fourth appearance.¹¹ (8) The final words in John 21:25 form a literary conclusion, similar to other conclusions from ancient literature (see Lagrange 1927, 535; Brown 1966–70, 2:1130). However, these words provide a much weaker conclusion than the theological and reader-oriented words of 20:30–31.

These difficulties should not be ignored, despite the consistent presence of elements in John 21 that indicate continuity and completion. John 21:18–19 and 22–23 indicate that both Peter and the Beloved Disciple are long since dead, while there is no hint of this in the narrative of John 1–20. In the light of this, there may have been a considerable lapse of time between the original

10. Indeed, Lagrange argues for the unity of John 1–21 but suggests that 20:30–31 may follow 21:24 so that it can still be the formal end of the Gospel (1927, 520).

11. It could be argued that the witness of a woman does not count. But if that was in the mind of the author of John 21, he or she has not understood Mary’s crucial role in John 20, where she becomes, in fact, the *apostola apostolorum* (20:18).

writing of the body of the Gospel and its concluding section. If that was the case, this may explain some shift of perspective, despite the overall continuity traced above.

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

John 21 was the product of a long familiarity with John 1–20 and concludes the book in the only way that we have ever had it, consciously continuing the story of the Beloved Disciple (21:24). Everything pointing to continuity and completion shows an author who was able to look back to the Gospel as the author had heard it, read it, prayed it, and used it for a considerable period of time. The author of John 21 is a product of the Johannine tradition who continues it with grace and ease, bringing many elements in the larger story to a satisfactory conclusion. On the basis of the evidence discussed above, it would be easy to conclude, with Craig Keener, that “many scholars understandably believe the burden of proof rests with those who challenge scholarly consensus; I am more inclined to leave the burden with those who challenge the simplest explanation, which is usually unity. In the absence of evidence to the contrary..., it is normally better to view the work as a unity” (Keener 2003, 2:1221–22).

However, I remain uncomfortable with Keener’s suggestion and prefer to pick up the “burden” and “challenge the simplest explanation” (if that is what it really is!). Many years of study and reflection have led me to the conviction that a crucial issue dominates the narrative of John 20:1–31. The implied author uses the narrator to communicate a desire that readers should respond to a summons to greater faith (20:31), so that they might have life in Jesus’ name from their reading of the Scriptures (20:9), from their experience of the Spirit and the holiness granted to them through generations of disciples who retain and forgive sin (see 20:22–23), and from their recognition of their blessedness in believing without seeing (20:29). The story closes with a frank recognition of the situation of the readers: they are living in the in-between time, and they are blessed because they believe without seeing (see 20:29). John 20 instructs a community of Christians on their blessedness and exhorts them to greater faith (20:30–31) even though they are living in the period of the physical absence of Jesus: “Blessed are those who believe without seeing” (20:29; Collins 2005, 173–90).

Earlier parts of the narrative have prepared the reader for this final instruction on the presence of one now physically absent. The Gospel began with Jesus’ question to the disciples of the Baptist, “What are you looking for?” When they respond that they want to know where he lives, he invites them to “come and see” (1:38–39). However, as the story unfolds, “seeing”

the physical Jesus seems to become a problem for the readers of this story. The implied author tells the readers that they must learn to live their lives as followers of Jesus without seeing. This point of view is particularly obvious in those few places where the reading experience depends upon the community's sacramental practices. On several occasions the storyteller takes Eucharist and baptism for granted. Living without the physical presence of Jesus, the Christian reading in the in-between time asks, How do I see and enter into this kingdom? Where do I find this Jesus in whom I must believe? How am I to have part of Jesus? Upon which crucified one must I gaze? The author responds by introducing material that reminds the reader of the presence of the one who is physically absent (3:3–5; 6:51–58; 13:1–38; 19:34–37). The sacraments are never ends in themselves in this Gospel; they are taken for granted by the storyteller as part of the life of the reader.

The Johannine Jesus and the narrator have insisted that Jesus must depart to the Father (see 7:32–36; 8:14; 13:1, 33, 36; 14:2–3, 28; 16:6–7, 16, 28; 17:1–5, 11a, 13, 24), leaving the disciples in the world (13:1; 14:2–3, 18–20, 29; 15:18–16:3; 16:21–24; 17:11b, 13–16). His departure, however, is not final. He will come to them (see 5:28–29; 6:40, 54; 14:3, 18, 23; 16:16), but during the in-between time he will not leave them orphans (14:18). He will send them another Paraclete, to dwell with them throughout the in-between time (see 14:15–17), guiding, strengthening, reminding, and teaching them during his absence (see 14:26; 16:12–15), enabling them to bear courageous witness in a hostile world (see 15:26–27), and continuing the judgment of Jesus in the world (see 16:7–11). Because the departed Jesus lives, the disciples will live in the unity of Father, Son, and believer (14:18–21). The reader has been well prepared for the final words of the risen Jesus in the original story: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (20:29).

But according to 21:1–25, the risen Jesus is not absent! This claim subverts the impact that 1:1–20:31 should have had upon readers living in the in-between time in the absence of Jesus. The addition of the appearance stories of 21:1–25 contradicts the original storyteller's narrative design. Another point of view is being developed by the implied author of John 21. An earlier implied author told a story that came to a conclusion with a blessing from Jesus in 20:29 and closing words from the narrator in 20:30–31. While the author of 1:1–20:31 creates a satisfactory sense of closure as a journey is completed in 20:1–31, the author of 21:1–25 tells the reader that the journey goes on. John 21 undermines the message of the absence of Jesus by telling of the presence of Jesus to the infant church.

The above proposal would hold true regardless of the question of the actual authorship of John 21. It is possible that the addition of chapter 21 was the work of the same author at a later stage, faced with new difficulties

that were not earlier foreseen in the ongoing life of the community. It may not have been enough to exhort believers to go on believing more, so that their experience of the risen one might match that of the original disciples despite his physical absence. At the same time, it is equally possible that John 21 came from another Johannine Christian (see Culpepper 1993, 297–325). If this is the case, the one (or those) responsible for the epilogue of John 21 must have belonged to the same Christian community as the original author. The undeniable literary links between John 1:1–20:31 and John 21:1–25, and the fact that there is no manuscript tradition without John 21, show this conclusively.¹²

The Johannine story of Jesus comes to an end in 20:30–31, but that was not the end of the story of Johannine disciples. The original implied author wanted to convince readers that the Scriptures had been fulfilled in the glorification of Jesus through his death and resurrection (John 19:23–37, esp. 19:28–30), and this author left the γραφή of his or her story of Jesus as a witness to fulfillment (20:9, 30–31). What had been selected from the tradition had been “written” so that all who did not see might believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in his name (20:30–31; see Moloney 2005a, 454–68). But as is evident from the subsequent Johannine literature (1, 2, 3 John), Johannine disciples were troubled by unanswered questions concerning the nature and mission of the community and questions of leadership and authority. Someone had to tell readers of the Fourth Gospel that, although the story of Jesus had come to an end, another story had begun. In order to tell this further story, the implied author of John 21 called upon other Johannine traditions concerning the risen Jesus (see Brown 1974, 246–65; Neirynck 1990, 321–29; Vorster 1992, 2207–14).

The addition of the epilogue was pastorally effective, as the ongoing presence of John 21 within accepted Christian literature indicates. While it must not be regarded as a mere appendix, added by accident for apologetic reasons (Gaventa 1996, 240–52; see also Zumstein 1990, 214–30; Breck 1992, 27–28), it has altered the design of the original narrative. There is an element of discontinuity between John 1–20 and 21. This discontinuity calls for the former’s being regarded as “the Gospel” and the latter as “the Epilogue.” The Christian reader has been led from 1:1 to 20:31 to see the blessedness of the one who believes in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God and has life in his name because of what has been “written” (20:30–31) despite the absence of Jesus. In an ideal world, the reader does not need a further narrative in which Jesus is again

12. The recent work of Culpepper, presented above, argues strongly for strong continuity between John 1–20 and 21, whatever the history of the tradition.

present. The implied author of John 1:1–20:31 saw no need for the return of the ascended Jesus to guide the church with Peter, the Beloved Disciple, and the other disciples (against Brodie 1993, 582). From the perspective of this implied author, Jesus has ascended to the Father to establish a new situation where his disciples are his brethren, children of God (see 20:17; 1:12). Another Paraclete is with the followers of Jesus and will be with them (see 14:16–17) until Jesus returns to take them to his Father's dwelling place (see 14:2–3).

But disciples of Jesus do not live in an ideal world. A community that had already produced a Jesus story sensed the need to give further instructions from the risen Lord to guide it as it lived in the in-between time, and thus the Fourth Gospel appeared in its present form (see Westcott 1908, 299 for an eloquent statement of this position). But behind John 1–20 and John 21 lurk two implied authors communicating different points of view through the voice of a single narrator. John 21:25 hints that the early Christian community that listened to and read 1:1–20:31, despite its conviction that "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (21:25), could not resist the temptation to add more to the book it had as a treasured part of its storytelling tradition. But there is only one book that rightly tells the original Johannine story of Jesus. It ends: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.... These things are written that you may go on believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:29, 31; see Moloney, 2005a, 454–68).

AFTERWORD: THINGS NOT WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK

Stephen D. Moore

Twenty-five years after it first appeared, Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* remains the most impressive product of New Testament narrative criticism. In 1983 it seemed a work of dazzling originality, at least to me. Yet I was not so much exhilarated by its advent as plunged into a morbid depression. I had discovered Culpepper's narratological muse, Seymour Chatman, the previous year (see Chatman 1978; Culpepper 1983, 6–8, 231) and with the eager impressionability of a doctoral student desperate for a thesis had, like Keats “on first looking into Chapman's Homer,” “felt like some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken.” That planet began to swim rapidly away, however, when I first looked into *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* and realized that its author had already achieved what I had set out to accomplish. Worse still, he had done a far better job of it than I could ever have done. So that was how I did not become a narrative critic.

What was narrative criticism, precisely, in 1983? In order to realize what it was we must first realize what it was not. For one thing, it was not the first importation of narrative theory into biblical studies. That had begun with structuralism. Structuralism flashed brightly in biblical studies in the 1970s and early 1980s and quickly burned out, at least in North America.¹ Yet structuralism's significance was considerable. Consider the fact that the first three biblical studies journals founded as forums for methodologies other than the historical-critical—*Linguistica Biblica* in 1970, *Semeia* in 1974, and *Sémiotique et Bible* in 1975—were established either principally or exclusively for expositions of biblical structuralism and its closest kin (semiotics, narratology, generative poetics, sociolinguistics, and the like). “High” structuralism, say of the Lévi-Straussian or Greimasian variety, floated free of historical criticism to a dizzying degree that has never been equaled since

1. For an in-depth survey and critique of biblical structuralism, see The Bible and Culture Collective 1995, 70–118.

by any other methodology in biblical studies (even deconstruction, I would argue), which is why it soon drifted out of sight and out of mind for the majority of biblical scholars.

How did narrative criticism fit into the equation? Precisely as the mediating term between structuralism and historical criticism. Narrative criticism had its roots in structuralist narratology, but it had its roots equally in historical criticism, more precisely in redaction criticism. Narrative criticism was structuralism fully adapted and assimilated to the field of biblical studies—and hence no longer fully structuralist. This is not to say that most redaction critics immediately accepted narrative criticism, spontaneously opening their arms to embrace it. I still recall vividly the charged atmosphere in which Robert Tannehill presented a prepublication installment of the second volume of his *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (1990) at the Cambridge meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas in 1988 and the deep consternation in the voice of the first German colleague to make it to the microphone afterwards: “But what about the *theological* unity of Luke-Acts? Does all our work on that now go out the window?” Alan Culpepper could probably relate many anecdotes of this kind, and far gorier ones. Less than a decade after Tannehill presented his paper, however, another major commentary on Luke made its appearance, authored by an established scholar, but one whose name was hardly synonymous with New Testament literary criticism. Joel Green’s commentary, weighing in at more than one thousand pages, combined throughout “concerns with first-century culture in the Roman world with [an] understanding [of] the text of Luke as a wholistic, historical narrative,” as its jacket blurb attested, and “focus[ed] primarily on how each episode functions within Luke’s narrative development” (Green 1997). To my mind, this is as good an index as any of the mainstreaming of narrative criticism in Gospels studies, at least in the Anglophone world. Many other such examples could be cited.

Yet Alan Culpepper, Robert Tannehill, David Rhoads, Jack Dean Kingsbury, and the other architects of biblical narrative criticism not only opened doors into the field of literary studies for New Testament scholars. Through no fault of their own, they also caused these same doors to slam shut behind them. The first generation of narrative critics were New Testament scholars who were knocked off their hermeneutical horses by their encounter with literary theory and criticism. They read fervently in that other field. For the past fifteen or twenty years, however, New Testament scholars who wish to do narrative criticism have only needed to read *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel, Mark as Story* (Rhoads and Michie 1982), *Matthew as Story* (Kingsbury 1986), *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Tannehill 1986–90), or simply *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Powell 1990). The more narrative criticism has moved into the

disciplinary mainstream, the less it has become an authentic interdisciplinary exercise. Exceedingly few New Testament scholars today would identify themselves primarily as narrative critics, although many have added narrative criticism to their methodological repertoire. But the literary studies discipline that even self-identified narrative critics tend to engage is, essentially, still the same discipline, or the same slice of it, that Culpepper, Rhoads, and company served up twenty-five years ago, as a perusal of, for example, James Resseguie's recent *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* confirms (2005; see also 1998; 2001). Fixed in amber, the narratology and other literary theory (most notably, reader-response criticism) that continues to fuel narrative criticism is still that of an earlier generation.

What has become of narratology, meanwhile, in real-time literary studies? For more than a decade now, that scientific, systematic, taxonomic, neologistic brand of narratology epitomized by Gérard Genette's "Discours du récit" (1972), Mieke Bal's *Narratologie* (1977), Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* (1978), Gerald Prince's *Narratology* (1982), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* (1983), and Franz Stanzel's *Theorie des Erzählens* (1984) has been termed "classical" narratology.² One of the earliest attempts to disturb the classical model was Susan Lanser's "Toward a Feminist Narratology" (1986; see also 1988; 1992; 1995; Homans 1994; Mezei 1996). By 1990, sometime narratologist Christine Brooke-Rose was inquiring somewhat plaintively, "Whatever happened to narratology?" and answering, "It got swallowed into story" (1990, 283). A still more obvious answer, perhaps, is that it got swallowed into poststructuralism, which had begun to transform literary studies in earnest in the 1980s. I had the privilege of auditing Seymour Chatman's narratology seminar at U.C. Berkeley in 1984 while a visiting student at the Graduate Theological Union. The first thing I learned in that class was that poststructuralism was a touchy subject for Professor Chatman. Other structural narratologists were also feeling the strain. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in the afterword to the 2002 reprint of her classic *Narrative Fiction*, poignantly recalls that the poststructuralist deluge of the 1980s induced in her "a period of near-paralysis, caused by the destabilization of [her] 'certain certainties'" as a structurally inclined narrative theorist (2002, 143). Against all odds, however, narratology did not give up the ghost. Eventually it went forward to meet poststructuralism—and gender studies and cultural studies and all the other forces that were reshaping literary studies in the 1980s and 1990s—and passed through them and emerged on the other side. Thus,

2. David Herman seems to have been responsible for coining the term (see, e.g., Herman 1997).

“postmodern narratology” was born (see Gibson 1996; Currie 1998; Herman and Vervaeck 2005, 108–17).

That birth was still some years distant when I was penning *Literary Criticism and the Gospels* (1989) and *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives* (1992). In the former book I briefly pondered the possible outlines of a poststructuralist narrative criticism (Moore 1989, 52–55, 66–68), while in one of the later chapters of the latter book I attempted to limn out the contours of such a criticism more concretely, using Michel Foucault’s study of panoptic surveillance to defamiliarize the narratological concepts of authorial omniscience and omnipresence (Moore 1992, 129–44 *passim*; see Foucault 1977). I would have liked to extend this experiment, but in 1992 robust models of poststructuralist narratology were still lacking in literary studies. Four years later, having learned from Gayatri Spivak what she had in turn learned from Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man—namely, that it is sometimes necessary to read metaphors absolutely literally (Spivak 1990, 163)—I had another run at narrative criticism, and this time at *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* specifically, cross-reading it with *Gray’s Anatomy* and other anatomical textbooks (Moore 1996, 50–62, 70).³ Given that biblical criticism and anatomical science were equally offspring of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, I wanted to analyze the genetic material that they shared in common. The title of Culpepper’s study and certain features of his approach made his book an ideal subject for that particular experiment. After that, however, narratology, whether of the structuralist or poststructuralist stripe, passed largely from my mind. During the past few years, the decision of one of my doctoral students, Scott Elliott, to write a dissertation that brings poststructuralist narratology to bear on the Gospel of Mark has provided me with a welcome pretext to revisit narratology and marvel at the makeover it has recently undergone.

The first thing to be said about the new narratology is that it is not one: chameleon-like, it adapts to whatever critical environment it happens to be in (see Herman 1999; Nünning 2003). Thus it morphs into feminist narratology, as we saw earlier, but also into cultural studies narratology (or, more simply, cultural narratology; see Bal 1999; Nünning 2000; 2004; Staley, arguably, in the present volume), postcolonial narratology (see Bhabha 1990; Quint 1993; Fludernik 1999; Liew, arguably, in the present volume), and queer narratology (see Roof 1996; Farwell 1996), as well as poststructuralist narratology (see O’Neill 1994; Gibson 1996; Currie 1998). One thing these diverse narratologies might be said to share in common is a rejection of the scientific aspirations of classical narratology (see Fludernik 2000). They have

3. I had warmed up for it in Moore 1994, 78–81.

relinquished the structuralist dream of turning literary criticism into a science by constructing ultimate explanatory models that would lift the lid off literature once and for all and expose the hidden mechanisms that make it tick. One interesting result of this renunciation is that New Testament narrative criticism now unexpectedly finds itself ahead of the narratological curve. The narratological retreat from theory—at least theory in the structuralist mold—means that “narratological criticism” has fully crystallized in literary studies as an end in itself (as opposed to a means to even bigger and better narrative theories) and now takes its place confidently on the spectrum of current narratological enterprises (see Nünning 2003, 243). Meanwhile, New Testament narrative criticism has, from its inception, really only ever been interested in interpretation, theory only ever being a means to that end. Another feature of postclassical narratology is that it is marked by a rediscovery of historical and sociocultural contexts; it has broken with the formalist analysis of “intrinsic” literary properties that characterized classical narratology (see Nünning 2000, 358; Herman and Vervaeck 2005, 109). This development, too, will merit a yawn from New Testament narrative critics. They have always been deeply attentive to context, thanks to the heavy drag of historical criticism on their scholarly sensibilities, as so many of the essays in the present volume, not least Culpepper’s own, make plain.

Yet it is not, of course, a simple case of “secular” narratology now finally catching up with New Testament narrative criticism. For while secular narratology is at present closer to narrative criticism than ever before, it is also simultaneously further away from narrative criticism than ever before. Whereas narratology has, indeed, been reshaped by the “rediscovery” of historical context that has marked literary studies during the past quarter century or so (hence narratology’s current closeness to narrative criticism), it has also been reshaped by the “poststructuralization” that has marked literary studies even more profoundly during this same period (hence narratology’s current distance from narrative criticism). As a rough measure of the distance involved, consider the following passage culled from Patrick O’Neill’s *Fictions of Discourse*, one of the earliest examples of poststructuralist narratology:

Narrative communication ... involves both intratextual communication (between character and character, narrator and narratee, implied author and implied reader) and extratextual communication (between the real author and the real reader). Except that, as post-structuralist textology makes clear, reality is itself merely a fiction, and for extratextual we must read intertextual, which in turn emerges as only another way of saying intratextual. (O’Neill 1994, 129)

Thus a revised edition, say, of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* that would entail an engagement with postclassical narratology every bit as vigorous and courageous as the engagement with classical narratology that characterized the first edition would entail a descent down the rabbit hole of poststructuralism and an emergence into a considerably more curious narrative world—a “curiouser and curiouser” world, as Alice herself might put it—than the one left behind. But it would not necessarily be any more odd than the narrative world into which the Fourth Gospel itself plunges us, a world that begins with a Word that precedes the world (John 1:1–3) and ends with a claim that to write that Word out in full would result in a textuality so excessive that the world itself could not contain it (21:25). Strange texts require strange theories, and political texts (for the Fourth Gospel is also that) require political theories.⁴ Even if “reality is itself merely a fiction,” as O’Neill avers, that fiction is an ideological construct, so our poststructuralist narrative criticism would need to have recourse to still further resources—such as postcolonial studies, new historicism, and cultural studies—in order to take the measure of the theo-ideology, or ideo-theology, of this incalculably influential narrative. But that is precisely what certain of the essays in the present volume have already begun to do.

4. For recent reappraisal of John’s relationship to Rome, see Dube and Staley 2002; Moore 2006, 45–74; Carter 2008.

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