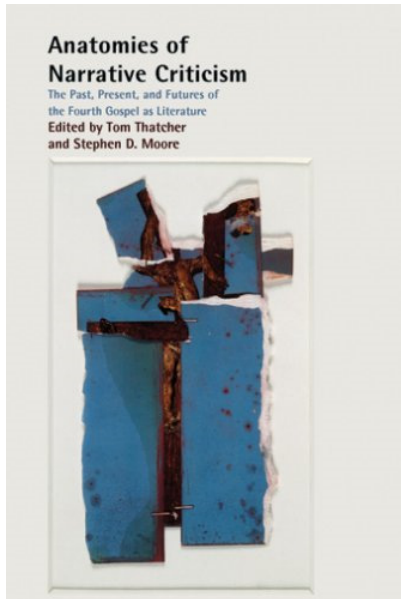


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**Thatcher, Tom, and Stephen D. Moore, eds.**

***Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature***

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Tom Thatcher's introduction sets the stage for this remarkable volume written in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of R. Alan Culpepper's seminal study *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (hereafter *Anatomy*). Thatcher begins by sketching out the state of Johannine studies as they were prior to *Anatomy*, noting, for example, Bultmann and Fortna and their source- and redaction-critical works and then Martyn and Brown and their developmental approaches. Nearly all Johannine scholars at this time worked within the rubrics established by these giants. Thatcher argues that each of these approaches kept the narrative of John as a meaningful text in its own right in the shadows. After helpful summaries of Herbert Leroy, David Wead, and Marinus de Jonge, scholars who anticipated what was to come, Thatcher shows how Culpepper's *Anatomy* rediscovered the narrative and opened the door for all the narrative critical work that followed and has continued unabated to this day.

Culpepper's own chapter in this book begins by reviewing the interpretation of John 19:26–27 in the works of Bultmann, Barrett, Dodd, Brown, and Schnackenburg, the major historical-critical works predating his *Anatomy*. Each of them, save Dodd, understood the references to Jesus' mother, the Beloved Disciple, and so forth in general symbolic terms. Culpepper then reviews three post-*Anatomy* interpretations of the passage. While each

understands the text symbolically, each one understands the symbolism by relating it to thematic patterns established throughout John. So Mark Stibbe emphasizes familial images in John to show that 19:25–27 constitutes the denouement of Jesus’ ministry. Most striking, and related to Culpepper’s basic point, is how often historical concerns figure into these modern studies. It appears that the divorce between history and narrative has been postponed for now, as several essays in this volume demonstrate.

Indeed, Adele Reinhartz, specifically addresses the issue in the next chapter. Are the two methodologies competitors or complementary? Does employment of the one render the other obsolete? She demonstrates first that one of the pillars of the most innovative historical work on John has always been literary criticism (she discusses Bultmann, Fortna, Martyn, Meeks, and Brown). She then shows how some post-*Anatomy* historical scholars have employed literary tools to support historical conclusions about John. Richard Bauckham, for example, relied on literary methods in his attempt to overturn the widely held, long-standing view that John was written for a specific “Johannine community” as opposed to the church at large. After noting some who argue that literary theory simply undermines the possibility of historical critical work (i.e., practitioners of the latter never escape their own ideologies and presuppositions, and their results are often overly speculative and open to other plausible interpretations), Reinhartz endorses historical criticism, while insisting that her results be grounded in three simple considerations: “humility, imagination and good humor” (70). As an example, she reconstructs the situation behind the expulsion passages in John, arguing that they do not reflect poorly on “the Jews” so much as they reflect the rhetorical purposes of an author who intends to deter the audience from a turn or return to Judaism. While less dramatic than the dominant view (see Martyn), it accords well with her own reconstruction of Judaism in the period and is, therefore, a plausible alternative.

Colleen Conway details the reception of narrative-critical work on John in the early years following *Anatomy*. While some dismissed the new approach as anticritical because it presupposes literary or thematic coherence (see Jürgen Becker and Martinus de Boer), others attacked it on methodological grounds: John Ashton referred to narratological analysis of the Gospels as akin to “using a combine harvester to mow the garden lawn” (79). Conway notes how newer literary methods (e.g., queer theory, postcolonial theory) are dependent on postmodernist thinking and how, therefore, they may be more threatening to traditional historical critics because “history” is no longer their exclusive property: those seeking to redefine it sit at the table, too. Conway then reviews some postcolonial interpretation of John and, interestingly, suggests that some perennial historical problems may be better understood in light of these studies. For example, the negative presentation of “the Jews” might be better understood in light of postcolonial theory, which argues that colonized subjects often turn on one another when pressed by

colonizing powers. Implicit in John's presentation, then, is the "astounding notion that the heated and deadly conflict between Jesus and the Jews might be unnecessary if it were not for the presence of the Romans in the land" (89).

Paul Anderson begins by giving as succinct a presentation of the various *aporias* in John as one will find anywhere. According to Anderson, the literary, historical, and theological riddles (96–106) in the text are not satisfactorily explained by any of the leading proposals currently available. After presenting his own unifying theory based on six "inferences" from the text (a final editing of the Gospel by a redactor, three phases in the Johannine situation from 30 to 100 C.E., etc.), Anderson explores, in turn, John's theological, historical, and literary dialogism. Among other things, he argues that the innate tension of the theological riddles should be seen in light of the Evangelist's dialectical thinking, which "works in both/and conjunctive ways rather than either/or disjunctive ones" (109), and that in the divine-human dialogue, it is the divine initiative that proves so important: since no one has seen God, "all that is of human origin and initiative is scandalized by the divine initiative" whether it is first-century "religious platforms" or our own (111). Our claims to see clearly must go. The historical riddles may best be resolved by considering the intratraditional dialogue within the community itself as well as the intertraditional dialogue the community appears to be having with Synoptic traditions. John's literary dialogism may be seen when the narrator employs the first-person plural ("we") "to include the willing reader in the experience ... of the narrator" (117) and in the numerous dialogues in the Gospel that invite readers to engage Jesus themselves.

Where *Anatomy* focused on the interaction of elements within John that create meaning, Jean Zumstein's essay expands that notion, arguing that the meaning of the text arises intratextually as well as intertextually. He begins noting the implicit paratexts of John that frame the text: the prologue, conclusion and epilogue help readers to decode the narrative. More, he argues that the second Farewell Discourse (John 15–16) is a *relecture* of the first (13:31–14:31) and that the narrator's explicit commentary works at multiple levels and, at times, offers multiple interpretations (e.g., the foot washing is understood in symbolic-christological terms and ecclesiological-ethical ones). Zumstein argues that meaning arises also from an intertextual reading. He moves through the following evidence: the Gospel's title and then its specific relationship to the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine corpus, and the Hebrew Bible. This excellent piece would have been strengthened by a consideration of John's potential intertextual relationship with the Pauline corpus.

After Robert Kysar's short article, part 2 of the volume delves into the text of John in a series of "anatomical probes." Mark Stibbe leads with an essay on the flaws in the final form of John. Among others, he notes the interruption of the narrative created by the

placement of chapters 15–17. Criticizing Culpepper, Stibbe argues that the Gospel cannot be understood only at the synchronic level as a “tale”; it needs to be understood as an archaeological “tell” also. A more integrated “tell-tale” approach rescues “narrative criticism from its apparently antihistorical bias” (152). While acknowledging Johannine literary artistry, Stibbe maintains that the narrative evinces a compositional history. After detailing this history, Stibbe pursues the work of the Ecclesiastical Redactor, who moved the temple cleansing to chapter 2 and inserted the prologue, chapters 15–17, the epilogue, and other passages. He investigates chapter 21 and then 19:31–37 in depth. Then, remarkably, employing deconstructionist theory to the text, he argues that the Ecclesiastical Redactor “broke” the text precisely because that is what he was experiencing in the increasingly fragmented Johannine community (163–64). In his conclusion, Stibbe suggests that future work attempt to integrate diachronic and synchronic approaches to the Gospel.

Tat-siong Benny Liew’s study of Jesus’ death in John is driven by his “concern for the other, particularly the displaced or colonized, both past and present” (168–69). Liew questions Jesus’ obsession with his own death in John. He finds a compelling answer in the Roman conception of *homo sacer*, which he, following others, refers to as “bare life.” Colonized people in ancient Rome (like modern subjects of American colonialism) are part of a “secondary social stratum” and thereby are “powerless subjects ... liable to the whims and under the threats of the sovereign ... potentially excludable and killable without recourse to law” (169–70). His brief discussion of what this looks like in the present is interesting: where one might only refer to Holocaust victims or those in Guantanamo Bay, Liew asks about comatose patients or the experience of African Americans. Returning to the past, Liew examines the “death zone” Jews inhabited within the empire and then reviews the ubiquitous notion of death in John. Throughout, he moves seamlessly from past Jewish experiences of bare life to present African American or gay community experiences of the same. Liew then identifies Jesus’ belief, within this system, in the “*productive potential* of death” (180, emphasis original): the colonized limit the power of the colonizer by letting go of their fear of death. Jesus’ fight in John, then, is against a colonial master, and his community is the way he sees himself surviving after death. Still, Jesus’ self-will and determination is undermined and “made more troubling” by his desire to do the will of his father (190). For Liew, the paternalistic relationship between the two is similar to the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer.

Readers interested in nine cinematic representations of the raising of Lazarus that date from the silent picture era to the present, complete with an assessment of camera angles, the length of the scene, a record of the dialogue in the films (especially as it relates to or departs from the dialogue in John 11), the presentation of women in the films, and so forth should read Jeffrey Staley’s article. Those, however, who hope to limit their

exposure to sexual innuendo and bawdy humor when reading scholarly works on the Fourth Gospel will do well to avoid the piece altogether. The connection between his suggestive title and his essay is lost on this reviewer. It seems only to underscore his view that Martin Scorsese's film intends to present Jesus as the "re(s)-erection and the life" (213). Well, how should one respond? Indeed, how would Scorsese respond?

Ruben Zimmermann attends to garden symbolism in John. Drawing attention first to the fact that John alone refers to the garden in his resurrection story, Zimmermann then notes how a "problematic of knowledge" dominates the entire scene in John 20 (so, e.g., Mary believes Jesus to be a gardener), perhaps following the lead of Gen 2–3 (231). Similarly, both narratives include divine prohibition with respect to touch: the tree of knowledge in Genesis and the resurrected one in John. Because there are a number of references to creation in John, Zimmermann sees his "symbolic exegesis" as "possible" but not "laying claim to internal necessity" (232). So he notes the abundance of water in both Gen 2 and John 7, the relationship between eating bread and death (Gen 3:19) and eating heavenly bread and life (John 6:58), and the breath of life in Gen 2:7 and Jesus' breathing on his disciples in John 20:22. Zimmermann concludes with an interesting discussion of the role of the reader and his or her imagination in understanding "latent" symbols in John's narrative (235).

Francis Moloney's study of John 21 begins by drawing together all of the arguments put forward in the last twenty-five years that attempt to show that John 21 is an integral part of the original Gospel. So, for example, scholars argue that John 21 fills in the gaps left by a reading of chapters 1–20 alone and that 20:30–31 is not a conclusion for the whole Gospel but a conclusion for 20:1–29 (noting that 12:36b–37 functions similarly). Having observed how chapter 21 continues and completes John 1–20, Moloney nevertheless concludes that the original intention for the Gospel has been somewhat obscured by another implied author, whose work becomes most conspicuous in John 21. While this later author has deep roots in the Johannine tradition, for Moloney there remain several elements of discontinuity between chapter 21 and the rest of the Gospel. After summarizing scholarly arguments against the text's basic unity, he adds his own primary argument to their collective weight: having prepared readers to follow Jesus without seeing and in his absence, the narrator then has Jesus return to his followers unexpectedly in chapter 21, "subvert[ing] the impact that 1:1–20:31 should have had upon readers living in the in-between time in the absence of Jesus. The addition of the appearance stories of 21:1–25 contradicts the original storyteller's narrative design" (249).

A brief afterword by Stephen Moore concludes this fine volume.