

Literary Approaches

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The literary turn in New Testament studies was indicative of a larger shift in the landscape of biblical scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s. For more than a century, historical criticism had been the dominant approach to interpreting biblical texts. Under its influence, the task of interpretation had to do with investigating the prehistory and formation of biblical texts through the use of source, form, and redaction criticisms. Some scholars, however, began to question whether a solely historical and positivistic approach could fully illuminate the nature of biblical texts, generating a movement to read the Bible as literature.

This movement was anticipated by two seminal works, Hermann Gunkel's *The Legends of Genesis* (1901), and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality on Western Literature* (1946), both of which employed narratological methods for performing biblical interpretation.¹ Subsequently, a pair of Society of Biblical Literature presidential addresses disputed the historical-critical hegemony in biblical studies by introducing a literary-rhetorical approach.² First, Amos Wilder (1955) challenged biblical scholars to draw from literary, anthropological, and psychological resources to interpret the symbolic language of the New Testament, because he believed historical-critical tools to be ill-equipped to do so. A decade later, James Muilenberg (1968) introduced the phrase "rhetorical criticism" to describe a supplementary investigation to form criticism. He challenged biblical scholars to attend not only to forms but also to the literary devices that lay bare the progression of an author's thought.

In response to these challenges, biblical scholars sought and found theoretical allies among contemporary literary critics. The landscape of contemporary literary criticism had already shifted, since its practitioners had critiqued historical approaches to its canonical texts in the mid-twentieth century. Biblical scholars had first used literary criticism (*Literarkritik*) to refer to source criticism as part of the historical-critical toolbox. But with the appropriation of modern literary theory, scholars distinguished the "new literary criticism" to refer to the variety of approaches to the biblical text that followed developments in modern literary studies.³

I divide the following discussion into two parts. First, I discuss narrative criticism and reader-response criticism, by which New Testament scholars tend to approach texts as formal structures. Second, I discuss poststructuralism, by which New Testament scholars tend to approach texts as cultural artefacts.

¹ Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis*, trans. W. H. Carruth. (New York: Schocken, 1964); Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality on Western Literature*, trans. W. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

² Amos N. Wilder, "Scholars, Theologians, and Ancient Rhetoric," *JBL* 75 (1956): 1-11; James Muilenberg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.

³ Edgar V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, eds., *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); cf. J. Cheryl Exum and David J. A. Clines, eds., *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 143 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 11-12.

Narrative Criticism and Reader-Response Criticism

In its inception, narrative criticism adapted elements of American New Criticism for the interpretation of biblical narrative texts. American New Criticism was a post-World War II literary theory that drew on Russian formalism and French structuralism to rescue the interpretation of poetry from its focus on historical context to re-center it on the aesthetic experience of reading. Formalism, based in part on Saussurean structural linguistics, attends to the form of the text rather than its content. Structuralism views language as a system of conventional signs without an inherent connection between the signifier (the word) and the signified (what it represents); signs only have meaning in a system of relations between and among signifier(s) and signified. In addition, Wimsatt and Beardsley famously banned the author and reader from the determination of textual meaning, so that texts were to be viewed as closed systems of meaning, with historical context, authorial intent, and reader response as incidental or unnecessary for interpretation.⁴ As a result, interpreters concentrated on close readings of autonomous texts.

Certain New Testament scholars were attracted to elements of American New Criticism in their reaction to historical criticism's fragmentation of biblical texts, investigation of their underlying history, and search for authorial intention.⁵ Literary approaches germinated in the Society of Biblical Literature's 1971-1980 Mark Seminar and Literary Aspects Group.⁶ While some members, such as Norman Petersen, saw contemporary literary criticism as the handmaiden of historical criticism, others saw it as the handmaiden of biblical narrative texts themselves.⁷ David Rhoads delivered a programmatic paper to the Mark Seminar in which he coined the phrase "narrative criticism" to describe the application of contemporary literary approaches to biblical narrative texts. In the paper, he stated that (1) the nature of the narrative is fundamentally *unified* and *autonomous*; and (2) the practice of *narrative criticism* is the analysis of "the formal features of narrative," which include "aspects of the story-world of narrative and the rhetorical techniques employed to tell the story."⁸ While the idea of a unified text was a legacy of redaction criticism, the idea of an autonomous text marked a shift from all previous historical-critical methods.

"Narrative criticism" subsequently developed as an eclectic approach to biblical narrative texts with no direct parallel in contemporary literary theory.⁹ The most influential early book-length works of New Testament narrative criticism include those of David Rhoads and Donald Michie on Mark (1982) and Alan Culpepper on John (1983), followed closely by Richard Edwards (1985) and Jack Dean Kingsbury (1986) on Matthew and Robert Tannehill on Luke-Acts (1986).¹⁰ These early practitioners of narrative criticism assume that the gospels are unified and governed by a single, overarching point of view. In addition, they

⁴ W. K. Wimsatt and M. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54 (1946): 468-88; eadem, "The Affective Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 57 (1949): 31-55.

⁵ Hebrew Bible scholars preceded New Testament scholars in offering a number of book-length discussions of literary criticism of biblical narrative, the most famous of which is Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

⁶ Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 1-21.

⁷ Norman Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 11.

⁸ David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 411-12.

⁹ Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 34-37.

¹⁰ David M. Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: The Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983); Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Vol. 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

share the following tasks: (1) to interpret the finished form of the text; (2) to focus on the process of reading sequentially through the narrative; and (3) to explain what the implied author communicates to the implied reader. Finally, to accomplish these tasks, they rely on Seymour Chatman's formalist narratology and narrative communication model.¹¹

Chatman conceives of a narrative as a two-level structure, between which he develops the Aristotelian distinction between the formal content—or the “story” (characters, plot, setting)—and its formal expression—or the “discourse” by which the story is communicated.¹² His narrative communication model maps the discourse level:

Real author → [implied author → narrator → narratee → implied reader] → real reader

According to Chatman, the real author communicates by devising a story and creating an implied author as a structural and normative principle of the narrative. Yet the implied author is not only a structural principal but also a communicative agent, because the narrative transaction becomes a text-centered dialogue between the story-as-constructed by the implied author and the implied reader. According to Chatman, the current reader may participate in this dialogue by identifying with the implied reader through the implied author's cues in the process of reading or hearing the text. Thus, the implied reader reconstructs the implied author based on (1) properties of the text (structural principles) and (2) historical and cultural conventions. Through this process and these devices, “the implied author informs the real reader how to perform as the implied [audience],” or what worldview to take on.¹³

Alan Culpepper, for example, appropriates Chatman's narrative communication model in his analysis of the Gospel of John by defining the implied author as “the sum of the choices reflected in the writing of the narrative... [which] determine the reader's response to the narrative and the mental image the reader will have of the author.”¹⁴ Correspondingly, he explains that “[t]he implied reader is defined by the text as the one who performs all the mental moves required to enter into the narrative world and respond to it as the implied author intends.”¹⁵ Like others who appropriate narrative criticism, Culpepper seeks to explain the relationship between the implied author and the implied reader by holding in tension the *story level* (*what* the narrative says) and the *discourse level* (*how* the narrative means). The story level of the narrative includes characters, settings, and conflicts that advance the plot, while the discourse level of the narrative encompasses rhetorical elements through which the implied author and the narrator communicate to the implied reader, and indirectly to the real reader.

Narrative criticism has developed since its debut, such that Mark Allan Powell has identified three different hermeneutics with which gospels scholars have come to employ it: either an author-centered, text-centered, or reader-centered hermeneutic.¹⁶ Those who employ an *author-centered* hermeneutic seek an answer to the question, “What does the real author say?” Narrative analysis provides a way of mapping an author's textual cues to discover authorial intention. For example, Jeannine Brown focuses on the author's “communicative intention,” by which she means “what an author actually does communicate by intention in a

¹¹ Most proponents of narrative criticism and the narrative communication diagram are North Americans. Those who take a literary approach to the gospels outside North America include Geert Van Oyen, Francis Moloney, Susan Miller, Eddie Adams, Ole Davidsen, and Camille Focant.

¹² Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19-26, 146, 151.

¹³ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 150.

¹⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 6-7.

¹⁵ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 7; see also Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 31, 38.

¹⁶ Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*; see also James Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

text,” and not “what an author hopes to communicate,” to which we have no access.¹⁷ With this focus, Brown rejects any attempt to discern an author’s mental acts or motivations. Instead, she argues that, “everything we can affirm about the implied author can contribute to an understanding of the real, or empirical author” because “[t]ypically what authors want audiences to know about themselves is inscribed by them in their texts.”¹⁸

Those who employ a *text-centred approach* seek to answer the question, “how does the text mean?” Narrative analysis provides a way of mapping the internal workings of the text as an unfolding story communicated in dialogue between the implied author and implied reader. For example, in connection with the Gospel of Mark, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon comments that “[t]he narrative critic does not pursue the quest for the real author’s intention but, instead, “seeks to analyze and appreciate the implied author’s effect—that is, the text itself.”¹⁹ According to Malbon, “Markan rhetoric is narrative rhetoric,” which means that the implied author works to persuade the implied reader by means of how the story is told. In particular, Mark’s is the rhetoric of juxtaposition, in which scene is placed against scene and character is placed against character “in order to elicit comparison, contrast, and insight.”²⁰ Markan narrative rhetoric is thus internal to the text.

Those who employ a *reader-centered approach* seek to answer the question, “what does the text *do*?” In contemporary literary theory, reader-response criticism developed as a poststructural response to New Criticism’s treatment of the text as a closed system which left out the reader (see below). Literary theorists Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish viewed textual meaning as unfixed and plural, and texts as created in the process of reading.²¹ Yet in a 1977 essay on the disciples in Mark, Robert Tannehill introduced reader-response criticism into New Testament studies in formalist terms by integrating it into narrative criticism. Tannehill built upon narrative criticism’s assumption of a unified story to investigate “the function of the disciples in the implicit dialogue between author and reader.”²² He argued that the author shapes the presentation of the disciples in such a way as to elicit a certain response from the reader in the process of reading the story. Subsequently, Robert Fowler developed and applied reader-response criticism to correct narrative criticism’s failure fully to attend to the reader’s experience. Like narrative critics, Fowler adopted Chatman’s demarcation of story and discourse and equated discourse with rhetoric. But while narrative critics define rhetoric as stylistics, Fowler defines rhetoric as persuasion.²³

David M. Rhoads responded by stating that there is “reason to rethink” the traditional narrative-critical approaches to rhetoric, so that narrative critics should be concerned “not only with what the story *means* but also with what the story *does* to the hearers in the course of its telling.”²⁴ Indeed, while the first edition of *Mark as Story* has a text-centered hermeneutic, the second and third editions exhibit a shift towards a reader-centered one. Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie disband Chatman’s story-discourse distinction and look at the

¹⁷ Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 22-23.

¹⁸ Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 81.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?” in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. J. C. Anderson and S. D. Moore, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 41.

²⁰ Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 39; cf. eadem, *Mark’s Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009).

²¹ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

²² Robert C. Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role,” *JR* 57 (1977): 386.

²³ Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress 1991), 64, 79.

²⁴ David M. Rhoads, *Reading Mark: Engaging the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 31-32.

form and content of the narrative as a unified whole with the following five features: narrator, setting, plot, characters, and rhetoric. Under this model, the most important figure is the narrator, rather than the implied author, to whom the norms and standards of judgment belong. Whereas narrative criticism had equated rhetoric with the formal features and norms of the text, Rhoads and his co-authors now equate it with the effects of the text on the reader. More recently, a turn towards rhetorical narratology integrates narratology with rhetorical approaches in order to investigate how readers experience texts.²⁵

In spite of their differences, each approach posits a unified text as a starting point. Additionally, Mark Allan Powell comments that “[t]he basic goal of narrative criticism is to discern how the implied reader of a narrative would be expected to respond to the text,” implying a model of communication and raising the question, “expected by whom?”²⁶ The simple answer is, “the implied author.” But this quick survey reveals that a more complex answer is required since some equate the implied author with the real author (Brown) and some with the text (Malbon), while some jettison the implied author altogether in favor of the narrator (Rhoads, et. al.). Moreover, it becomes clear that those who employ narrative criticism have not, in fact, abandoned “authorial” intention, but have taken it from the actual author and re-located it within the text by assigning intentionality either to a textually-constructed implied author, to the text/story, or to the narrator, which guides the implied (and real) reader towards certain responses.²⁷

Others have pushed for more comprehensive revisions to narrative criticism. For example, Petri Merenlahti calls for scholars to disband both foundational assumptions of narrative criticism--the unity and autonomy of the text.²⁸ Merenlahti maintains that a literary approach to the gospels is only viable by giving attention to the historical and ideological contexts of the text, that is, to the contexts of the text’s creation and reception. He argues that biblical narratives are not only a form of aesthetic literature, but are also examples of ideological literature that demand what he calls historical poetics. By “historical poetics,” he means interdependent narrative (formal) analysis (using a modified version of the narrative communication diagram) and historical investigation (using historical-critical exegesis). According to Merenlahti, ideology is communicated by the narrator, a godlike presence implied throughout the whole narrative, directing the audience and striving towards a “foolproof composition.”²⁹ Merenlahti sees members of the implied audience as essentially historical and ideological beings because they require intratextual and extratextual/ideological knowledge to understand the text, and because they themselves cannot be understood apart from their “textuality” that “expresses a particular historical experience and social meaning.”³⁰ Merenlahti’s key question is ideological: He sees the formal features of the text as concrete expressions of variable historical, social, and cultural experiences. The interpreter thus begins with formal analysis of the text as object and then moves towards the key question: *What does the text mean in each new historicized reading?*

Narrative Approaches to Non-narrative Texts

²⁵ Michal Beth Dinkler, “New Testament Rhetorical Narratology: An Invitation toward Integration,” *BibInt* 24 (2016): 203-28.

²⁶ Mark Allan Powell, “Narrative Criticism: The Emergence of a Prominent Reading Strategy,” in *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. K. R. Iverson and C. R. Skinner, SBLRBS 65 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 22-23.

²⁷ See Elizabeth E. Shively, “Intentionality and Narrative Worldmaking in the Gospel of Mark: Rethinking Narrative Communication,” in *Method and Meaning: Reading the Gospel of Mark in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. G. Van Oyen, BETL 301 (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 297-348.

²⁸ Petri Merenlahti, *Poetics for the Gospels? Rethinking Narrative Criticism* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 117-29.

²⁹ Merenlahti, *Poetics for the Gospels?*, 35, 69-70, 123.

³⁰ Merenlahti, *Poetics for the Gospels?*, 45.

Narrative criticism has reached beyond narrative biblical texts. In the 1980s Richard B. Hays tapped structuralist theory to argue that “story” generates Paul’s theology and ethics. Specifically, he argued that Paul’s thought is shaped by the biblical narratives of God’s work in creation and covenant faithfulness to Israel, with the result that a “narrative substructure” grounds, unifies, and constrains Paul’s letters.³¹ Subsequently, a growing number of biblical scholars have taken a “storied” approach to Paul’s letters as well as Acts, Revelation, and Hebrews. For example, J. R. Daniel Kirk takes a “storied” approach to the letters of Paul and argues that Paul “tells the story of Israel’s God as a narrative.”³² Also, Kenneth Schenck argues that although Hebrews is a sermon that makes arguments, the arguments are based on a narrative of how God has provided salvation for his people. He employs tools of narrative criticism to discuss how events, characters, and settings are combined into a plot, and the function of the story-as-discourse.³³ James L. Resseguie has likewise interpreted Revelation from a narrative critical perspective by examining its point of view, setting, characters, plot, and rhetoric.³⁴

Poststructuralism

In her 1987 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza challenged biblical scholars to consider the implications of their political contexts for their interpretation of biblical texts.³⁵ She observes that what an interpreter sees in a text depends on their social location and perspective on the world. As a result, a plurality of perspectives generates a plurality of symbolic worlds, values, explanations of events, and, ultimately, a plurality of constructions of meaning. For Schüssler Fiorenza, a plurality of meaning “raises the question of power,” regarding who employs texts to construct meaning and how, what sort of world they create, and what sorts of values and practices they promote.³⁶ In other words, the promotion of an “obvious” reading of a text amounts to the promotion of power. Recognizing this requires an ethics of reading that seeks both to interpret texts in their historical contexts and to evaluate them from a plurality of perspectives. In particular, Schüssler Fiorenza focuses on the inclusion of feminist and liberationist perspectives.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s concerns anticipate the poststructural turn in literary criticism pioneered by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault.³⁷ In the 1960s, Derrida popularized deconstruction (often equated with poststructuralism), a way of analysing language as an arbitrary and differential network of signs that made textual meaning plural and unstable.

³¹ Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); idem, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

³² J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus Have I Loved, but Paul? A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012). Others taking a narrative approach to Paul include Stephen Fowl, *The Story of Jesus in the Letters of Paul*, JSNTSup 36 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); and Bruce Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

³³ Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

³⁴ James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse*, BibInt 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); idem, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

³⁵ Published as “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* (1988): 3-17.

³⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation,” 14. For further exploration of this theme, see eadem, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

³⁷ Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

Derrida also critiqued the notion that people naturally think in binary oppositions, like life/death, male/female, or black/white. Rather, these are influenced by sociohistorical context. Finally, Derrida, argued that metaphysical concepts like nature, truth, and identity are culturally dependent. Then in the 1980s, Foucault's philosophy came to have a wider impact on contemporary literary theory. For example, Foucault's *The Order of Things* gives a history of human thought, and volume one of *The History of Sexuality* provides a discourse on power and a discussion of the categories of maleness and femaleness that have influenced feminist, gender, and queer studies.³⁸

Poststructuralism took hold among literary theorists in reaction to structuralism's approach to texts as closed systems. While structuralism views the signifier and signified as textually bound, poststructuralism views them as socially and culturally bound. On this view, a text is not merely an aesthetic object or a literary form, but a cultural artefact that reflects the presuppositions and values of those who created it. Likewise, a text's interpretation rests on the shared assumptions of those who receive it. Accordingly, poststructuralist approaches attend to the underlying presuppositions, values, and assumptions that influence the creation and interpretation of texts, rather than only attending to a text's formal features and an audience's response to them.

Poststructuralism has not yet influenced biblical scholarship to the extent that formalist theories have. In their 1987 *Literary Guide to the Bible*, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode dismiss deconstruction as "one recent sectarian manifestation" of literary analysis that is against the principles of the new literary criticism because it "disavows all unities" and approaches the text as "divided against itself."³⁹ Yet others have found poststructuralism fruitful for the interpretation of biblical literary texts. For example, John Dominic Crossan was an early practitioner of deconstruction, interpreting the parables of Jesus as "parables of parables" in a continuous system of signs.⁴⁰ More recently, for example, David Seely has applied the thought of Derrida to the interpretation of the gospels and Paul, and Valerie Nicolet Anderson has integrated a narrative reading of Romans with Foucault's construction of the self to analyze the idea of personhood.⁴¹ Poststructuralism has particularly influenced biblical feminist criticism⁴² and postcolonial criticism,⁴³ as well as gender (including masculinity) studies and queer theory.⁴⁴

³⁸ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1971); trans of *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966); idem, *History of Sexuality, Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978); trans of *Histoire de la sexualité, La Volonte de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). For Foucault's legacy, see, e.g., Judith P. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

³⁹ Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 25, 35 n. 8.

⁴⁰ John Dominic Crossan, *Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

⁴¹ David Seeley, *Deconstructing the New Testament*, BibInt 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Valérie Nicolet Anderson, *Constructing the Self: Thinking with Paul and Michel Foucault*, WUNT 324 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

⁴² Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991); eadem, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians," *Semeia* 54 (1992): 199-222; Amy-Jill Levine et. al., eds., *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings* series (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2000-2010); Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Althea Spencer Miller, and Musa W Dube, eds., *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁴³ Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006); Tat-siong Benny Liew, *Politics of Parousia: Reading Mark Inter(con)textually* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Rasiyah S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Stephen D. Moore, *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (London: Routledge, 1996); idem, *God's Beauty Parlor and Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, eds., *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003);

The Cognitive Turn and Literary Approaches

To think about the future, we might look at what contemporary literary critics have been doing lately since biblical scholars have always lagged few decades behind them. The “cognitive turn” of the 1950s made a significant impact on a number of academic disciplines, including musicology, anthropology, sociology, historiography, and religion, and is flowering in literary studies. Research in cognitive linguistics shows that narrative imagining is fundamental for human cognition and that storytelling is one of the key ways that human beings make sense of experience, reason about others’ and their own actions, and find patterns for thinking and behavior in social contexts.⁴⁵ A cognitive approach may thus illuminate the mental processes involved in textual communication as a sense-making event by means of discourse in a social context. Whereas from a historical standpoint texts are representations of people and events in the real world, and from a formalist standpoint texts are formal structures that are constructions of characters and actions in a story world, from a cognitive standpoint, texts are intentional actions that are constructions of mental models of characters-in-the-world and actions-in-the world. Yet a cognitive standpoint is not mutually exclusive of the others. In fact, a cognitive standpoint may provide an underexplored link between historical-critical and literary-critical investigations. Literary modes, like narratives, epistles, or apocalypses, may function as cognitive artefacts that enable authors to construct and audiences to construe a particular way of viewing world. As a result, the cognitive process of working through a text may serve as a resource for metacognition (thinking about thinking) for individuals and communities at every stage of reception.⁴⁶

Further Reading

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⁴⁵ Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); David Herman, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); idem, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); István Czachesz, *Cognitive Science and the New Testament: A New Approach to Early Christian Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁴⁶ Leif Hognisto, *Experiencing the Apocalypse at the Limits of Alterity*, *BibInt* 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Shively, “Intentionality and Narrative Worldmaking,” 297-348.

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