

## TELLING THE STORY: THE APPEARANCE AND IMPACT OF *MARK AS STORY*

*Christopher W. Skinner*

All crises begin with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal research. As this process develops, the anomaly comes to be more generally recognised as such, more attention is devoted to it by more of the field's eminent authorities. The field begins to look quite different: scientists express explicit discontent, competing articulations of the paradigm proliferate and scholars view a resolution as the subject matter of their discipline. To this end, they first isolate the anomaly more precisely and give it structure. They push the rules of normal science harder than ever to see, in the area of difficulty, just where and how far they can be made to work.<sup>1</sup>

When we see the narrative as containing a closed and self-sufficient world, with its own integrity, its own past and future, its own set of values, its own universe of meaning, we are able to enter the marvelous world of this story.<sup>2</sup>

The 1982 publication of *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*,<sup>3</sup> was one of the significant contributions to New Testament studies in the latter half of the twentieth century. *Mark as Story* formally introduced narrative criticism to a world of New Testament scholarship that was dominated by the monolithic historical-critical method.<sup>4</sup> David Rhoads, a New Testa-

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1. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 84.

2. David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 414.

3. David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982). The second edition appeared as David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

4. This comment is not meant to bracket out the development of narrative hermeneutics from historical criticism. To be sure, narrative criticism came out of and was deeply

ment scholar, and Donald Michie, an English professor, had come together to apply the insights of literary theory to the Gospel of Mark.<sup>5</sup> The book was groundbreaking not only for the ideas it advanced but also for its elegant simplicity; it was not a highly theoretical treatise but rather a study in applied method from two professors collaborating across their respective disciplines.<sup>6</sup> Though narrative criticism was in its embryonic stages, no one had yet applied this “new” method to one of the Gospels in its entirety.<sup>7</sup>

By the late 1970s redaction criticism had become the dominant interpretive framework within which Gospel scholars were working.<sup>8</sup> The work of the early redaction critics had forged a new way forward from the contribu-

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informed by historical criticism. Even today, in its most complete and intellectually honest forms, narrative hermeneutics stand on the shoulders of the strongest contributions from source, form, and redaction criticisms. Mark Allan Powell expresses it well when he writes that “narrative criticism is certainly not an antihistorical discipline. In fact, a symbiotic relationship exists between narrative and historical approaches to texts. Although the two methods cannot be used simultaneously, they can be used side by side in a supplementary fashion. They might even be viewed as necessary complements, each providing information that is beneficial to the exercise of the other” (*What Is Narrative Criticism?* [GBS; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990], 98).

5. The genesis of this collaboration is recounted in the preface to the first edition of *Mark as Story* (xv), though it has been eliminated from the second. While teaching at Carthage College, Rhoads asked Donald Michie, his colleague from the English department, to show students in his New Testament course how to read the Gospel of Mark as a short story. Michie’s lecture intrigued Rhoads so much that it led to further collaboration and ultimately to the publication of *Mark as Story*.

6. For their part, Rhoads and Michie believed that the best way to reach scholars was to write a book they could use with their students. This is one reason for both the simplicity and the usefulness of *Mark as Story*.

7. In its early stages, narrative criticism was referred to as the “new criticism” and in some cases the “new literary criticism.” This terminology arose out of secular literary critical approaches to English literature where the major emphasis was a close reading of the text without explicit reference to the extratextual world. For more on this, see Leroy Searle, “New Criticism,” in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory* (2nd ed.; ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 691–98.

8. There is not space here to rehearse the history of redaction criticism and its relative merits and deficiencies vis-à-vis narrative criticism. For a helpful overview of methodological developments from source criticism to modern reader-oriented methods, see Francis J. Moloney, *The Living Voice of the Gospels* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 309–42. Major contributions to redaction criticism include Willi Marxsen’s seminal work, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959, translated as *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969). This was followed by similar works on Luke (Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* [trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York:

tions of form criticism, but by this time much of the discussion had become focused on reconstructing the world behind the text.<sup>9</sup> Some within Gospels studies grew restless with this approach and came to regard at least a segment of redaction-critical scholarship as a complicated and speculative enterprise with few measurable results. In addition, there was a lack of unanimity among redaction critics as to where the process of study should begin.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, narrative critics assumed a basic and uncomplicated premise: it is preferable to start with what we have rather than what we do not have. Rhoads and Michie began with the text itself, assuming that the final form of Mark should be treated as an autonomous and unified narrative. This simple premise lies at the heart of narrative criticism and has contributed to major changes in the landscape of biblical scholarship.

Not all early readers of *Mark as Story* appreciated the book's simplicity. One early reviewer wrote:

Rhoads and Michie succeed in summing up the narrative elements in Mark. *Yet their survey cannot be called a significant contribution to the study of Mark or to narrative criticism.* Their presentation of "the story as a whole" prevents them from confronting the questions of Marcan scholarship and results in some simplification and oversimplification.<sup>11</sup>

These comments perhaps tell us more about the reviewer's assumptions than they do about the contributions of the first edition of *Mark as Story*. The reviewer goes on to conclude: "This study does not easily recommend itself to any of the readerships existing inside or outside the scholarly community. NT scholars in need of a solid introduction to narrative criticism ... will have to look elsewhere for satisfaction."<sup>12</sup>

If the previous excerpt told us something about the reviewer's assumptions, this second quotation reveals a great deal more about the assumptions of the academic context(s) into which *Mark as Story* made its entrance. To assert that there was no readily available readership for their book either

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Harper & Row, 1961]), and Matthew (Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963]).

9. For a helpful overview of Marcan studies up to the advent of narrative criticism, see Sean P. Kealy, *Mark's Gospel: A History of Its Interpretation* (New York: Paulist, 1982).

10. For a treatment of the merits and deficiencies of Marcan redaction criticism, see C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples according to Mark: Marcan Redaction in Current Debate* (JSNTSup 27; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

11. Susan Marie Praeder, review of David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, *JBL* 103 (1984): 483, emphasis added.

12. *Ibid.*, 484.

within or outside the scholarly community was ultimately to say that Rhoads and Michie had done something new: they had broken ground in a discipline dominated by the search for the world behind the text. In the early 1980s it may have been difficult to predict the impact of a literary approach to the New Testament narratives, but three decades later it is clear that the proverbial mustard seed has grown into one of the great trees in the garden of biblical scholarship. *Mark as Story* surely played an important role in the shift from emphasizing the world behind the text to the story world of the text.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the publication of *Mark as Story*, there had been signs indicating a shift in interest among biblical scholars, though battles were still being waged over the legitimacy of a literary approach to the biblical narratives. Within Old Testament studies, a segment of scholars working from a literary approach had already begun reading narratives with a focus on the world within the text.<sup>14</sup> This approach slowly began making inroads into New Testament studies, though it would take nearly a decade for New Testament narrative criticism to establish its own voice as a legitimate method alongside source, form, and redaction criticism.

In the United States, important developments that helped bring about a hermeneutical shift were taking place incrementally behind the scenes inside the Society of Biblical Literature's Seminar on Mark between 1974 and 1980.<sup>15</sup> Many of the group's members became leading voices in the shift toward narrative criticism and eventually formed the nucleus of SBL's Literary Aspects Group.<sup>16</sup> During the period in question there was an ongoing struggle between

13. It should be noted that other reviews were kinder in their evaluation of the book. See, e.g., positive reviews by Kent Brower in *CBQ* 45 (1983): 701–2, and William G. Doty in *Int* 37 (1983): 301–4.

14. Some early contributions to narrative criticism of the Hebrew Bible include Sean E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (AnBib 50; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971); Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978); Shem-aryahu Talmon, "The Presentation and Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana* (ed. Joseph Heinemann and Shmuel Werses; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), 9–26; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979); Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *VT* 30 (1980): 154–73; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981); H. van Dyke Parunak, "Some Axioms for Literary Architecture," *Semitics* 8 (1982): 1–16; idem, "Transitional Techniques in the Bible," *JBL* 102 (1983): 525–48; Peter D. Miscall, *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Adele Berlin, "Point of View in Biblical Narrative," in *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature* (ed. Stephen A. Geller; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 71–113.

15. Hereafter, the abbreviation SBL is employed for the Society of Biblical Literature.

16. Those who were particularly influential for Rhoads' and Michie's embryonic

Markan redaction critics and those who wanted to study the text as a whole. David Rhoads, a participant in these struggles, had come to favor the latter approach somewhat unexpectedly. In his dissertation he had undertaken a historical study of the Roman-Jewish wars and was convinced that Mark, written around 70 C.E., must fit within that area of historical investigation.<sup>17</sup> But his eventual exasperation with redaction criticism and his recognition that reading the text as a whole was immediately rewarding would together form the basis for his shift toward literary criticism. This shift was also facilitated by several publications.

In the late 1970s Robert Tannehill published two essays aimed at examining Mark from a narrative perspective. The first study appeared in 1977 and focused on the function of Jesus' disciples in Mark's story.<sup>18</sup> In the years immediately preceding Tannehill's essay, the disciples had taken center stage in Markan studies, but the focus had largely been on issues external to the text of Mark.<sup>19</sup> By focusing on the role of the disciples *within* the narrative, Tannehill anticipated a shift in thinking that would ultimately lead to a sustained emphasis on the story world of the text. In 1979, Tannehill published a second

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thinking on narrative criticism were Thomas Boomershine, Joanna Dewey, Robert Fowler, Werner Kelber, Norman Petersen, Robert Tannehill, and Mary Ann Tolbert. In the early years of the Literary Aspects Group, a great deal of time was devoted to reading secular literary criticism, which led to ongoing refinements in biblical narrative criticism. Eventually the Literary Aspects Group moved away narrative criticism, as devised by Rhoads and Michie, to more reader-oriented readings of the biblical text.

17. A substantially revised version of Rhoads's dissertation was published as *Israel in Revolution: 6–74 C.E. A Political History Based on the Writings of Josephus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

18. Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57 (1977): 386–405.

19. The function of the disciples in Mark had become an important discussion during this period. In 1968, Theodore Weeden published an article entitled "The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel" (*ZNW* 59 [1968]: 145–58), in which he argued that the disciples were the subject of a polemic aimed at clarifying the christological viewpoint of the Evangelist. Weeden and others working on *theios aner* traditions drew upon the scholarship of Ludwig Bieler (*Theios Aner: Das Bild des "Göttlichen Menschen" in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* [Vienna: Hofels, 1935]), but Weeden was more explicit than anyone to that point in arguing that Mark's polemic against the disciples could help the interpreter understand both the theology and the purpose of Mark's Gospel. Weeden's theory was presented in greater detail in his book *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1971). Weeden's work led to a renewed focus on the role of the disciples vis-à-vis Mark's Christology and spawned a number of attempts to explain the so-called "corrective Christology" of Mark's Gospel.

essay examining the “narrative Christology” of Mark’s Gospel.<sup>20</sup> The opening paragraph reads:

Jesus is the central figure of the Gospel of Mark, and the author is centrally concerned to present (or re-present) Jesus to his readers so that his significance for their lives becomes clear. *He does this in the form of a story. Since this is the case, we need to take seriously the narrative form of Mark in discussing this Gospel’s presentation of Jesus Christ.* In other words, we need ways of understanding and appreciating Mark as narrative Christology.<sup>21</sup>

The recognition that Mark uses the story form to explain the significance of Jesus’ life and vocation is foundational for the literary study of the Second Gospel as well as the other New Testament narratives.

Other works that were formative for Rhoads’s and Michie’s early thinking about the story world of the text were Thomas Boomershine’s unpublished dissertation (1974),<sup>22</sup> Norman Petersen’s “Point of View in Mark’s Narrative” (1978),<sup>23</sup> Werner Kelber’s *Mark’s Story of Jesus* (1979),<sup>24</sup> and Robert Fowler’s *Loaves and Fishes* (1981).<sup>25</sup> Each of these studies contributed to the burgeoning growth of literary studies in their application to the New Testament narratives.<sup>26</sup>

20. Robert C. Tannehill, “The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology,” *Semeia* 16 (1979): 57–95.

21. *Ibid.*, 57, emphasis added.

22. Thomas Boomershine, “Mark the Storyteller: A Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Mark’s Passion and Resurrection Narrative” (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1974). Rhoads acknowledges that Boomershine’s innovative work was formative for his own thinking about Mark’s Gospel and narrative criticism. Though it is not an example of what we have come to think of as classical “narrative criticism,” Boomershine’s approach to Mark resonated with those who had become weary of redaction criticism and were looking for a new way forward. Boomershine is presently revising his dissertation for publication as a performance-criticism commentary that will provide a detailed study of Mark’s passion and resurrection as a story performed for audiences in the post-70 c.e. period.

23. Norman Petersen, “Point of View in Mark’s Narrative,” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 97–121. Powell (*What Is Narrative Criticism*, 111 n. 26) has referred to Petersen as perhaps the “premier theorist” of early narrative criticism in New Testament studies. See also Petersen’s *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (GBS; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

24. Werner Kelber, *Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

25. Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 54; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981).

26. In the second edition of *Mark as Story*, Rhoads and Dewey acknowledge Norman Perrin (one-time chair of the Mark group), Thomas Boomershine, Werner Kelber, Norman

In 1982, Rhoads set forth his own assumptions in an essay entitled “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark.”<sup>27</sup> There he argued that the historical-critical methods used by many New Testament scholars had the unfortunate effect of breaking up the text. Scholars used these methods to pursue the questions of modern scholarship, which, in his view, led to a truncated reading of the biblical narratives. Since many of those questions dealt with issues outside the text, this meant that scholars rarely read the Gospels in their entirety.<sup>28</sup> Rhoads and Michie approached the text of Mark as a unified narrative, arguing that it presents a story world into which the reader can and should enter. With the theory taking shape and the assumptions clearly spelled out, all that was left was for scholars to apply these insights in a systematic way to the canonical Gospels. *Mark as Story* was the first book to accomplish this feat, though the other New Testament narratives would be covered in the years immediately following its publication.<sup>29</sup>

#### READING MARK’S STORY (1982–1999)

The incremental growth of narrative criticism within New Testament studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s led to a full-fledged phenomenon in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Some scholars focused on the methodological and theoretical end of matters,<sup>30</sup> while others began to apply narrative

Petersen, and Robert Tannehill for their early contributions to the development of narrative criticism. See *Mark as Story*, 160 n. 4.

27. This essay was originally delivered to the SBL Seminar on Mark in 1980, but it was not formally published until 1982. See n. 2 above for full bibliographic information.

28. He wrote: “Redaction criticism, form criticism, source criticism, and even composition criticism break up the narrative in order to get at the questions they pursue. Distinctions between redaction and tradition, between history and tradition, naturally fragment the text.... By contrast, literary questions about narrative features tend to reveal Mark’s Gospel as a whole cloth” (“Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” 412).

29. See R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986–1989); and Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1988).

30. General works on narrative-critical method have appeared with increasing frequency in recent years. A number of works aimed at reading biblical narrative in general (rather than strictly New Testament narratives) have appeared. See, among others, Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series; Sheffield: Almond, 1983); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Literary Biblical Series; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*; J. P. Fokkeman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991); and D. F. Tolmie,

methods to their exegetical endeavors.<sup>31</sup> Among New Testament scholars, the call to move toward biblical narrative criticism set in motion a process that helped spawn numerous methodological and exegetical trajectories. Once scholars embraced the concept of the story world of the text, methods such as reader-response criticism,<sup>32</sup> feminist criticism,<sup>33</sup> performance criticism,<sup>34</sup> postcolonial criticism,<sup>35</sup> and the numerous approaches that fall under the banner of postmodern criticism<sup>36</sup> had less trouble being recognized as legitimate methods for approaching the text.<sup>37</sup> The battles fought by early narrative

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*Narratology and Biblical Narratives: A Practical Guide* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999). A helpful work on New Testament narrative criticism is James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson explore narrative method and related reader-oriented methods as they apply to the Gospel of Mark in their important edited work, *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

31. E.g., Ernest Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (London: T&T Clark, 1989); and Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Disciples, Authorities* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

32. Robert M. Fowler's *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001) is the foundational text for anyone wanting to explore reader-response criticism. See also Fowler's chapter "Reader-Response Criticism: Figuring Mark's Reader," in Moore and Anderson, *Mark and Method*, 59–94.

33. See, e.g., Joanna Dewey, "The Gospel of Mark," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary* (vol. 2 of *Searching the Scriptures*; ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1997), 470–509.

34. See Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003). See also Holly E. Hearon and Philip Ruge Jones, eds., *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media* (Biblical Performance Criticism; Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2009). Rhoads and Dewey are also presently collaborating on a book tentatively titled *Biblical Performance Criticism*. There is a wealth of information related to performance criticism at <http://www.biblicalperformancecriticism.org>, a site created and maintained by David Rhoads, Peter Perry, and James Maxey.

35. For a work that presents the theory and traces the history of this hermeneutical development, see R. G. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also the more recent collection of essays in Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (Bible and Postcolonialism; London: T&T Clark, 2005); and Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading from This Place* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995–2000).

36. For a good overview, see A. K. M. Adam, *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). See also Edgar V. McKnight, *Postmodern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988).

37. I do not mean to suggest that the reception of narrative criticism in the academic



critics over the legitimacy of using a literary approach had paved the way for other hermeneutical trends to see the light of day.

In the wake of these developments and his own evolution as a narrative critic, Rhoads soon realized that his original work needed a thorough revision. The second edition, published in 1999, was substantially revised with the assistance of a new contributor, Joanna Dewey.<sup>38</sup> In the late 1970s Rhoads and Dewey had become friends and begun editing one another's work. As a graduate student, Dewey had also been asked to participate in the SBL Seminar on Mark by Norman Perrin.<sup>39</sup> Rhoads and Dewey forged a friendship in this forum, and Dewey subsequently proved to be an important outside contributor to the book's first edition.<sup>40</sup>

In the second edition, Rhoads and Dewey meticulously and methodically reorganized the entire book.<sup>41</sup> They added new discussions, fleshed out some of the first book's undeveloped assumptions, and chronicled developments since 1982—essentially rewriting a great majority of the book. A few of these changes are evident from a simple glance at both books. For instance, in the

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community has created a situation in which “anything goes” methodologically. Methods of textual study must meet certain criteria to be deemed legitimate by a significant cross-section of biblical scholars. Still, methods such as reader-response, feminist, performance, postcolonial, and postmodern criticisms have had less trouble being recognized as legitimate because narrative critics helped pave the way for their reception in the guild.

38. In the preface to the second edition, the authors note that the book was “substantially rewritten throughout, with no page remaining unchanged” (*Mark as Story*, xi). By this time Joanna Dewey had already established herself as a leading voice in both literary hermeneutics and Markan studies. Between 1976 and the release of the second edition of *Mark as Story*, Dewey published the following related studies: *Disciples of the Way: Mark on Discipleship* (Cincinnati: Women's Division, The United Methodist Church, 1976); *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure and Theology in Mark 2–3:6* (SBLDS 48; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1980); “Point of View and the Disciples in Mark,” *SBLSP* 21 (1982): 97–106; “Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark,” *Int* 43 (1989): 32–44; “Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 221–36; “Mark as Aural Narrative: Structures as Clues to Understanding,” *STR* 36 (1992): 45–56; “The Gospel of Mark as Oral-Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (ed. Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 145–63.

39. While Perrin is known for his work on Markan redaction criticism, toward the end of his life he had become more sympathetic to literary hermeneutics and their implications for reading the New Testament narratives.

40. Dewey's early interest in orality grew out of her desire to restore women to the story world of the text. Thus, her two abiding scholarly interests—narrative studies and feminist issues—came together in this one forum.

41. Donald Michie was unable to participate in the book's revision.

first edition the second chapter was entitled “The Rhetoric” and examined the role of the narrator, point of view, style, narrative patterns, and other literary features. In the second edition the chapter title was changed to “The Narrator,” and while much of the chapter remained the same as the first edition, more emphasis was placed on the rhetoric of the narrative as part of the storytelling device of Mark’s narrator. Rhoads and Dewey also expanded the first edition’s chapter 5 (“The Characters”) and divided it into two separate chapters: one that dealt strictly with the role of Jesus in Mark and another that dealt with Mark’s other characters. In addition to these changes, the authors also lengthened the book’s original concluding chapter and added two appendices and an afterword entitled “Reading as Dialogue: The Ethics of Reading.”

One substantive change that is not so obvious at a cursory glance is the newer perspective from which Rhoads and Dewey were now reading the Second Gospel. The first edition had been heavily reliant upon the work of Seymour Chatman and his focus on the process of discovery.<sup>42</sup> In their revision Rhoads and Dewey were influenced more by the writings of Wesley Kort.<sup>43</sup>

Chatman had made a distinction between story and discourse in a way that separated form and content. While Chatman’s work had proven insightful for Rhoads’s early thinking about narrative criticism, he eventually came to regard this approach as a simplistic and false dichotomy. By contrast, Wesley Kort sought to establish four features of narrative that make up a worldview: narrator, settings, characters, and plot.<sup>44</sup> To these four Rhoads and Dewey added rhetoric. The narrator provides the standards of morality and belief that govern the story. The settings identify the possibilities and limits within which characters act and events take place. Characters reveal the human condition. The plot unveils the dynamics of time as the story moves forward. Rhetoric has to do with the story as a whole—both content and storytelling techniques—that leave an impact on the hearers. In this model the rhetoric becomes the coherent impact of the whole presentation of both story and discourse and

42. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Film and Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978).

43. See Wesley Kort, *Shriven Selves: Religious Problems in Recent American Fiction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); idem, *Narrative Elements and Religious Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); idem, *Moral Fiber: Character and Belief in Recent American Fiction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); idem, *Modern Fiction and Human Time: A Study in Narrative and Belief* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1986); idem, *Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988).

44. Another strength of Kort’s reading of Mark is his tracing of the mounting tension in the Gospel and his attention to the pace at which the narrative unfolds. See especially *Story, Text, and Scripture*.

its impact upon the audience. Rhoads and Dewey found this scheme to be a better fit for their approach to the Gospel of Mark.

In the end, these changes had the practical effect of clarifying the book's various foci and making it even more user-friendly for students and scholars of the New Testament. In its second edition, *Mark as Story* has remained a fixture in undergraduate, graduate, and seminary courses on the Gospel of Mark. Scholars working in Markan studies and narrative criticism continue to cite the book as an authoritative resource. No bibliography of important works on narrative criticism is complete without *Mark as Story*. However, the strongest evidence for the impact of *Mark as Story* in particular and narrative criticism in general is that contemporary scholars routinely employ narrative methods, often without an explicit reference to their methodological choice. Narrative criticism and its attendant assumptions have become an organic part of biblical exegesis in the new millennium, and some (if not much) of this is surely due to the seminal contributions of *Mark as Story*. Contrary to the initial impression of our erstwhile reviewer, *Mark as Story* has proven to be a significant and enduring contribution to both Markan studies and narrative criticism.

#### MARK AS STORY: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

The foregoing survey suggests that the publication of *Mark as Story* marks a turning point in Gospel studies, both for the contribution it made to Markan scholarship and for the methodological insights that it advanced. This book aims to celebrate *Mark as Story* while offering critique, engagement, and exploration of the new hermeneutical vistas that have developed as a result of literary approaches to the text. By investigating various texts and themes in Mark's Gospel, the objective of this book is to reflect upon the rise of narrative criticism and to anticipate future trends in Gospels research. Thus, this volume has the complementary goals of looking backward and forward. The contributors have been brought together to celebrate the achievements of *Mark as Story* and suggest prospects for future research. Those involved in this project, leading voices on the Gospel of Mark and literary methods, have come, with a sense of appreciation for *Mark as Story*, to honor the work of David Rhoads, Donald Michie, and Joanna Dewey. The book is divided into two sections: the first consisting of studies on method and the second consisting of studies on Markan texts and themes from a perspective within narrative criticism or its related methodological trajectories.

Mark Allan Powell begins the first section of the book by questioning whether narrative criticism can be regarded as a hermeneutical method. Powell argues that the *method* of narrative criticism may best be described

as text-focused, but the *practice* of narrative criticism is always carried out by persons who hold to either an author-oriented hermeneutic (Warren Carter, Jack Dean Kingsbury, Graham Stanton), a text-oriented hermeneutic (Richard Edwards, James Resseguie), or a reader-oriented hermeneutic (Joanna Dewey, David Rhoads, Mary Ann Tolbert). The result has been the development of three fairly distinct exegetical approaches, all of which are referred to as “narrative criticism.” Each employs the same basic reading strategy, albeit with different assumptions and in service of different ends. Despite their differences, all three approaches aim to answer the same question: How should the implied reader respond to the text? Powell points out the assumptions, similarities, and differences in each approach, concluding that narrative criticism has developed into a reading strategy that can be employed by scholars with different hermeneutical interests and goals.

Elizabeth Struthers Malbon has distinguished herself as a leading authority on characters and characterization in the Gospel of Mark.<sup>45</sup> Her essay reflects on substantial changes in scholarly perspectives on both the narrative process and Markan characters that since 1982. She notes that narrative criticism, in its development more than in its initial appearance, is best understood as an active appreciation of the narrative process: from an implied author, through a story world of settings, plot, and characters, to an implied audience. She then demonstrates how the changes from the first edition of *Mark as Story* to the second, specifically in the chapters on characters, also illustrate how narrative critics at various times focus on different aspects of the narrative process. Malbon concludes by highlighting a range of scholarly works to illustrate how different views of characters and characterization reflect varying foci of the narrative process.

In his essay, Stephen Moore interacts with the theory of character that emerges from the first edition of *Mark as Story*. Moore begins with the observation that Rhoads and Michie tend to conflate the modern genres of short story and novel to help explain Mark’s narrative features, particularly their treatment of Markan characters. In the first edition, Rhoads and Michie rely heavily upon the categories provided by E. M. Forster in his classic *Aspects of the Novel*, in particular the distinction between “round” and “flat” characters.<sup>46</sup> Using categories drawn from Cartesian philosophy and the discipline of animal studies, Moore critiques the theory of character that emerges from the

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45. See the collected essays on characterization in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000). See also her more recent study, *Mark’s Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009).

46. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Arnold, 1927).

first edition of *Mark as Story*, finding it often to be anachronistic. The modern novel with its signature concept of character has played a crucial ancillary role in the construction of reimagined (nonanimal) human. Moore argues that *Mark as Story* incorporates this same concept of character and thereby becomes the unwitting vehicle of a problematic ideology of human-animal relations. Further, this ideology stands in marked tension with David Rhoads's own ecological work on the New Testament, with the result that Rhoads (on ecology) must be read against Rhoads (with Dewey and Michie on Mark's narrative) in order to construe the topic of character in Mark differently. Moore closes by using his critique as a means of calling us to a more informed and balanced theory of character in Mark and in the other New Testament narratives.

In 2002, Francis J. Moloney published the first full-length exegetical commentary on the Gospel of Mark from an explicitly narrative perspective.<sup>47</sup> In his essay he reflects on the process of writing a narrative commentary on Mark through the grid of the various categories provided by *Mark as Story* (e.g., narrator, setting, character, plot, rhetoric). In particular, Moloney emphasizes how his commentary focuses on two main characters: Jesus and the disciples. While most other characters play an instructive but secondary role in the story, Moloney identifies the relationship between Jesus and the disciples as one key feature driving the plot and bringing the story to its climax at the cross. He notes that during the process of writing the commentary he attempted to resolve the tensions in the narrative by the application of two principles. First, he takes for granted that Mark the storyteller attempted to write an account of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus that coherently communicated what he wanted to say to the original readers. Second, he has attempted to fit everything together into a consistent pattern for his own readers. Thus, even though Mark's story has many elements that are alien to a modern readership, Moloney shows how the Second Gospel possesses unity, structure, and coherence that are instructive for both an original audience (whether real or implied) and a real twenty-first-century audience.

Thomas Boomershine closes out the first section of the book with an essay on audience address in Mark. Boomershine has been a prominent figure in methodological movements toward performance criticism. The recognition that Mark was written to be performed for an audience that was largely uneducated has yielded insights that have taken narrative criticism a step further. Against this backdrop, Boomershine addresses two dimensions of the Second Gospel that are raised by *Mark as Story* but are not resolved: the

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47. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002).

analysis of Mark as a story that was addressed to audiences rather than readers in the ancient world and the implications of the dynamics of audience address in Mark for our understanding of the audience and purpose of the Gospel in its original historical context. He asserts that performance criticism is a logical methodological development and that it is more faithful to the original character of Mark than the narrative-critical assumption of the Markan reader, particularly as that is developed in *Mark as Story*. Against that backdrop, Boomershine discusses the nuances of audience address by demonstrating how Jesus, the central figure of the Gospel, addresses the audience as a series of predominantly Jewish characters. As the story progresses, the listeners experience a gradual shift from negative to more positive interactions with Jesus. Boomershine concludes that the reformation of narrative criticism for analyzing ancient stories performed for audiences in the ancient world has the promise of clarifying the meaning and purpose of Mark's story.

R. Alan Culpepper, another pioneer in New Testament narrative criticism, begins the second section of the book by examining the notoriously difficult section in Mark 6 that deals with the sending of the Twelve and the death of John the Baptist. Interpreters of Mark have often said that the story of the death of John the Baptist was inserted into the Gospel to provide an interlude for the mission of the disciples and that it has few connections with the rest of the Gospel. Keeping these comments in mind, Culpepper examines the intertextuality of the story as well as the nuances of the way the story is told. He then defines five themes that this complex pericope advances: (1) John's death foreshadows Jesus' death; (2) John's death foreshadows the persecution Jesus' disciples face; (3) Herod's banquet serves as the antithesis of Jesus' meals; (4) the serving of John's head on a platter anticipates the Last Supper; and (5) the characterization of Herod and his "kingdom" serve as the antithesis of Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God. Culpepper argues that, while narrative criticism has yet to take seriously the discontinuities in the narrative, it has exposed texture, richness, and depth that earlier historical-critical interpreters have missed.

Morna Hooker's essay examines how the title "Son of God" functions within Mark's story. Hooker argues that "Son of God" links the various parts of Mark's drama together and clearly expresses what Mark believes to be the truth about Jesus. "Son of God" is found in the prologue (1:11), where hearers of the Gospel are let into the secret of Jesus' identity, and again in one of the two recognition scenes at the turning point of the drama, when three of the disciples are told the truth about him (9:11). In the denouement, the high priest, representative of the Jewish nation, dismisses Jesus' absurd claim to be Messiah and Son of God (14:62), but the title is then used by the Gentile centurion (15:39). She points out that the scenes in the story proper—the cries of

the demons and Jesus' parable about the vineyard tenants—remind us from time to time of this truth about Jesus. Peter's acknowledgement that Jesus is the Messiah expresses only part of this truth, but Jesus' words about "the Son of man" continually explain what being the "Son of God" means. For Hooker, Mark skillfully tells the story in a way that demonstrates that it is Jesus' death as king of the Jews that leads Gentiles to acknowledge him as Son of God.

Kelly Iverson offers a fresh consideration of Mark's secrecy motif. The so-called "messianic secret" has been a fixture in Markan conversation for over a century, but despite vigorous dialogue, little consensus has been reached since the publication of William Wrede's *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* in 1901. Iverson argues that, not only is narrative criticism an indispensable tool for shedding light on one of the more long-standing issues in Markan studies, but that the hermeneutical trajectory it sets forth paves the way for a fuller, more complete understanding that transcends the current state of the discussion. Beyond raising issues about the historical Jesus, narrative criticism fosters questions about the messianic secret and the impact of Mark's story that have been widely overlooked. By analyzing Mark's Gospel with a sensitivity to its performance, Iverson explores how the secrecy theme functions as an audience-elevating device that serves a missional purpose within the Second Gospel.

In her essay Holly Hearon argues that narrative criticism has fundamentally changed the way scholars view the biblical text. It has sharpened our attention on the world that exists wholly within the text by focusing on the role of the narrator, plot, setting and character. She notes that in recent years both Joanna Dewey and David Rhoads (among others) have begun to introduce another major shift in how we understand, experience, and interpret the text through the exploration of what Rhoads calls "performance criticism." Where narrative criticism calls attention to the world created within the text, performance criticism explores this same textual world mediated by a performer in the presence of an audience. Drawing upon the work of Whitney Shiner, Philip Ruge-Jones, Margaret Lee, and Brandon Scott, Hearon explores selected dimensions of the text (narrator, setting, conflict, character) that are lifted up in narrative criticism, using Mark 5:21–43 as her focus text. She concludes by proposing methodological shifts that need to occur when engaging the text through performance criticism, with attention to the implications for interpretation.

Robert Fowler's essay concludes the book's second section by analyzing the three sea stories carefully positioned in Mark 4:35–41; 6:45–52; and 8:14–21. The first two of these stories are miracle stories, and in a classroom setting they raise all of the predictable interpretive problems associated with making sense of ancient miracle stories in the postmodern, high-tech world of the

twenty-first century. Contemporary students have little experience interpreting two-thousand-year-old miracle stories, and they enter the classroom with little exposure to literary theory. However, they have plenty of experience in watching movies. Fowler's students and, in this case, the readers of his essay are asked to exercise their imaginations to propose countless ingenious ways to film these miracle stories. Invariably, a corporate decision is made that the moviemaker's camera must, sooner or later, place the audience members "in the boat with Jesus." Concerns about the ostensible miraculous nature of these stories fade from our minds as we find ourselves, surprisingly, in the thick of the action on the silver screen. Fowler invites us, as he does his students, to enter the story world of the text by using the secondary context of the electronic age to shed light on the primary context of antiquity.

Fittingly, the book concludes with further reflections from David Rhoads, Donald Michie, and Joanna Dewey. Rhoads, Michie, and Dewey collaborate once again to critically engage the essays in this volume. As they interact with the book's essays, they also discuss where they see the discipline heading and they provide us with a list of prospects for future research.