

Chapter 1

THE STUDY OF CHARACTER(S) IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK: A SURVEY OF RESEARCH FROM WREDE TO THE PERFORMANCE CRITICS (1901 TO 2014)*

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I. Introduction

During the nearly two-millennia history of commentary-writing, the Gospel of Mark was overlooked for centuries as the Gospels of Matthew and John occupied pride of position, largely due to their influence on important developments within creedal Christianity.¹ Beginning in the mid-1800s, that trend was reversed as the Gospel of Mark found itself front-and-centre in the most important discussions within Gospel studies. Once Markan priority became a canon of critical orthodoxy, a whole new wave of attention was given to the long-neglected Gospel.²

* I would like to thank Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, Kelly Iverson, Michael Kok, and Scott S. Elliot, all of whom interacted with an earlier version of this chapter.

1. The earliest patristic commentary on Mark was written by Victor of Antioch in the late fifth century, though his work is essentially a catena of texts drawn from the Gospel. Michael Cahill has argued that the earliest true commentary on the Second Gospel was produced in the Middle Ages, and though widely thought to have been the work of Jerome, was more likely the work of an anonymous Irish monk from the seventh century; see Michael Cahill, *The First Commentary on Mark: An Annotated Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-4.

2. In the new millennium, commenting on Mark has experienced its own renaissance. Since 2000, no fewer than fourteen critical commentaries on the Gospel of Mark have appeared in English. See, in chronological order: Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (AB, 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000); James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP, 2; Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 2002); Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002); M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A*

Accompanying this revival of interest in the Gospel of Mark was an especially fervent interest in Mark's disciples. Representatives of the history-of-religions school as well as those working with redaction criticism and literary methods have all expressed interest in the various players in Mark's story – again, particularly the disciples. In many ways, interest in Mark's disciples has set the lines for the major discussions within Markan scholarship since the early 1900s.³ Under what circumstances was the Gospel of Mark written? What sort of Christology do we find in the Gospel of Mark? What are we to make of Mark's secrecy motif? What, if anything, can we know of a Markan community? All of these questions have, in some way, turned to a consideration of Mark's disciples to provide an answer.⁴ Though this volume is concerned with analyzing current *literary* approaches to Markan characters and characterization, the present essay aims to provide a broader survey of research on the characters of the Second Gospel. What follows is an attempt to sketch the history of research on Markan characters from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present day, with emphasis on major methodological developments and exegetical contributions.

Commentary (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006); Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007); Mary Healy, *The Gospel of Mark* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16* (Anchor Yale Bible, 27A; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); C. Clifton Black, *Mark* (ANTC; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011); Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). Very few Mark commentaries in French or German have been produced in recent years; two exceptions are: Camille Focant, *L'Évangile selon Marc* (Commentaire biblique: Nouveau Testament, 2; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2004), and Hans F. Bayer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (HTA, 5; Giessen: Brunnen-Verlag, 2008).

3. In this regard, Mary Ann Tolbert perceptively notes: 'For most of the last century, the group of characters in the Gospel of Mark drawing the most attention and causing the most problems has clearly been the twelve disciples... From the arguments of William Wrede at the turn of the century to recent redaction-critical or literary investigations, the characterization, role, and fate of the twelve disciples have formed the centerpiece of historical reconstructions of the Markan community, evaluations of Markan theology, and hypotheses concerning the gospel genre'; see Mary Ann Tolbert, 'How the Gospel of Mark Builds Character', *Int* 47 (1993), p. 347.

4. Against this tendency, see the critique offered by Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), Chapter 4, which is entitled, 'Disciples Become Deserters'.

The goals of this overview are to situate the other essays in this book within a broader history of scholarship, and provide a more robust background against which to evaluate the arguments those essays propose. A primary focus of this *Forschungsbericht* will be to examine the various shifts in critical methods used by Gospel scholars and the consequent impact these shifts have had on our understanding of Markan characters and characterization.

II. William Wrede: An Epoch-Making Paradigm (1901)

Like many areas of inquiry within contemporary Markan research, the modern study of characters in the Second Gospel can be traced back to the epoch-making work of William Wrede. In his seminal monograph, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*,⁵ Wrede examined Mark's secrecy motif and found two competing strands of tradition in the narrative. In his consideration of these two groups of material, Wrede focused on the role of the disciples and raised questions about their ambiguous and seemingly contradictory presentation. Attentive readers of the Second Gospel recognize that there is a significant block of material in which the disciples are presented in a positive light and another block of material in which they appear to be devoid of understanding as it relates to Jesus' identity and mission. Wrede acknowledged that these two blocks of material stand in conflict with one another; his solution was to question the historicity of Jesus' claims to be messiah. The conflict can be stated in this way: the historical reality is that Jesus never claimed to be messiah during his lifetime, even though the Gospel of Mark is concerned to show its audience otherwise. Therefore, the misunderstanding of the disciples and Jesus' commands to secrecy are both later literary creations meant to explain why the disciples never recognized Jesus as the messiah during his lifetime. Though many of his *conclusions* have been rejected by modern scholars, Wrede's *questions* have remained relevant and are often the starting point for contemporary Markan research.⁶

5. The original German publication appeared as William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901). The English edition was published in 1971 under the title, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J.C.G. Greig; Library of Theological Translations; Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971). References that follow will be to the English translation.

6. Wrede's work continues to be cited as a reference point for fresh examinations of Mark's secrecy motif. See, most recently, David F. Watson, *Honor Among*

It is often said that the enduring contributions of Wrede's work are found in the ways it anticipated future developments in both form criticism and redaction criticism, though I do not think it unreasonable to claim that Wrede's work also anticipated more recent narrative-critical studies of Markan themes and characters.⁷ Wrede and his contemporaries recognized that the canonical gospels were collections of inherited material rather than simple eyewitness accounts, though many scholars of the time still held that Mark provided a somewhat reliable window into the life and vocation of the historical Jesus. Wrede's analysis of Mark helped lay the foundation for the eventual discarding of this notion among scholars. Further, the distinction Wrede maintained between traditional Jesus material and later literary creation became instructive for future form- and redaction-critical discussions of the Gospels, particularly as these discussions conceived of the distinction between the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* and the *Sitz im Leben der Kirche*.⁸

In his treatment of Mark's secrecy motif, Wrede's primary goal was to discern what was of *historical* origin, though I have suggested that the categories he proposed could also have anticipated current narratological concerns. For instance, were we to use the language of more recent

Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); and Kelly R. Iverson, "'Wherever the Gospel is Preached': The Paradox of Secrecy in the Gospel of Mark", in Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect* (SBLRBS, 65; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 181-200.

7. Rudolf Bultmann was one of the first scholars to trace Wrede's impact on the development of *Formgeschichte*; see his essay, 'A New Approach to the Synoptic Problem', in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (New York: Meridian, 1960), pp. 35-54. William C. Robinson discusses Wrede's impact on the development of redaction criticism in his essay, 'The Quest for Wrede's Secret Messiah', in Christopher Tuckett (ed.), *The Messianic Secret* (IRT, 1; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 97-115. Few scholars today accept Wrede's conclusions. Rather, the enduring genius of his work is that it caused a sea change in the way scholars looked at the Gospels. To quote Robinson: 'What Wrede accomplished is of importance sufficient to insure his book its place as a classic in NT research, and yet the inadequacies of his argument are such that it does not deserve the influence it still exerts on current efforts to interpret the Gospel of Mark' (p. 97). For more on the significance of Wrede's contributions, see Georg Strecker, 'William Wrede: Zur hundersten Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages', *ZTK* 57 (1960-61), pp. 67-91.

8. Or, in the case of the form critics, the distinction between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' Jesus material. For an insightful treatment of the inability of form-critical method to isolate authentic Jesus material from the inauthentic, see Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee* (LHJS, 8; LNTS, 413; London: T&T Clark International, 2011), Chapter 2.

narrative hermeneutics, we could (I think, rightly) say that Wrede identified a tension in the literary presentation of the disciples. Given Wrede's aims and context, it would of course be anachronistic for us to speak of Mark's 'ambiguous characterization' of the disciples throughout the narrative. However, looking through the lens of contemporary narratological concerns, this is precisely the sort of thing Wrede's critique anticipated.

Wrede identified a pattern of characterization that might, on the one hand, be described as incongruous or contradictory – at least by form critics like Rudolf Bultmann, who impugned the literary integrity of the narrative. On the other hand, narrative critics – who are generally more optimistic about the internal unity of the story – might describe the presentation of the disciples as being laced with dramatic tension. Wrede notes, for instance, that Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi can hardly have been regarded as a turning point or climactic moment for Mark since the disciples' 'inability to comprehend Jesus is no less after the event than it was before'.⁹ He continues:

If Mark really thought of the confession as something extraordinary and new then it must be said that this view has no influence upon his presentation as a whole; he would describe an episode without having any notion of what it actually means or without thinking through what conclusions derive from its contents.¹⁰

From this perspective there is a seeming inconsistency in Mark's presentation of both the 'when' and the 'why' of the disciples' obtuseness; sometimes they understand, sometimes they do not, and we are in the dark about why this is so. Wrede used this observation as one launching point for his conclusions about the unhistorical elements of Mark's Gospel.

Suffice it to say that we could include a much greater reflection on Wrede's analysis of Mark, but space considerations preclude such a discussion. Of greater importance for our present purposes is an awareness of Wrede's impact on what would follow. Wrede was the first critic to highlight the importance of the disciples in answering major questions about the Gospel of Mark. He was also the first to suggest that Mark developed his own theology of Jesus as 'Christ' and 'son of God'. Both of these insights would go on to factor heavily in the work of the redaction critics, but before we discuss them, we should make at least passing mention of the form critics.

9. Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, pp. 115-16.

10. Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, p. 116.

After Wrede challenged the idea that Mark provided an historical window into Jesus' life, several new doors were opened for fresh research.¹¹ Through one of those doors entered the form critics, who were less interested in the *world of the text* and more concerned with reconstructing the *world behind the text*.¹² Building upon the insights of source criticism, which recognized that the Gospels were comprised of various *written* sources, the form critics were guided by the assumption that the evangelists were collectors of various *orally transmitted* traditions. The form critics also regarded the sources in a given text as untidily knitted together and, at times, incompatible with one another. It is well known that Rudolf Bultmann, the most important of the German form critics, and possibly the most important NT scholar of the twentieth century, regarded the Gospel of Mark as a sloppy and haphazardly constructed account, offering numerous theories about literary seams and the rearrangement of Mark's received tradition.¹³ Concluding his discussion of Mark's collecting of source material, Bultmann famously opined that 'Mark is not sufficiently master of his material to be able to venture on a systematic construction himself'.¹⁴ For Bultmann, Mark's editorial ineptitude reveals itself over and over again. Given this critique, the period in which form criticism dominated the landscape of Gospel studies saw little concern

11. This quotation, perhaps more than any other in the book, articulates Wrede's conclusions about history in Mark: 'It therefore remains true to say that as a whole the Gospel no longer offers a historical view of the real life of Jesus. Only pale residues of such a view have passed over into what is a suprahistorical view for faith. In this sense the Gospel of Mark belongs to the history of dogma' (Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, p. 131).

12. I recognize that it is anachronistic to frame the discussion using these specific designations since it would not have occurred to the form critics to make such a distinction. However, in the light of contemporary developments, it is wholly appropriate for us to recognize the difference in focus and outcome between the two approaches.

13. The other two widely recognized German form critics were Karl Ludwig Schmidt (see *Die Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zu ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1919]) and Martin Dibelius (see *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919], later appearing in English as *From Tradition to Gospel* [trans. B.L. Woolf; Cambridge & London: James Clarke, 1971]).

14. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 1972; original German 1921), p. 350. Recent awareness of Mark's literary sophistication would suggest an error in Bultmann's thinking about Mark's editorial sophistication, especially in light of Mark's intercalated passages – literary units Bultmann sharply criticized and which, in the light of contemporary literary studies, he did not appear to understand.

for the role of the disciples or other Markan characters. Instead, the focus was squarely on (1) classifying the various forms, (2) identifying the life setting of the forms, and (3) using the life setting as a basis for determining the relationship of a given saying to the historical Jesus. Markan characters would not become a topic of significant conversation again until the rise of redaction criticism, a topic to which we now turn.

III. Markan Characters and Redaction Critics (the Mid-1950s to the Mid-1980s)

Redaction criticism developed partially in response to a perceived weakness in the agenda of form criticism. As already mentioned, the work of the form critics was guided by the assumption that the gospels were put together through a process of ‘collection’ that was not always concerned with the unity or integrity of the final product.¹⁵ As provincial and lacking in insight as this assumption sounds today, it lay beneath the surface of nearly all form-critical studies of the period. In response to this assumption, one of the major insights advanced by the redaction critics was that the evangelists were not simply collectors of texts and traditions, but rather sophisticated theologians in their own right. Those who were responsible for putting the gospels together in their final forms were now seen as carefully crafting their stories rather than indiscriminately piecing bits of tradition together. It was thus appropriate to begin speaking of the gospel writers as ‘evangelists’, each promoting a specific theological understanding of Jesus’ life and vocation. In light of this development, focus again turned to the Markan disciples along with other characters to answer critical questions about the Gospel’s composition and provenance.¹⁶

The first major redaction-critical study of Mark was Willi Marxsen’s *Der Evangelist Markus* (1956),¹⁷ which set the guidelines for future

15. See, e.g., the well-known assertion of Martin Dibelius: ‘The literary understanding of the synoptics begins with the recognition that they are *collections* of material. The composers are only to the smallest extent authors. They are *principally collectors*, vehicles of tradition, editors’ (*From Tradition to Gospel*, p. 3, emphasis added).

16. The definitive work on this subject is C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate* (JSNTSup, 27; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989); I discuss Black’s work below in greater detail.

17. Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956); later translated into English as *Mark the Evangelist* (trans. James Boyce, Donald Juel, William Poehlmann, and Roy A. Harrisville; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969).

redactional studies of the Second Gospel. Marxsen was not especially concerned with Markan characters, nor was he interested in the disciples, though it should be noted that he devoted one detailed chapter to a study of John the Baptist – an area of interest theretofore lacking in Markan scholarship. Specifically, Marxsen examined the Baptist material available to Mark and compared Mark's presentation of the Baptist to that found in the other canonical Gospels. From this analysis, he averred that alterations to Mark's received Baptist material could provide clues to the Gospel's composition and theological agenda. As with Wrede, it should be noted that Marxsen's approach nudged scholarship closer to a concern for the intricacies of the text's story world, even if this development was unintended.

In 1958, two years after Marxsen's achievement, Alfred Kuby published an influential article that helped initiate a new series of discussions about the disciples in Mark's Gospel.¹⁸ Kuby argued that the two major divisions in the Gospel of Mark corresponded to two different aspects of the disciples' failure within the story. He argued that 1.16–8.21 envisioned the struggle and ultimate failure of the Twelve to comprehend Jesus' identity. The second major division of the Gospel, 8.22–14.72, pictures the disciples' unwillingness to embrace the true nature of Jesus' mission – that is, that as Messiah, he must suffer rather than conquer.

Building on Kuby's insights, Joseph Tyson published an article in 1961 in which he explored the 'blindness' of Mark's disciples.¹⁹ The stated purpose behind Jesus' parables in Mark (cf. 4.10-20) is to conceal rather than reveal, and while the disciples are privy to the explicit interpretations of these parables, they remain at least partially blind to Jesus' identity. Against this backdrop, Tyson looked at the disciples' inability to understand, among other things, the calming of the sea (4.41), the feeding of the five thousand men (6.52), and the first two passion predictions (8.31-33; 9.30-32), and concluded that Mark's view of discipleship was different than that of Jesus' earliest disciples. Tyson saw the characteristically 'blind' Markan disciples as a vehicle for Mark to illustrate an improper understanding of what it meant to follow Jesus. In other words, Jesus' historical disciples did not truly understand 'discipleship', at least not as Mark conceived of it. Tyson's concluding paragraph makes this point clear:

18. See Alfred Kuby, 'Zur Konzeption des Markus-Evangeliums', *ZNW* 49 (1958), pp. 52-64.

19. Joseph B. Tyson, 'The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark', *JBL* 80 (1961), pp. 261-68.

Even the resurrection is not understood by Jesus' associates. They were in a position to see and to proclaim, but they told no one, for they were afraid. Although only three women are mentioned as seeing the empty tomb, *surely the disciples are in Mark's mind, as 16⁷ indicates*. Moreover, it may be significant that Mark does not describe an appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples. Here is the climax of the gospel, and although Mark looks forward to some kind of experience on the part of the 'disciples and Peter', these are not the first to hear the news of Jesus' resurrection. What a strange ending for our earliest gospel, and yet what an appropriate and significant one if one of Mark's chief purposes was to call attention to the ways in which the disciples fell short in their understanding and proclamation of the Christian gospel.²⁰

Tyson's argument was widely accepted by Markan scholars, and like Wrede and Marxsen before him, anticipated later narrative treatments of Markan characters in at least two ways. First, while he is clearly focused on the role of the disciples, Tyson makes mention of how the secrecy motif impacts the presentation of other Markan characters, including the demons who 'recognize Jesus' but 'are commanded to be silent', and the Jewish authorities who 'fail to recognize Jesus because they have been blinded'.²¹ Second, Tyson spends considerable space discussing the shape of the story as it relates both to the historical circumstances *behind* Mark's supposed anti-disciple polemic and the rhetorical impact of the story in its final form. In my estimation, these insights reveal a subtle even if unwitting move toward a more robust consideration of Markan themes and their importance for interpreting Mark's characters.

Drawing upon Tyson's assumptions, Étienne Trocmé argued in 1963 that the dispute unfolding in the Markan narrative was ecclesiological rather than Christological.²² Like Tyson, Trocmé saw reflected in the Gospel a struggle within the Markan community. However, that struggle was not rooted in a debate over Jesus' identity, but his intentions for the church. For Trocmé, Jesus never intended to establish a dynastic church in which his family would take over after his departure. Instead, the church belongs to and falls under the leadership of the resurrected Lord Jesus, and Mark's intention is to make this clear. Thus, Trocmé envisions a life-setting in which Mark's community is responding to the Jerusalem church which had James, the brother of Jesus, at its head. Though he

20. Tyson, 'The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark', p. 268 (*italics added*).

21. Tyson, 'The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark', p. 261.

22. Étienne Trocmé, *La formation de L'Évangile selon Marc* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); later translated into English as *The Formation of the Gospel according to Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

disagrees with Tyson about the nature of the internal conflict, Trocmé agrees that the disciples are used as a vehicle for presenting a flawed understanding of some element of Jesus' ministry. For Trocmé, Mark is using the disciples to polemicize specifically against the leadership of the Jerusalem church.

In 1968, Theodore Weeden drew upon both Kuby's two-stage thesis and Tyson's suggestion about the disciple's incorrect Christological view, and brought them together in his important essay, 'The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel'.²³ That article subsequently became the basis of his influential book, *Mark – Traditions in Conflict*.²⁴ Whereas Tyson had argued that Mark's disciples are only partially blind to Jesus' identity, Weeden saw a three-tiered progression in the disciples' blindness, beginning with an incipient incomprehension and culminating in outright rejection. Weeden's exegetical insights were guided by two observations: (1) there is a discernible polemic against the disciples in Mark, and (2) there are two opposing Christologies in the Gospel, 'one a Hellenistic θεῖος ἀνὴρ christology inherent in a large section of Markan material and the other, Mark's own suffering christology presented in his *theologia crucis*'.²⁵ From here, Weeden makes the case that Mark is relentlessly grinding a theological axe against the disciples by imposing on them a faulty 'divine man' christology.²⁶ Though this axe-grinding takes the form of an 'anti-disciple polemic' in which the Twelve are presented as incapable of understanding Jesus' identity and mission, the real target is the Markan community. Jesus came to be the suffering messiah, a point Weeden believes was missed by at least some segment of Mark's community. Thus, Mark has carefully crafted a story in which Jesus' identity and mission have been clarified, and in which the disciples hold views that should be rejected by Mark's audience. Again, we must keep in mind that even though scholarship at this time was creeping ever closer to narrative studies, the focus was still on history; this is clear from the way Weeden frames his discussion:

23. Theodore Weeden, 'The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel', *ZNW* 59 (1968), pp. 145-58.

24. Theodore Weeden, *Mark – Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

25. Weeden, 'The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel', p. 145.

26. The concept of a 'divine man' first found expression in Ludwig Bieler's two-volume work, *Theios Aner: Das Bild des "Göttlichen Menschen" in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (Vienna: Hofels, 1935). For a helpful survey of material on 'divine men' as they relate to Jesus, see Morton Smith, 'Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretologies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus', *JBL* 90 (1971), pp. 174-99.

Mark has cast the disciples as advocates of a θεῖος ἀνὴρ Christology which is pitted against the suffering messiahship of Jesus. Since there is no historical basis for a dispute of this nature having taken place between Jesus and the disciples, the only conclusion possible is that the *Sitz im Leben* for this dispute is Mark's own community and that Mark has intentionally staged the dispute in his Gospel using the disciples to play the role of his opponents and presenting Jesus as the advocate of the evangelist's own position.²⁷

Weeden's work exercised considerable influence in Markan studies for the better part of the next decade and remained a primary conversation partner in scholarly attempts to explain Mark's so-called corrective Christology.²⁸ Also, many subsequent studies of Mark's corrective Christology had the disciples at the centre of deliberations. Of particular importance to this discussion are the works of Norman Perrin,²⁹ and several of his students (sometimes called the 'Perrin school'), including Werner Kelber,³⁰ John R. Donahue,³¹ Vernon K. Robbins,³² and

27. Weeden, 'The Heresy That Necessitated Mark's Gospel', p. 150.

28. For more on the influential arguments during this period, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, 'The "Divine Man" as the Key to Mark's Christology: The End of an Era?', *Int* 35 (1981), pp. 243-57.

29. See the following works by Norman Perrin (in chronological order): 'Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions by Mark', *USQR* 23 (1968), pp. 357-65; *What is Redaction Criticism?* (GBS; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); 'Composition of Mark ix 1', *NovT* 11 (1969), pp. 67-70; 'The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology', *JR* 51 (1971), pp. 173-87; 'Modern Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus and the Problem of Hermeneutics', *Int* 25 (1971), pp. 131-48; 'Evangelist as Author: Reflections on Method in Study and Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts', *BR* 17 (1972), pp. 5-18.

30. Werner Kelber, 'Mark 14:32-42: Gethsemane; Passion Christology and Discipleship Failure', *ZNW* 63 (1972), pp. 166-87; *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14-16* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1976); 'Redaction Criticism: On the Nature and Exposition of the Gospels', *PRSt* 6 (1979), pp. 4-16; 'Mark and Oral Tradition', *Semeia* 16 (1979), pp. 7-55; *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

31. John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS, 10; Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973); 'Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark', *Int* 32 (1978), pp. 369-86; 'A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 563-94.

32. Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984).

Mary Ann Tolbert.³³ These particular members of Perrin's circle are highlighted here not only because they were originally in dialogue with redaction criticism vis-à-vis Mark's corrective Christology, but also because they went on to play a role in facilitating the full-blown emergence of narrative criticism in the early 1980s.

It is occasionally noted, though not very widely known, that just prior to his untimely death in 1976, Perrin had been moving in the direction of a more well-rounded methodology that included literary analysis. Perrin, a champion of redaction criticism, had begun paying closer attention to the final shape of the narrative and saw a need for a more highly nuanced interpretive approach. In one of his final publications – an article on the interpretation of Mark's Gospel – the opening paragraph read:

The interpretation of the Gospel of Mark today requires a sophisticated, eclectic method of approach, a method I would call *literary criticism* to distinguish it from the narrower *redaction criticism* (*Redaktionsgeschichte*). In an attempt to show why this is the case, I will review the various methodological approaches to the Gospel which have been practiced since the rise of modern scholarly concern for it. I will then develop some of the features of a literary criticism that might be applied to the Gospel.³⁴

The method Perrin called for in this article included an emphasis on the story world of Mark's Gospel – something clearly in line with the emphasis of the early narrative critics. At the time of his death Perrin was known for his productivity and creativity, and was widely acknowledged as one of the most influential NT scholars working in the United States. We are left to wonder where his thinking might have taken him and what impact this might have had on the development of narrative criticism in (what sadly became) the years just after his death.³⁵

33. Mary Ann Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1978); *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

34. Norman Perrin, 'The Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark', *Int* 30 (1976), pp. 115-24 (115, italics in original). While not focused exclusively on narrative criticism, Stephen Moore's book, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), helpfully critiques the relationship between narrative criticism and redaction criticism while also providing insights into the dependence of early narrative critics on secular literary critics.

35. For more on Perrin's hermeneutical evolution and impact on Markan studies, see Calvin Mercer, *Norman Perrin's Interpretation of the New Testament: From*

There is not space here to discuss in detail each of the various attempts to explain how the disciples were used to explain Mark's corrective Christology, though a few remarks are in order. First, the basic assumption of an anti-disciple polemic rooted in Mark's *Sitz im Leben* predominated among students of the Second Gospel until the mid-1980s. Many affirmed the assumption, while others sought to challenge it, but it was nearly impossible to disregard this foundational assumption and still engage scholarship on the Gospel of Mark. Second, all of this meant that the disciples remained at the forefront of discussions for redaction critics devoted to separating tradition from redaction. To these, I would add a third remark, which is my own opinion rather than an observation about the scholarly ethos of the period: I regard it as positive – at least as it relates to the development of narrative-critical studies – that such complex theories did not attempt to isolate, but rather combined, Markan themes such as discipleship and Christology with a consideration of the disciples. This not only provided a helpful framework for the literary critics who would approach the final form of the text with a concern for the rhetoric of the narrative, but also provided a helpful launching point (or perceived weakness against which to respond), while measuring the validity of their own theories.

Though the disciples were a key component in the discussion, they were not the only Markan characters under examination as it related to Mark's corrective Christology. In 1973, John Dominic Crossan published an article in which he further explored the *Sitz im Leben* that gave rise to Mark's corrective Christology by examining two other character groups: the relatives of Jesus and the women present at the death, burial, and resurrection.³⁶ This redactional study of the Beelzebul controversy (3.21-35), the reception of Jesus in his hometown (4.1-6), and two passages from the Markan passion (15.40, 47; 16.1) widens the net around the supposed controversy and suggests that the disciples were not the only target in Mark's Christological crosshairs. Crossan argues that Mark's deliberate redactional intention is to cast not only the disciples – particularly Peter, James, and John – as proponents of an improper Christology, but also others close to Jesus. Crossan comments that '[r]ecent studies on Mark's gospel have stressed the Christological controversy which is at its core and have argued that the Christology

'*Exegetical Method*' to '*Hermeneutical Process*' (SABH, 2; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), particularly the chapter entitled, 'The American Reformulation: Literary Criticism', pp. 46-70.

36. John Dominic Crossan, 'Mark and the Relatives of Jesus', *NovT* 15 (1973), pp. 81-113.

which Mark opposed is exemplified by the attitudes of the disciples while the true Christology is revealed in the Markan Jesus himself".³⁷ This would seem to indicate that Crossan, at least at that time, largely bought in to the idea of a corrective Christology in Mark. He continues:

[T]he animosity of Mark to the relatives of Jesus points likewise against the Jerusalem church because it is there that James, the brother of the Lord, becomes important. In Acts i 14 the Jerusalem community includes "Mary the mother of Jesus, and...his brothers". James is especially noted in Acts xii 17; xv 13; xxi 18; 1 Cor. xv 7; Gal. i 19; ii 9, 12 and Jas. i 1, and his brother Jude is mentioned in Jude i 1 (cf. Mk. vi 3). The polemic against the disciples and the polemic against the relatives intersect as a polemic against the doctrinal and jurisdictional hegemony of the Jerusalem mother-church although, of course, this was most likely all provoked by heretics within the Markan community. But to oppose them Mark had to write not only a doctrinal warning against heresy but a jurisdictional manifesto against Jerusalem.³⁸

For Crossan, both the brothers of Jesus and the women who accompanied him are used by Mark as vehicles of an improper Christology. This move further pits Mark's Jesus against another entity – the Jerusalem church – with whom Mark's community was likely in dialogue. Here we see a point of contact with Trocmé's argument, though Crossan's focus is on Christology rather than ecclesiology. From this move, it is possible to see how the redaction critics sometimes used Markan characters to formulate historical arguments that may today seem rather unwarranted – though it should be pointed out that this trend persists even today in historically driven scholarship on the Gospels.³⁹

37. Crossan, 'Mark and the Relatives of Jesus', p. 110

38. Crossan, 'Mark and the Relatives of Jesus', p. 112.

39. In recent years it has been popular to see a behind-the-scenes controversy between the communities associated with John and Thomas, respectively. In particular, the proponents of this position make a great deal of Thomas's three appearances in John, using those as a springboard to argue that the Fourth Gospel was written, in part, to counter the teachings of a supposed Thomas community. On this hypothesis, see, e.g., Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: John and Thomas in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Elaine Pagels, 'Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John', *JBL* 118 (1999), pp. 477-96; idem, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003); April D. DeConick, "'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen" (Jn 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse', in John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 381-98; idem, 'John Rivals Thomas: From Community Conflict to Gospel

As with our previous discussion of Wrede, we could say a great deal more about the role Markan characters played in scholarly attempts to draw out Mark's corrective Christology, though the ground we have covered will have to suffice for the purposes of this survey.⁴⁰ For now it is important to note that, like the earliest investigations, Mark's disciples remained a focal point for such studies. It is noteworthy that a number of studies during this period focused on the disciples while regarding the theme of discipleship as borne not of polemical but rather genuinely didactic interest in Mark's community.⁴¹ This emphasis on the role of the disciples began to change with the rise of narrative criticism. However, before we jump into narrative criticism and its related methodological trajectories, it will prove beneficial to reflect briefly on both the merits and deficiencies of redaction criticism since these are largely responsible for nudging scholarly interests in the direction of narratology and spawning what would become 'narrative criticism'.

In 1986 C. Clifton Black published his revised doctoral dissertation, *The Disciples in Markan Redaction*.⁴² There he offered a definitive analysis of redaction-critical scholarship and its use of the disciples in

Narrative', in Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (eds.), *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 303-12; idem, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (VCSup, 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996); idem, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospel of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature* (JSNTSup, 157; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001). Responses to this hypothesis include: Ismo Dunderburg, *The Beloved Disciple in Conflict? Revisiting the Gospels of John and Thomas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Christopher W. Skinner, *John and Thomas: Gospels in Conflict? Johannine Characterization and the Thomas Question* (PTMS, 115; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).

40. There is a helpful critique of corrective Christology in Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), Chapter 2. See also, Kingsbury's more recent essay, 'The Christology of Mark and the Son of Man', in Christopher W. Skinner and Kelly R. Iverson (eds.), *Unity and Diversity in the Gospels and Paul: Essays in Honor of Frank J. Matera* (SBLECL, 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 55-70.

41. See Karl-Georg Reploh, *Markus Lehrer der Gemeinde: Eine redaktions-geschichtliche Studie zu den Jungerperikopen des Markus-Evangeliums* (Stuttgart Biblische Monographien, 9; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969); Camille Focant, 'L'Incompréhension des Disciples dans le deuxième Évangile', *RB* 82 (1975), pp. 161-85; Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup, 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981).

42. The book was recently been released in a second edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); the original text remains the same and is followed by a detailed afterword in which Black reflects on scholarship in the 25 years since the initial publication of his book.

separating tradition from redaction. The book represented something of a death knell for redaction criticism, or at the very least, a devastating critique of the inherent weaknesses in the *redaktionsgeschichtlich* agenda. In his analysis, Black identified three representative strands of redaction-critical scholarship, designating them as the ‘conservative’, ‘mediate’, and ‘liberal’ positions, respectively. Despite these unfortunate labels – which can easily be mistaken for references to a given scholar’s theological *Tendenz* – Black’s analysis is substantive and insightful. After a careful analysis of all three approaches and a lengthy consideration of attempts to rehabilitate redaction criticism, Black offers the following negative conclusions:

- (1) It seems to be the case that practitioners of redaction criticism in each of the three groups find their preconceptions to be confirmed. In other words, there is an inherent circularity in the process by which interpreters find what they expect to find in the text. Black bluntly states, ‘To the degree that the method has not effectively inhibited the normal tendency of its practitioners to “hear their own voice”, Markan redaction criticism must be reckoned a failure’.⁴³
- (2) Attempts to refine Markan redaction criticism have proven to be less than persuasive. He writes: ‘[T]he scholarly premises on which [these attempts] rest are subject to dispute; the modes of argumentation that they employ are at best circular and fallacious at worst, the rigor they inject into Markan *Redaktionsgeschichte* tends, paradoxically, to undermine the worth of the method’.⁴⁴
- (3) As helpful as redaction criticism can be in answering some questions, its weaknesses point to the need for a variety of methodologies. Black writes, ‘Though anchored in the historical-critical approach to the Bible, the *redaktionsgeschichtlich* perspective has reminded us of something that medieval interpreters simply took for granted: that biblical texts do not bear a single sense but harbor a rich plenitude of meaning. They encourage not one but many different avenues of interpretation: investigations historical, sociological, and traditio-critical; inquiries into the author’s intentions, the reader’s responses and the literary and rhetorical contours of the narrative itself.’⁴⁵

43. Black, *The Disciples in Markan Redaction*, 2nd edn, p. 289.

44. Black, *The Disciples in Markan Redaction*, 2nd edn, p.289.

45. Black, *The Disciples in Markan Redaction*, 2nd edn, p. 290.

All of this is not meant to suggest that Black holds a completely negative evaluation of redaction-critical scholarship. Elsewhere Black notes that, ‘by incorporating the historical, traditional, literary, and theological concerns of its methodological predecessors (especially source and form criticism), *Redaktionsgeschichte* virtually “set the agenda” for the full range of critical inquiry into the Gospels during the second half of the twentieth century. Obviously, this amounts to no small contribution.’⁴⁶ So the question is not, ‘Was redaction criticism valuable in its approach?’, but rather ‘Was redaction criticism successful in achieving its goals?’ In the second edition of Black’s book (2012), he provides a lengthy afterword in which he traces the role of redaction criticism in Markan scholarship in the 25 years since his book’s initial publication. Among his more recent comments, particularly as it relates to the disciples, he notes:

Whatever their type, few of the studies I have noted [from the past 25 years] are redaction-critical in character. That is a big difference from mid-twentieth century scholarship. Some still so proceed (Telford, Reiprich); others’ exegeses are vestigially *redaktionsgeschichtlich* while conducted on other bases (Steeman, Henderson)... [A] majority of inquiries into the disciples in Mark *do not proceed by separating, then weighing, tradition and redaction*... What’s clear, a quarter century on, is that *redaction criticism is no longer the automatic default setting in Markan scholarship*.⁴⁷

Insofar as these comments derive from Black’s analysis of Markan scholarship in 2012, we are left with a lacuna in our survey of scholarship. Thus, it will prove helpful for us to trace the developments that took Markan studies from the dominance of redaction criticism in the early 1980s to the state described by Black. In order to appreciate that seismic shift we turn our attention to the rise of secular literary criticism within biblical studies.

46. C. Clifton Black, ‘The Quest of Mark the Redactor: Why Has It Been Pursued, and What Has It Taught Us?’, *JSNT* 33 (1988), pp. 19-39 (27). Black goes on to articulate the specific positive contributions of redaction criticism: ‘[T]hree contributions of *Redaktionsgeschichte* as applied to Mark and to the other Gospels thus seem secure: its emphasis on the Evangelists as creative authors in their own right; its recognition of the fundamentally theological character of the Evangelists’ intentions; and its multiple concerns for the history, tradition, theology, and literary character of the Gospels’ (p. 29).

47. Black, *The Disciples in Markan Redaction*, 2nd edn, pp. 329-30 (emphasis added).

IV. Markan Characters in Literary Perspective (1982 to the Present)

By the late 1970s, a handful of Hebrew Bible scholars⁴⁸ had begun interpreting biblical narratives using the assumptions and methods of literary criticism (also known as the ‘new criticism’) – a paradigm that had taken hold among interpreters of secular literature in the 1940s.⁴⁹ This approach was guided by a concern for the final form of the text rather than a search for the hypothetical stages of a text’s development, and took seriously the idea that the text in question was unified and autonomous in its own right.⁵⁰ This trend represented a radical change in

48. Early narrative-critical contributions to Hebrew Bible studies include: Sean E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (AnBib, 50; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1971); Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978); Shemaryahu Talmon, ‘The Presentation of Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative’, in Joseph Heinemann and Shmuel Werses (eds.), *Scripta Hierosolymitana* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), pp. 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), pp. 154-73; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); H. van Dyke Parunak, ‘Some Axioms for Literary Architecture’, *Semiotics* 8 (1982), pp. 1-16; idem, ‘Transitional Techniques in the Bible’, *JBL* 102 (1983), pp. 525-48; Peter D. Miscall, *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Adele Berlin, ‘Point of View in Biblical Narrative’, in Stephen A. Geller (ed.), *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 71-113. For a helpful overview of these developments, see Patricia K. Tull, ‘Narrative Criticism and Narrative Hermeneutics’, in Steven L. McKenzie (ed. in chief), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 37-46.

49. When the methodology was first introduced into NT studies, scholars referred to it as the ‘new criticism’ or the ‘new literary criticism’, terminology which arose out of literary-critical approaches to English literature where the major emphasis was a close reading of the text without explicit reference to the extra-textual world. See Leroy Searle, ‘New Criticism’, in Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (eds.), *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 691-98. During the early stages of narrative criticism’s evolution, one particularly influential work was Hans Frei’s book, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).

50. Ironically, just as early narrative critics heavily critiqued the redaction-critical tendency to break the text into pieces, more recent scholars working with semiotics and postmodern criticism have critiqued the holistic approach taken by

a world of scholarship devoted to tracing the history of hypothetical readerships (or communities) by searching for the formula that would authoritatively isolate received tradition from editorial activity. It took a little longer for this approach to begin making serious inroads into NT research. Redaction criticism had held a virtual stranglehold on Gospel studies since the late 1950s, and by the early 1980s it was still the dominant method used by scholars working with the NT narratives. Incremental changes began to occur as a small group of NT scholars grew weary of the assumptions and methods employed by redaction critics. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the seeds of this scholarly discontent were sown, particularly in North America, within the Society of Biblical Literature's Seminar on Mark. Between 1974 and 1980, this group of scholars presented papers on numerous topics with an overarching emphasis on the *world of the text*. Several publications expressed an explicit desire to move forward from redaction criticism and laid a foundation for what would eventually come to be known as narrative criticism.⁵¹

This resultant dissatisfaction with redaction criticism manifested itself in several ways. First, scholars expressed concern over the lack of a methodologically sound and universally agreed-upon starting point. Due to the speculative nature of most redaction-critical scholarship, nearly every practitioner proposed a unique set of criteria for distinguishing between Mark's received tradition and his editorial handiwork. Practically, this made it nearly impossible for scholars to agree on a starting point. The early narrative critics preferred to start with the text as it stood in its final form, assuming that it was better to begin with what we have rather than with what we do not have. When dealing with either Matthew or Luke it is possible to isolate material that is derived from Mark and see how each Gospel used Mark's material for its own literary and theological agendas. Matters are not so clear-cut when it comes

narrative critics. For example, see George Aichele (*Simulating Jesus: Reality Effects in the Gospels* [Bible World; London: Equinox, 2011]), who argues that the gospels are texts that can live outside the semiotic control of the Bible in various re-tellings (e.g., films in particular).

51. See, e.g., Norman Petersen, 'Point of View in Mark's Narrative', *Semeia* 12 (1978), pp. 97-121; Robert C. Tannehill, 'The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology', *Semeia* 16 (1979), pp. 57-95; Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*; Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS, 54; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). See also Thomas Boomer-shine, 'Mark the Storyteller: A Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Mark's Passion and Resurrection Narrative' (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1974).

to the distinction between Mark's received material and Markan redaction.⁵² We have no access to Mark's original sources and therefore must rely upon numerous speculative reconstructions, many of which disagree with one another on the most foundational issues. This was one of several factors that led to the development of a new approach within Gospel studies.

Second, many of the issues discussed in any detail by Markan redaction critics were those *external* to the text, or to say it another way, the redaction critics were primarily concerned with reconstructing the *world behind the text* rather than examining the *world reflected in the text*.⁵³ Those interested in narrative criticism wanted to examine the texts in their final forms without having to appeal to various editorial theories.

Third, because of the two concerns just highlighted, the redaction critics rarely read the Gospel of Mark in its entirety, choosing instead to emphasize the importance of various blocks of material. Ironically, the search for a uniquely 'Markan theology' often revolved around a discussion of Mark's supposed editorial activity rather than an examination of how such a theology might unfold through a reading of the entire narrative. Concluding his discussion of redaction criticism's weaknesses, Black somewhat prophetically comments:

The way forward in Markan research lies in the exploration and interrelation of the historical, social, theological, and literary contexts to which *Redaktionsgeschichte* has directed us, and in the clarification and refinement of the critical disciplines germane to those interpretive contexts. In pondering appropriate strategies in the study of Mark, we need not only to move beyond redaction criticism but also, and perhaps more important, to move forward in a manner respectful of the lessons it has taught us.⁵⁴

52. However, this did not prevent scholars from searching for Mark's received tradition. See, most famously, Paul J. Achtemeier, 'Toward the Isolation of a Pre-Markan Miracle Catena', *JBL* 89 (1970), pp. 265-91.

53. Black ('The Quest of Mark the Redactor', p. 31) states this problem well: 'by concentrating on the author, Markan redaction criticism (again presupposing Markan priority) has been forced to appeal to interpretive clues lying beyond the boundaries of the Gospel itself. The paradox of Markan redaction criticism is that it must traffic in evidence that is not redactional: the key to the enterprise lies in the fragile reconstruction of the shape, development, and utilization of pre-Markan (non-textual) tradition.'

54. Black, 'The Quest of Mark the Redactor', p. 33.

‘Moving forward’ is one way to describe how the narrative critics envisioned their progress in dealing with the text.

In 1982, a NT scholar named David Rhoads collaborated with an English professor named Donald Michie to produce an elegant primer entitled *Mark as Story*.⁵⁵ That book served as the official introduction of narrative criticism to NT studies. At the time, Rhoads and Michie were colleagues at Carthage College in Wisconsin, and the book grew out of a regular classroom exercise in which Michie would lecture to Rhoads’ class with the goal of helping students learn to read the Gospel of Mark as a short story. This collaboration ultimately led to the publication of their much-celebrated book. Rhoads had been a participant in the aforementioned SBL Seminar on Mark and had played a key role in conversations about approaching the Gospel in its final form. Much of the fruit of those early discussions was to be found in the original edition of *Mark as Story*. In the first edition of the book, Chapter 5 was entitled ‘The Characters’, and began:

Characters are a central element of the story world. An analysis of the characters in Mark’s story inevitably overlaps with the analysis of the conflicts, since the characters are so integrally related to the plot. Character analysis deals in part with the actions of a character in the plot of a story. Yet characters are memorable apart from the plot and deserve to be dealt with separately.⁵⁶

Here we see a dramatic shift away from an approach that examined characters as a means of drawing historical conclusions. Rhoads and Michie were concerned to understand how characters were functioning in the story world of the text, and, specifically, how this related to the conflicts driving the story’s plot. This approach represented two firsts: (1) this was the first time Markan characters were actually treated as *characters* in the context of a larger narrative, and (2) this was the first time that figures other than the disciples received significant attention from interpreters. Looking back, the approach to character outlined in the original edition of *Mark as Story* was rudimentary and in need of a more nuanced articulation. As narrative criticism grew and attention turned

55. David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). During that same year, Rhoads also published a shorter and more technical primer on the narrative criticism of Mark’s Gospel; cf. his ‘Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark’, *JAAR* 50 (1982), pp. 411-34.

56. Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, p. 101.

from the shape of the narrative in general to characters in particular, scholars would raise questions about the nature of characters in the Gospel genre,⁵⁷ the relationship of such characters to reality,⁵⁸ and our ability to classify various characters into types.⁵⁹ These three questions have served as guideposts for many recent discussions of Markan characters and characterization.

In 1999, *Mark as Story* was completely re-written with significant contributions from a third author, Joanna Dewey. As mentioned above, the original edition had dealt with characters in one chapter, but in the second edition the authors divided their discussion of Mark's characters into two chapters: Chapter 5, 'The Characters I: Jesus', and Chapter 6, 'The Characters II: The Authorities, the Disciples, and the People'. Whereas the original edition gave a few cursory lines to the discussion of characterization, the second edition spent considerable space discussing different approaches to characterization, character types, and the

57. In his treatise on *Poetics*, Aristotle had argued that 'action' was the most important element of any drama – a move that completely subjugated characters to a subservient role. For Aristotle, characters existed merely to advance the plot. See the helpful discussion of Aristotle's approach in Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 108-10. However, Aristotle had no access to the Greco-Roman biographies (*bioi*) after which the gospels have largely been patterned. An awareness of the uniqueness of the gospel genre necessitates an honest discussion about how characters function in the *bioi* of the period.

58. Within character studies there has been a debate between those who see characters as corresponding to reality and those who regard characters as uniquely bound to the story world in which they appear. These two groups have been labeled the 'realist' (or mimetic) and 'purist' (or functional) approaches, respectively. The classic exposition of this debate can be found in Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, Chapter 3. Realists argue that characters achieve an independence from their story world and can be extracted from their narratives and discussed as hypothetical individuals in the 'real world'. Purists, on the other hand, argue that characters are bound to and by the particulars of their story world. To extract them from their story world would be to create an entirely new character. More recent studies have sought to establish a *via media* between these two approaches.

59. Early in the development of narrative criticism, the influential distinction between 'round' and 'flat' characters established by E.M. Forster was still very much a standard view among literary critics (see *Aspects of the Novel* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1927], pp. 103-25). In a foundational article, Fred W. Burnett has challenged this overly simplistic dichotomy, arguing instead that characters in the gospels are to be located on a continuum including agents (or actants), types, and full-blown characters. See Burnett, 'Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels', *Semeia* 63 (1993), pp. 3-28.

interconnectedness of characters and plot.⁶⁰ The more substantial discussion in the second edition was evidence of how Markan character studies had advanced in the seventeen years since the first edition was published. (*Mark as Story* has recently been released in a third revised edition, having stood the test of time over three decades as a course text and a resource for scholars.⁶¹) As narrative criticism continued to make its way into mainstream NT scholarship in the early 1980s, proponents of literary methods began reading and incorporating the ideas of important literary theorists such as Seymour Chatman,⁶² Wayne Booth,⁶³ Gérard Genette,⁶⁴ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan,⁶⁵ Mieke Bal,⁶⁶ and Wesley Kort.⁶⁷

Despite the weaknesses in their 1982 discussion of character, Rhoads and Michie helped advance Markan character studies in several ways. First, no longer was there a primary focus on the role of the disciples. If the Gospel of Mark was to be approached as an autonomous narrative, then every figure in the story was potentially valuable for understanding Mark's story of Jesus. Second, this also meant that Jesus could be treated as a character. To that point, studies of the Markan Jesus were more properly theological in nature and sought to draw out Mark's unique Christology. Against the backdrop of narrative-critical concerns, interpreters with interests other than Christology now saw Jesus as a viable character. Third, scholars became interested in the so-called minor

60. For a detailed analysis of the differing approaches to character in the first and second editions of *Mark as Story*, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, 'Characters in Mark's Story: Changing Perspectives on the Narrative Process', in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 45-70.

61. For further reflections on both the impact of *Mark as Story* and its reception among biblical scholars, see my essay, 'Telling the Story: The Appearance and Impact of *Mark as Story*', in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 1-16.

62. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*.

63. Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

64. Among his other works, see Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

65. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen & Co, 1983).

66. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

67. Wesley Kort, *Moral Fiber: Character and Belief in Recent American Fiction* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1983); *Modern Fiction and Human Time: A Study in Narrative and Belief* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1985); *Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988).

characters of Mark's Gospel;⁶⁸ in the previous environment where the questions were almost exclusively historical and focus was directed toward reconstructing Mark's *Sitz im Leben*, it would have been difficult to conceive of such characters receiving much attention.

Between 1982 and the present day, the study of Mark's characters has grown from a parochial area of academic interest into a burgeoning enterprise. Articles and monographs employing a narrative-critical perspective have proliferated, both on questions of method⁶⁹ and on the analysis of specific characters or character groups, including God,⁷⁰ Jesus,⁷¹ Peter,⁷² women,⁷³ children,⁷⁴ Jews,⁷⁵ Gentiles,⁷⁶ religious leaders,⁷⁷ Herod,⁷⁸ the crowds,⁷⁹ and of course, the disciples.⁸⁰

68. Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel* (JSNTSup, 102; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); idem, 'Discipleship and Minor Characters in Mark's Gospel', *BSac* 153 (1996), pp. 332-43.

69. Paul Danove, *The Rhetoric of Characterization of God, Jesus and Jesus' Disciples in the Gospel of Mark* (LNTS, 290; London: T&T Clark International, 2009); Stephen D. Moore, 'Why There are No Humans or Animals in the Gospel of Mark', in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 71-93; Scott S. Elliott, *Reconfiguring Mark's Jesus: Narrative Criticism after Poststructuralism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011).

70. Paul Danove, 'The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God', *NovT* 43 (2001), pp. 12-30; Ira Brent Driggers, *Following God Through Mark: Theological Tension in the Second Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

71. Cf. Ole Daviden, *The Narrative Jesus: A Semiotic Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1993); Jacob Chacko Naluparayil, *The Identity of Jesus in Mark: An Essay on Narrative Christology* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta, 49; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2000); Paul Danove, 'The Rhetoric of the Characterization of Jesus as the Son of Man and Christ in Mark', *Bib* 84 (2003), pp. 16-34. For a broader overview of publications on the Markan Jesus, see Jacob Chacko Naluparayil, 'Jesus of the Gospel of Mark: Present State of Research', *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 8 (2000), pp. 191-226.

72. Gerald O'Collins, 'Peter as Witness to Easter', *TS* 73 (2012), pp. 263-85.

73. Cf. Winsome Munro, 'Women Disciples in Mark?', *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 255-41; Monika Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium: Unter besonder Berücksichtigung kultur- und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergründe* (Münsteraner Theologische Abhandlungen, 8; Altenberge: Telos, 1990); Susan Lochrie Graham, 'Silent Voices: Women in the Gospel of Mark', *Semeia* 54 (1991), pp. 145-58; Hisako Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994); Paul Danove, 'The Characterization and Narrative Function of the Women at the Tomb (Mark 15,20-41, 47; 16,1-8)', *Bib* 77 (1996), pp. 375-97; Willard M. Swartley, 'The Role of Women in Mark's Gospel: A Narrative Analysis', *BTB* 27 (1997), pp. 16-22; Mary Rose D'Angelo, 'Gender and Power in the Gospel of Mark: The Daughter of Jairus and the Woman with the Flow

During this period in which character studies have flourished, few scholars have been as important to their growth and development as Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. From 1983 to 2009, Malbon published numerous narrative-critical studies of Mark's characters, and several studies (essays and monographs) devoted to questions of characterization

of Blood', in John C. Cavadini (ed.), *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), pp. 83-109; Francis Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), Chapter 2; Susan Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel* (JSNTSup, 259; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); F. Scott Spencer, 'Shall We Dance? Women Leading Men in Mark 5-7', in Spencer, *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies, and Women of the Cloth* (New Testament Guides; London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 47-75; Joanna Dewey, 'Women in the Gospel of Mark', *WW* 26 (2006), pp. 22-29; Sharon Betsworth, *The Reign of God is Such as These: A Socio-Literary Analysis of Daughters in the Gospel of Mark* (LNTS, 422; London: T&T Clark International, 2010); Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Jesus, the Syrophenician Woman, and Other First Century Bodies', *BibInt* 18 (2010), pp. 342-63.

74. Cf. Judith M. Gundry, 'Children in the Gospel of Mark, with Special Attention to Jesus' Blessing of the Children (Mark 10:13-16) and the Purpose of Mark', in Marcia Bunge (ed.), *The Child in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 143-76.

75. Cf. William A. Johnson, '"The Jews" in St. Mark's Gospel', *Religion and Intellectual Life* 6 (1989), pp. 182-92.

76. Cf. Kelly R. Iverson, *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: 'Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs'* (LNTS, 339; London: T&T Clark International, 2007).

77. Cf. A.J. Saldarini, 'The Social Class of the Pharisees in Mark', in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 69-77; Jack Dean Kingsbury, 'The Religious Authorities in the Gospel of Mark', *NTS* 36 (1990), pp. 42-65.

78. Abraham Smith, 'Tyranny Exposed: Mark's Typological Characterization of Herod Antipas (Mark 6:14-29)', *BibInt* 14 (2006), pp. 259-93.

79. David Joy, 'Markan Subalterns/The Crowd and Their Strategies of Resistance: A Postcolonial Critique', *Black Theology: An International Journal* 2 (2005), pp. 55-74.

80. Cf. Joanna Dewey, 'Point of View and the Disciples in Mark', *SBLSP* 21 (1982), pp. 97-106; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 89-118; Paul Danove, 'The Narrative Rhetoric of Mark's Ambiguous Characterization of the Disciples', *JSNT* 70 (1998), pp. 21-38. See also Whitney Taylor Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* (SBLDS, 145; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), which, while not a thoroughgoing example of narrative-criticism, incorporates narrative-critical assumptions alongside its more historical-critical focus.

in biblical narrative.⁸¹ It is safe to say that her publications are generally regarded as required reading for anyone wishing to become conversant with the foundational issues in Markan character studies. In asking, ‘How Does the Story Mean?’⁸² Malbon has consistently demonstrated both a concern for and a sensitivity to the larger narrative; she has also

81. See the following works by Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (in chronological order): ‘Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark’, *Semeia* 28 (1983), pp. 29-48; ‘The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee’, *JBL* 103 (1984), pp. 363-77; ‘Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers’, *NovT* 28 (1986), pp. 104-30; ‘The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark: A Literary Study of Marcan Characterization’, *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 259-81; ‘The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers’, *CBQ* 53 (1991), pp. 589-604; ‘Text and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark’, *Semeia* 62 (1993), pp. 81-102; ‘The Major Importance of the Minor Characters in Mark’, in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), pp. 58-86. Several of these studies were pulled together and published as *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000). Malbon also co-edited, along with Adele Berlin, the volume, *Characterization in Biblical Literature* (*Semeia*, 63; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1993), and edited *Between Author and Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation* (NTM, 23; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009). See also ‘The Christology of Mark’s Gospel: Narrative Christology and the Markan Jesus’, in Mark Allan Powell and David R. Bauer (eds.), *Who Do You Say That I Am? Essays on Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), pp. 33-48; ‘“Reflected Christology”: An Aspect of Narrative “Christology” in the Gospel of Mark’, *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 26 (1999), pp. 127-45; ‘Narrative Christology and the Son of Man: What the Markan Jesus Says Instead’, *BibInt* 11 (2003), pp. 373-85; ‘Markan Narrative Christology and the Kingdom of God’, in Sharon H. Ringe and H.C. Paul Kim (eds.), *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God* (Festschrift Robert C. Tannehill New York/London: T&T Clark International, 2004), pp. 177-93; with Sharyn Dowd, ‘The Significance of Jesus’ Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience’, *JBL* 125 (2006), pp. 271-97; ‘The Jesus of Mark and the “Son of David”’, in Malbon (ed.), *Between Author and Audience in Mark*, pp. 162-85; *Mark’s Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009); ‘New Literary Criticism and Jesus Research,’ in Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *The Handbook of the Study of the Historical Jesus*. Vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 777-807; ‘Characters in Mark’s Story: Changing Perspectives on the Narrative Process’, in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 45-69.

82. See Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, ‘Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?’, in Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (eds.), *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2nd edn, 2008), pp. 29-57. See also her comments in this regard in *Mark’s Jesus*, pp. 6-9.

shown an awareness of the communication process that takes place between the implied author and implied audience while remaining mindful of the interconnectedness of characters to themes like discipleship and Christology. Her application of a robust narrative-critical approach to the more narrow area of characterization has served as a guide for much of what has been written in this area in recent years; the essays in this volume, no doubt, also owe a large debt to Malbon's contributions over the last three decades.

Space limitations preclude a full-scale discussion of the most recent publications on Markan characters, though it is hoped that the essays that follow will, both through their arguments and bibliographies, orient readers to much of that newer material. We should, however, make mention of two very recent challenges to the way narrative-critical character studies have proceeded in recent years. First, Stephen Moore has recently leveled a critique against the dominant view of Mark's characters within narrative-critical circles, with specific attention given to the first edition of *Mark as Story*.⁸³ Seeking to bring narrative criticism into dialogue with both modern theories of 'the novel' and animal studies, Moore has suggested that *Mark as Story* in particular and contemporary narrative criticism in general have tended to treat characters anachronistically, insisting on the individuality of characters, especially the Markan Jesus. The construction of one's personal identity is of paramount importance for modern individuals and plays an important role in the modern novel. Moore argues that we often project this concern onto our reading of the biblical narratives and this anachronism is aided by contemporary understandings of characterization within narrative criticism. For Moore, a return to a pre-Cartesian understanding of 'creatures' – in which there is no distinction between 'human' and 'animal' – would be preferable, insofar as it would more accurately reflect Mark's worldview.

In like manner, Moore's former doctoral student, Scott S. Elliott has suggested that narrative-critical appropriations of Mark's characters have proceeded illegitimately, armed with unwarranted assumptions about the nature of biblical narrative and an often inconsistent application of its stated methodology. He writes:

How might we read narratives like Mark without resort to what are arguably both anachronistic and ideologically suspect concerns about a *character's* agency or subjectivity (e.g., *his* or her interior thoughts, feelings, or motivations)? Pursuing such possibilities, and concentrating on

83. Stephen D. Moore, 'Why There Are No Human or Animals in the Gospel of Mark', in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 71-93.

the processes of characterization rather than on the characteristics of individual characters, I am taking an alternative approach to New Testament narrative as a discursive mode that forces a radically different reading of the literary figure of Jesus in Mark's gospel. It is an approach that, I believe, resonates with the Gospel of Mark itself.⁸⁴

Using a poststructuralist approach to narratology, Elliott contends that there is 'no clear parallel in the larger sphere of literary theory outside biblical studies, much less in narratology specifically'.⁸⁵ He goes on to point out ways in which most narrative-critical studies are inconsistent – largely in their nod to historical concerns – and argues for a 'reconfiguring' of the way narrative critics approach Mark's Jesus. The critiques offered by Moore and Elliott show that there still is more work to be done in character studies as scholars seek to refine narrative criticism and bring it into dialogue with other disciplines.

V. Markan Character Studies in Prospect

Before concluding this survey, we need to pay brief attention to two final areas, one for its relative dearth of research in character studies and another for the prospects that lie on its horizon. First, in the early portions of our review, references to literature produced by European scholars – both on the continent and in the United Kingdom – were ubiquitous. By contrast, our coverage of literary methods in Markan scholarship has shown the relative scarcity of such works arising from within the European academy. This observation is true not only with respect to character studies, but seemingly with the entire narrative-critical enterprise. It appears that scholars working in North America, particularly in the United States, and those working in Europe are not only asking different questions about the text but also working both from different methodologies and bibliographies.⁸⁶ Apart from the work of Susan Miller

84. Elliott, *Reconfiguring Mark's Jesus*, pp. 2-3.

85. Elliott, *Reconfiguring Mark's Jesus*, p. 4.

86. On this observation I have gleaned some helpful insights from Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, both in personal correspondence and in two different essays: the first is her review of van Iersel's reader-response commentary on Mark (Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, 'Review of Bas M. F. Van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998]', *Bib* 81 [2000], pp. 285-90), and the second a review of the 2011 English translation of Camille Focant's commentary on Mark delivered at the SBL Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois (19 November 2012). In these essays she notes how both scholars – one Dutch and the

(Scotland), Ole Davidsen (Denmark), Geert van Oyen (Belgium), Camille Focant (Belgium), and Stephen D. Moore (an Irish scholar who teaches in the United States) one is hard-pressed to identify much significant research in this area undertaken by European scholars or by those teaching in a European context. Taking this observation a step further, with the exception of several fine contributions from a handful of Australian scholars,⁸⁷ most recent narratological works, including those related to characterization, have been generated almost exclusively by scholars working in North America or by North American students studying abroad. While the growth of narrative-critical studies has largely taken place within an American context, one can hardly doubt whether enough time has passed or enough quality material has been published to demonstrate sufficiently the value of this approach. We are therefore left wondering: Why is there such a chasm between a European academy focused largely on historical concerns and the more methodologically diverse North American scene? What is it about narrative criticism, character studies, and the panoply of methods that has captured the North American scholarly imagination while leaving the European academy virtually untouched? Most importantly, is there a way to bridge this gulf between the North American and European scenes?

A second (and final) area that deserves our attention is the nascent approach known as ‘performance criticism’. In recent years, a handful of those who began by working with narrative methods have suggested that the next organic methodological step after narrative criticism is performance criticism. Like narrative criticism, performance criticism takes seriously the narrative in its final form, but departs from narrative criticism’s focus on the *reading* process, choosing instead to emphasize the

other French – demonstrate a relative lack of awareness of and/or concern for narrative-critical issues and recent publications in the US, even though these two scholars are trying to move in that direction.

87. See Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Narrative Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), idem, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004). Other Australian scholars have published significant narratological and/or narrative-oriented research on the Gospel of John, including Dorothy A. Lee (*Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning* [JSNTSup, 95; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994]; and *Flesh and Glory: Symbol, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* [New York: Crossroad, 2002]), Mary Coloe (*God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001]), and Ruth Sheridan (*Retelling Scripture: The Jews and the Scriptural Citations in John 1:19–12:15* [BIS, 110; Leiden: Brill, 2012]).

oral/aural dynamics of life in the ancient world. Scholars have long recognized the high rate of illiteracy in the NT world, all the while persisting in a myopic post-Gutenberg, ‘text-centered’ approach to the NT narratives. This means that, even though scholarship has often pursued ‘the original reader’ – largely against the backdrop of an unquestioned understanding of how ‘reading’ works today – scholars have overlooked the process by which these stories would originally have been disseminated. The notion of a first-century individual sitting down alone to read the Gospel of Mark quietly is an anachronism. Not only would the original audience not have had access to a written text of Mark’s Gospel, most would have been unable to read such a text had it been presented to them. Instead, the Gospel of Mark would have been ‘proclaimed’ through public performances.

Performance criticism is actually a fusion of several different critical approaches. It aims to interpret the story in its final form (narrative criticism) against its socio-historical background (historical and social-science criticisms), with a concern for audience-reception (reader-response criticism), all the while paying attention to specific dynamics of the oral-scribal context, such as the performer, the audience, and the performance event itself.⁸⁸ Among those voices most prominent in this burgeoning discipline have been David Rhoads,⁸⁹ Thomas Boomer-shine,⁹⁰ Joanna Dewey,⁹¹ Antoinette Clark Wire,⁹² Whitney Shiner,⁹³

88. A wealth of information about this approach can be found online, at www.biblicalperformancecriticism.org, a website run by scholars devoted to advancing the discipline.

89. David Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Temple Studies’, Part I, *BTB* 36 (2006), pp. 1-16, Part II, *BTB* 36 (2006), pp. 164-84; ‘What is Performance Criticism?’, in Holly E. Hearon and Philip L. Ruge-Jones (eds.), *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance* (Biblical Performance Criticism; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), pp. 83-100.

90. Boomershine has perhaps been the strongest advocate for advancing performance criticism. His publications are too numerous to list. See, most recently, ‘Audience Address and Purpose in the Performance of Mark’, in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 115-42.

91. Dewey has been a pioneer in this field. See her recent book, which collects her influential articles on this subject, *The Oral Ethos of the Early Church: Speaking, Writing, and the Gospel of Mark* (Biblical Performance Criticism; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

92. Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance* (Biblical Performance Criticism; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

93. Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

Holly Hearon,⁹⁴ Philip Ruge-Jones,⁹⁵ and Kelly Iverson,⁹⁶ along with many practitioners who regularly perform as members of the Network of Biblical Storytellers (NBS).⁹⁷ Since the performance of biblical narratives includes both an interpretation and a dramatic presentation of characters, a theory of character for interpretation and performance is needed.

In his useful handbook, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, Whitney Shiner briefly discusses the role played by ‘stereotyped characters’ in comic drama, which he regards as somewhat analogous to first-century performances of Mark.⁹⁸ These figures characteristically donned masks or certain types of clothing in order to be identified easily by the audience. He also discusses briefly the treatment of several characters as they factor into intentional ‘applause lines’ woven into the dramatic presentation, though this coverage is superficial and ancillary to the study of Markan characters.⁹⁹ Beyond these rather cursory discussions, however, there is little attention given to the role or perception of characters, either from the perspective of the performer or the audience. These observations, along with the growing interest in performance criticism, point to the need for a systematic treatment of how characters are to be understood and represented by performance critics.

94. Holly Hearon, ‘The Storytelling World of the First Century and the Gospels’, in Hearon and Ruge-Jones (eds.), *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, pp. 21-35; ‘From Narrative to Performance: Methodological Considerations and Interpretive Moves’, in Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 211-32.

95. Philip Ruge-Jones, ‘The Word Heard: How Hearing a Text Differs from Reading One’, in Hearon and Ruge-Jones (eds.), *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, pp. 101-13; ‘Omnipresent, Not Omniscient: How Literary Interpretation Confuses the Storyteller’s Narrating’, in Malbon (ed.), *Between Author and Audience in Mark*, pp. 29-43.

96. Kelly Iverson, ‘Incongruity, Humor, and Mark: Performance and the Use of Laughter in the Second Gospel (Mark 8.14-21)’, *NTS* 59 (2013), pp. 2-19; and ‘A Centurion’s “Confession”: A Performance-Critical Analysis of Mark 15:39’, *JBL* 130 (2011), pp. 329-50. See also his forthcoming volume, *Narrative and Performance in Dialogue and Debate* (Biblical Performance Criticism; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books).

97. For more information about the founding, background, and current make-up of this group, visit <http://www.nbsint.org/aboutus>.

98. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, pp. 90-92.

99. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, Chapter 8. On this subject, see also Iverson, ‘A Centurion’s “Confession”’.

At the conclusion of this winding and circuitous survey, it is clear that scholarly understandings of Mark's characters have undergone numerous substantive changes since Wrede's seminal work in 1901. Our goal in this book is to examine approaches to Mark's characters in 2014 in light of the most recent developments within narrative criticism and its related methodological trajectories.¹⁰⁰ The essays that follow have been divided into two sections: the first section consists of essays that direct our attention toward clarifying different angles for approaching Mark's characters, and the second section consists of fresh examinations of Markan characters. All of the essays in this book are situated within a narrative approach to the Gospel of Mark represented by those approaches discussed in the latter stages of this *Forschungsbericht*. My co-editor and I have attempted to bring together into one volume the fruit of recent research with the goal of stimulating fresh insights, introducing newer perspectives, and moving the discussion ever forward.

100. This is a phrase I have used elsewhere to describe the new vistas opened by the introduction of narrative criticism into NT studies. In 2011 I noted that, '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, feminist criticism, performance criticism, postcolonial criticism, and the numerous approaches that fall under the banner of postmodern criticism had less trouble being recognized as legitimate methods for approaching the text. The battles fought by early narrative critics over the legitimacy of using a literary approach had paved the way for other hermeneutical trends to see the light of day' (Skinner, 'Telling the Story', in Iverson and Skinner [eds.], *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 8-9).