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**The End of John:
A Literary-Historical Reading of John 21**

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2019

Declaration

I hereby declare, in fulfilment of the University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees concerning the submission of a thesis, that: I have composed the following thesis, that it is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Michael Leary

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Abstract

The history of scholarship on John 21 is characterized by a routine set of general conclusions about its relationship to the rest of John. The following thesis begins with a survey of these longstanding historical and interpretive frames to demonstrate that historical, literary, and related standard methods of analysis still have difficulty in producing anything more than provisional explanations for its presence at the end of John. This is in part due to the relative lack of space in academic work given to John 21 in comparison to other areas of John's gospel. It is also, though, in greater measure due to the elusive nature of this text. More recent research on the Gospel of John using enhanced literary and historical methods to locate the gospel's most unique features in its initial literary environment have proven effective in reconceiving basic questions about its provenance and early readership. This thesis works in these innovative critical spaces to reassess the nature and composition of John 21. Following a survey of scholarship on John 21 and a close reading of the text, taking its cues from many of the issues raised by its history of interpretation, are four case studies treating specific literary features of the chapter in turn. The first case study assesses the function of the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple with specific reference to its historical context and contemporary debate on Johannine authorship. The second explores self-awareness in John 21 as part of a key, broader authorial strategy in the gospel. The third explores the shift in narrative time from John 1-20 and John 21 as the core emphasis of the chapter. The fourth probes the reference to "books" in the final verses as related to the emerging culture of book technology, lending chapter its unique position in the composition history of the gospel. These case studies collectively provide a basis for new directions of literary-historical research in scholarship on John's gospel.

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“He decides to tell this story rather than any other story...”

(W. Booth)

Chapter 1

Toward Rediscovering John 21

1.1 Why John 21?

The history of scholarship on John 21 can be characterized as the continued testing of a set of historical-critical hypotheses initially proposed when it was discovered that John 21 was problematic to the traditional consensus regarding the literary integrity of the Gospel of John.¹ One can imagine John 21 as a troubling problem for every compositional theory on John's gospel, the problem persisting because every experiment conducted to resolve the issue has taken place in the same laboratory. To be fair, this history of interpretation has inspired as much critical conjecture as it has constructive reflection, making it a tradition of scholarship both plagued by false dichotomies and steeped in nuance. Its source material as Streeter freely admitted, seduces even seasoned scholars "to stray from the paths of stern historical method, and, in the absence of determinative evidence, allow the historical imagination to wander freely in the pasture-land of speculation."² And though the basic questions of source, audience, and intention seemed to have been laid to rest by the mid-twentieth century, John 21 struggled loose from the bonds of historical criticism, emerging once again as a *crucis interpretum* in the literary-criticism of

¹ In the 1640's Grotius concluded that John 21 was an Ephesian addition to an original gospel (Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (2nd Ed; Gronigen: W. Zuidema, 1826). Soon afterwards, Richard Simon contested this now common reading of John 21 (Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du text du Nouveau Testament* [Rotterdam: R. Leers, 1689], and A. Köstenberger, *Studies on John and Gender* [New York: Peter Lang, 2001], 21). cf. William Baird, *History of New Testament Research Vol. 1: From Deism to Tübingen* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1992) 10, 21. John 21 was so recognizably problematic in the early history of critical scholarship on John that Baird notes regarding the interaction between these two scholars, "...the issue of [NT textual] integrity had largely been restricted to the ending of Romans and John 21." (Baird, 30).

² B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels – A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1936), 468.

contemporary New Testament studies. Why precisely has John 21 inspired so much indecision in this history of scholarship?

It is a text that has been passed off as a clumsy attempt to finalize the written Johannine tradition and championed as an elegant example of early Christian literary creativity. Such distinctions become all the more important in light of the compositional placement of John 21, either as the original conclusion of John's gospel or a later addition steeped in the concerns its evolving social and political setting. Either way, our perception of the chapter has significant consequences for our reading of the rest of John's gospel, and the range of these historical possibilities will be catalogued in detail in the first two chapters of this thesis. Relatively recently, the continued testing of these historical distinctions in different critical modes has uncovered fields of data and refined queries leading to innovative readings of the text, but no single study has significantly altered the state of the question since it was posed by Bultmann in his commentary on the Gospel of John.³ The state of the question has always been best described as a stalemate. Though, once simply stalled between worn readings of the text as either a redactional addition or an integral part of an original gospel, it now is emerging as a centrepiece text for a gridlock of historical-critical and literary-critical issues. As this is the case, now is an excellent time to scholarship to revisit John 21 and the role it has played in Johannine studies.

The driving question of this thesis is specifically: How do the unique literary features of John 21 inform our description of its probably historical and social context? In order to answer this question, there are several other questions from all the correlated literature to address first, such as: Why do commentaries on John's gospel characteristically consign close readings of chapter 21 to mere pages, while other chapters continue to receive much longer and more detailed discussion? And, why do simplistic descriptions of the chapter as clumsy, overtly manufactured, or integral persist through generations of scholarship with only slight variance? The task of forging new critical pathways for reading John 21 is inextricably bound to a wholesale description of its interpretive history. One could certainly say this is the case for any early text. But as one works through the history of scholarship in this

³ R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971).

area, we find that readings of John 21 are intrinsically bound to entrenched patterns of critical method that flow into readings of the chapter from broader arguments concerning the nature of John's gospel as a whole. As one's interpretative schema goes for John 1-20, so it goes for John 21.

The capitulation to stalemate in the literature is so pervasive that if someone were interested in actually challenging the state of the question, the burden of proof would lie on their shoulders to demonstrate first that the need exists, and second, that there is significant historical and literary warrant to push discussion beyond the generalizations so deeply embedded in John 21 commentary.

1.2 Critical Encounters with John 21

The first two chapters of this thesis are interested in this first proposition, namely a demonstration that the state of the question, with all of its embedded tensions and age-old Johannine axioms, is outdated. It is an attempt to articulate where scholarship can move forward, and where each classic impasse should grant space to more recent fields of data in the orbit of Johannine studies. The second proposition, that being a description of the historical and literary details that provide the evidentiary means of movement beyond the current state of the question, is the subject of the remainder of this thesis. This will take place through a comprehensive exegesis of the chapter with reference to the initial survey of the history of scholarship (Chapter 5). Following this close reading of the chapter are four case studies exploring specific areas that both historical and literary criticism on John 21 have struggled to address (Chapters 6-9). These are often failures of methodology here, which can be corrected by attention to contemporary advances in discussion on the composition and setting of John's gospel. They are also, though, failures of imagination, in the sense that there are several overt literary features of chapter 21 that have remained relatively untested by historical or critical methodologies. Each case study presents an extended example of these fresh literary and historical readings of John 21.

The next two chapters (Chapters 2-4) will work through the history of scholarship on John 21, highlighting the significant trend in relegating John 21 to the back of the gospel in compositional and interpretative reconstructions, rather than perceiving John 21 as a primary access point to many of the key issues related to the provenance of the Gospel of John. The few exceptions to this trend stand out in

instructive relief against the broader history of scholarship. Connected to this basic methodological assumption is a corollary tendency to emphasize the historical questions raised by John 21 without additional attention to the quite unique literary features scattered throughout the chapter. There is, also, a mirror image of this critical oversight, in that more recent scholarship probing these literary features typically avoid pushing these insights toward historical questions posed by the text and the identification of the Johannine author(s) or community. It is necessary to accurately catalogue and parse these tensions in order to apprehend John 21 as a significant partner within Johannine studies. The length of this survey in Chapters 2-3 is directly related to the complexity of this task, given the breadth of literature over the past few centuries on John 21. But as there is no comprehensive survey available, it is a necessary frame for the case studies which follow.

Chapter 2

John 21 in Historical Criticism

Defining the state of the art in scholarship on John 21 is difficult, as this history of scholarship overlaps such massive bibliographies as belong to the Beloved Disciple, the community behind John's gospel, and the compositional history of John 1-20.¹ Long before even Westcott's commentary, entire historical reconstructions of John's gospel had begun feeling the weighty problem of John 21.² At the high water mark of historical-critical Johannine studies in the mid-twentieth century, Bultmann began practicing the axiom that "chapter 21 is the key and cornerstone for any redactional theory."³ Decades later and on the other end of the critical spectrum, Culpepper's pioneering literary criticism posed John 21 as the narrative key to the gospel, signalling a shift away from Bultmann towards readings less affected by historical and redactional methods.⁴ And readings abound in between these two representative poles, each one emphasizing in their own way the strategic position of John 21 within the broad, often unpredictable, landscape of the Johannine tradition. In the journals and commentaries, no less than three dozen

¹ The following capture the range of questions in a summary fashion: R. Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1975), 10-101; Klaus Scholtissek, "Johannine Studies: A Survey of Recent Research With Special Regard to German Contributions." *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 6 (1998), 227-259; Köstenberger, *Studies in John and Gender*, 17-48; and the introduction to Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John – Vol. 1* (Peabody, MA; Hendrickson, 2003).

² B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: J. Murray, 1908), 359. Westcott's commentary on John was a landmark for historical criticism in English and his equivocation on John 21, taking it as an unplanned later addition by the same hand as 1-20, set an ambiguous tone for the next century of commentary.

³ D. Moody Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) 234. cf. J.A.T. Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of John" in *Twelve More New Testament Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 65-67. He similarly points out that "Evidence for two editions or recensions within the body of the Gospel itself must remain somewhat subjective. Yet there are two isolable problems, at the beginning and the end, which are in a class by themselves, the Prologue in chapter 1 and the Epilogue of chapter 21." (66)

⁴ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983).

substantively different approaches to John 21 have been proposed since Bultmann, each one attempting to chart a different course up the edifice of the chapter.

Fortunately, despite this varied bibliography there are a few generalizations that can be made about its history of interpretation; a few well-worn routes firmly in place. But the critical anxiety attending even current commentary on the chapter, expressed in the shifting literary critical frameworks emerging across Johannine studies or the limited range of possible historical reconstructions of John 21's composition, is an indication that even these well-worn routes, such as that of Bultmann or Culpepper, still function as provisional analyses.

2.1 Sources of Critical Anxiety in John 21

Much of this critical anxiety is due to the subject matter of John 21. It is material densely packed with the historical and literary conundrums that define the parameters of Johannine Studies in general. Many of these points of interpretation, the identity of the Beloved Disciple, for example, are ambiguous in the Gospel of John. The gospel simply lacks many solid points of internal or external reference by which we could definitively identify the intended readers, the actual authors, the implied readers, the implied authors, or the host of other literary mechanisms latent in the text. Compounding this difficulty, many of these features are also seemingly without parallel in canonical gospel literature or related contemporary literatures in the gospel's Greco-Roman and Jewish matrix. Thus, they remain strictly Johannine issues, often isolated in scholarship from the broader discussion of early Christian literature.

Critical anxiety is also connected to the position of John 21 within the Johannine tradition. The consensus of critical history identifies the chapter as an addition to 1-20, written later by an author, editor, or group of editors responsible for the final layer of the Johannine tradition. Though the Gospel of John has been exposed to a proliferation of literary-criticisms over the last few decades which have often challenged this long-held historical-critical conviction with arguments for the integral nature of the chapter, it still shows no signs of serious revision. This abundance of recent alternate readings of John 21, whether historical or literary in scope, implore the student of John to pause and ask a question about which came first: the critical anxiety or the dominant historical reconstruction of the composition

John 1-20 and 21 that is the constant source of such anxiety? It is this difficult impasse that best describes the state of the art of research on the chapter.

A different way to define this critical anxiety is to point out that John 21 has always functioned as a virtual test chamber for theories regarding the composition history of John. It is the court of final appeals for new ideas about what is going on in the foregrounds and backgrounds of the gospel. As this is the case, John 21 is seldom read as a text distinct from its own history of interpretation. Commentaries and essays on the chapter seem to spend most of their energy on wading through the classic questions it raises before making it back to the big pictures of compositional placement and literary affect in the tradition. Any specific published works of criticism or exegesis of John 21 are typically linked to a particular literary theory, historical conjecture, or redactional reconstruction of the text rather than studies of micro-level historical or literary details within the text that then lead to macro-level literary and historical assessment of its relationship to the rest of the Gospel.⁵ As a result, many of its finer exegetical features have languished in obscurity by virtue of its status as battle ground for compositional theories regarding the Johannine tradition.

This odd oversight is compounded by the lack of any lengthy survey of scholarship on John 21 beyond the summary glimpses one finds scattered throughout the relatively massive amount of literature on the subject, and within such a survey one would still be hard-pressed to find a full-length monograph devoted in particular to this chapter.⁶ As such, this lacuna has passed relatively unnoticed even though Johannine scholarship in general is quite affected by it.

The problem posed by scholarship on John 21 is thus three-fold. Initially, we are faced with a long academic history of interpretation that has neglected many of the basic literary and historical features of John 21. As these basic features have gone uncatalogued, they have not factored into the more general discussions based in John 21 concerning the identity of the Beloved Disciple, its compositional history,

⁵ The notable exception in the traditional commentary setting is that of R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Burnes & Oates, 1968-1982), 341-388.

⁶ A few recent monograph length studies that are relevant include: Larry Darnell George, "The Narrative Unity of the Fourth Gospel's Resurrection: A Literary-Rhetorical Reading of John 20-21" Vanderbilt University, 1997, and Kevin Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

and other key Johannine topics. The two other problems are closely related to this. The second problem we are faced with is one of method, namely, how would one conduct a close-reading of John 21 that will avoid the methodological presumptions characterizing the various stages of its history of interpretation? And the third problem is one of material. John 21 obviously sets its own synchronic parameters, that being John 21:1-25. But if it is the case that there are some basic features of the chapters that have been overlooked, which have not been brought to bear within its history of interpretation, what are these specific features and how can their relevance be coherently demonstrated? There are many narrative, literary, and historical features in the backgrounds and foregrounds of John 21, why single out a specific set as having greater significance than others?

These problems that shape the contour of the following study, in both the close reading of John 21:1-25 and the four case studies that follow, the thesis taking its cue from areas of ambiguity latent in the history of interpretation of John 21. If a significant problem typifying past study of John 21 is that it bypasses closer analysis of the chapter in favour of reading it in light of defaulting to initial convictions regarding the authorship and the composition of the gospel, then it follows that it is important to conduct a close reading of the chapter fully aware of, and critical distant from, these past oversights. In order to properly neglect a discussion, however, one must be thoroughly aware of it. There are distinct patterns of scholarship on John 21 which persist through broader shifts in Johannine studies, and the failure to detect this stifling consistency has a great deal to do with why John 1 has remained under-appreciated from a literary-historical point of view.

To reiterate, the following survey of this history of scholarship will serve to highlight the necessity of this study in several ways. First, it will demonstrate the role John 21 has played in key moments of Johannine scholarship. Second, it will demonstrate the way in which past studies of John 21 have been primarily concerned with more general Johannine issues than the specifics of the text. Third, it will highlight the methodological inconsistencies responsible for critical anxiety related to John 21, and its current indeterminate status in scholarship. And lastly, it will shape the reasoning at play in the specific selection of literary-historical case studies to be addressed in the remainder of the thesis.

There are several ways in which this survey could be arranged. It could be organized by questions regarding its authorship, its placement within the redactional

history of John's gospel, its relationship to the compositional history of 1-20, or any of a variety of known narrative and theological perspectives on its contents. But the most basic question regarding John 21, the point of irreducible complexity for any interpretive strategy, regards its status as epilogue or conclusion to the chapter. It is this question that altered the direction of thought on John 21 and its relationship, by any measure, to the rest of the Gospel of John. And by the early twentieth century, this specific issue had become responsible for creating the rut in which perspectives on John 21 have been stuck ever since. All the stages of the history of scholarship on John 21 can be traced to this basic distinction. As D. Moody Smith pointed out, "chapter 21 is the key and cornerstone for any redactional theory," and this has remained the case.⁷ Much research on the chapter remains under the spell of this compositional simplification. It wasn't until Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* that the focus on the possible dramatic and literary unity of John 21 with John 20 and the Gospel as a whole afforded a possibility for reconfigurations of the classic historical-critical impasse, paving the way for recent scholarship to address the chapter from innovative and provocative angles.⁸

Parallel to these more recent literary oriented re-estimations of John 21, however, an insightful notion has developed that historical-critical issues regarding composition and literary critical issues regarding the structure and intention of the chapter are inseparable. This is a fact that, though having gone largely unheeded, was pointed out by Culpepper in the introduction to his pioneering literary work on the Gospel. He presciently noted, "Once the effort has been made to understand the narrative character of the gospels, some rapprochement with the traditional, historical issues will be necessary."⁹ As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter

⁷ D. Moody Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 234. cf John A.T. Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," in *Twelve More New Testament Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 66. Robinson points out: "Evidence for two editions or recensions within the body of the Gospel itself must remain somewhat subjective. Yet there are two isolable problems, at the beginning and the end, which are in a class by themselves, the Prologue in chapter 1 and the Epilogue of chapter 21."

⁸ This is in spite of the practice of literary-criticism on John long before Culpepper. An early example being F.R.M. Hitcock, "Is the Fourth Gospel a Drama?" in *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives*, ed. Mark W.G. Stibbe (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 16-24; and H. Windisch, "John's Narrative Style" (Stibbe, *The Gospel of John as Literature*), 25-64. Both of these essays were written in 1923.

⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 11.

4, Neiryck further developed this unexpectedly complicated vision of rapprochement at the end of his much referenced lecture on the chapter, noting in conclusion that, “If I am not mistaken, we can observe that in recent studies the two positions, the evangelist’s addendum or the appendix of a post-Johannine redactor, come closer to one another: the redactor sometimes takes the shape of an evangelist, and ch. 21 is studied as part of the Fourth Gospel.”¹⁰

Research on John 21 following Neiryck’s comment, however, does not seem to have borne out his insight. The most productive line of inquiry to be made regarding a survey of the history of interpretation of John 21 would be to chart the progress made towards responding to this lacuna in Johannine scholarship and attempting to determine why the classic impasses still abide. The following survey will trace each side of this question chronologically, and assess the possibility of conducting a “rapprochement” between the two in light of recent studies that approximate this potential direction in scholarship. If historical criticism and literary criticism respectively encompass the first and second wave in the history of scholarship on John 21, then the aim of this survey is to demonstrate the existence a nascent third wave, a truly literary-historical criticism, which has been taking shape in Johannine studies.

The survey is arranged by the progression of Johannine studies from historical-criticism to literary-criticism. Working out this chronology of research is methodologically necessary, as it will provide a way to recreate a sort of blank Johannine canvas, against which the following case studies in reading the text as a literary-historical artefact within the history of the Johannine community will be possible.

2.2 Surveying John 21 in Historical Criticism

The following series of historical-critical readings of John 21 cannot be considered “old” in the sense that they belong to the era of Johannine Scholarship

¹⁰ F. Neiryck, “John 21” *NTS* 36 (1990): 336. cf. W.S. Vorster, “The Growth and Making of John 21,” in *The Four Gospels*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, J. Verheyden, and G. Belle (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2207. Here Vorster notes concerning Neiryck’s conclusion, “The importance of this remark should not be underestimated in current research on the Gospel of John.”

labelled by J.A.T Robinson as the “old look.”¹¹ In this period of scholarship, it was generally accepted without question that the Gospel of John features some sort of dependence on the Synoptic tradition, a conviction eventually questioned and critiqued by Gardener-Smith and Dodd. Rather, they are old in the sense that even F.R.M Hitchcock’s work, *A Fresh Study of the Fourth Gospel*, published at the turn of the twentieth century could be considered “fresh” or “new.”¹² Though Johannine scholarship would not catch up to Hitchcock until the 1950’s, and then even more convincingly again at the end of the twentieth century when literary and dramatic studies on the Gospel of John begin to flourish, his work signals a brand of scholarship that would begin to ask different questions about the text of John’s Gospel.¹³

“Old” and “new” are by no means chronological labels in Johannine studies. Generally speaking, what makes literary-critical studies “new” is simply that they ask questions of the text based on methodologies adopted in response to perceived inadequacies of historical criticism.¹⁴ Even though many species of literary criticism are by now widely accepted in Johannine research, scholarship is still producing historical exegesis, redactional commentary, and compositional reconstructions of John’s Gospel. The first section of this survey will assess a number of these relevant historical studies as far as John 21 is concerned.

¹¹ J.A.T Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J.F. Coakley (SCM Press: London, 1985), 11. cf Stephen Smalley *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, (The Paternoster Press: Exeter, 1978). After discussing J.A.T Robinson’s seminal paper on “A New Look on the Fourth Gospel.” Smalley argues that “The independent use of a common tradition by John and the other evangelists will fit the facts better...” (22), and “We can now reckon seriously with the possibility that the Fourth Gospel, including John’s special material, is grounded in historical tradition when it *departs* from the Synoptics *as well as* when it overlaps with them.” (29)

¹² F.R.M Hitcock, *A Fresh Study of the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1911).

¹³ In the introduction to *The Gospel of John as Literature*, Mark W.G. Stibbe includes Hans Windisch as an early pioneer along these lines, as he published similar research on “John’s Narrative Style” in 1923 (Mark. W.G. Stibbe, ed. *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993], 7). cf. H. Windisch, “Der Johanneische Erzählungsstil,” in *Eucharisterion: Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Festschrift für H. Gunkel* vol. II (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1923) 174-213, and H. Windisch, “John’s Narrative Style,” trans. David E. Orton in *The Gospel of John as Literature*, 25-64.)

¹⁴ cf John Ashton, “Second Thoughts on the Fourth Gospel,” in *What We Have Heard From the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2007), 1-18.

One similarity between historical-critical and literary-critical studies on the Gospel of John persists in the overwhelming number of questions posed by the text to modern readers concerning authorship, composition, and transmission history. Both trends in of scholarship share a fairly routine set of questions. Historical-critical approaches to the Gospel of John, and John 21 specifically, are characterized by heuristics or critical prompts used to reconstruct its historical origin, purpose, and initial social or theological function. As noted above, this very broad set of questions makes brief surveys of Johannine scholarship difficult, as one must taxonomize theories of authorship, redactional hypothesis, text critical issues, and compositional theories that together comprise the formidable bibliography behind Johannine studies. The following survey is mainly interested in the basic features of representative historical-critical perspectives on John 21, and how these perspectives situate John 21 with respect to John 1-20 and its early Christian setting. This involves both reconstructions of the composition history of John taking their cue from John 21 and subsequent assessments of the original function of the chapter as either a redactional epilogue or integral conclusion. Taking this approach through the literature allows us to arrange representative historical-critical readings of John 21 under three major categories: John 21 as a Redactional Composition, John 21 as an Original Composition, and a mediating perspective that sees John 21 as an Original Composition serving a Redactional Function.

2.2.1 John 21 as a Redactional Composition

The idea that John 21 was composed at a later date as an appendix, epilogue, or supplement to John 1-20 is found so commonly in literature on the text that it can be taken as the standard assessment.¹⁵ And with a few notable exceptions, the idea that John 21 is a redactional composition, either by the hand of the evangelist or a later redactor, or even a community of redactors working their way toward a final form of the text over time, has long determined the consensus understanding of its function in the landscape of early Christian literature. Within this general critical discourse, there is debate as to whether it was written by the same

¹⁵ This unanimity is identified in G. Reim, "Johannes 21: Ein Anhang?" in *Studies in New Testament Language and Text*, ed. J.K. Elliot (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 330. The range of datings differs, but the consensus is that it was composed not long after the Gospel was finally completed or edited.

hand that penned John 1-20, or by a redactor whose presence can be seen in traces of the compositional history of the rest of the Gospel. A number of lengthy and detailed arguments exist for either case.

Likewise, using the terms “additional” and “original” as formative concepts in this history of interpretation can become problematic if these terms are taken as anything more than heuristic distinctions. Many readings of John 21 as an “additional” text still locate its compositional history within the writing of John 1-20, and many readings of John 21 as an “original” composition source its development in a later redaction of the gospel. It is not until the application of literary-criticism to John 21 that the particularities involved with such distinctions become functionally relevant as the bases for fuller descriptions of its composition, a key point to be argued when this history of interpretation traces the literary-historical side of John 21 scholarship. It is perhaps most helpful to note simply that classic and contemporary redactional readings of the text characteristically ascribe a redactor or editor to the text that was also largely involved with a final, later edition of the Gospel.

There is also within this consensus ongoing conversation about whether we should refer to John 21 as an “appendix,” “epilogue,” “supplement” or any number of other terms applied to it.¹⁶ Detailed discussion of this question, despite its relationship to key historical questions of authorship and composition history in the Gospel of John, has been more effectively and programmatically addressed by literary-criticism. As a result, the redactional-critical trajectory in scholarship on John 21 has been primarily concerned with the author of John 21 and the compositional chronology involved with its addition to John 1-20. There are dozens of commentaries on John 21 aligned with this trajectory, but the following four are particular influential and cover the range of historical reconstructions this section of the survey intends to outline as the dominant redactional readings of John 21.

¹⁶ Others that could be added to this list include terms surveyed in Brown, 1077-82; Rudolph Pesch, *Der reiche Fischfang: Lk 5, 1-11/Jo 21, 1-14* (Duesseldorf: Patmos, 1969); Guenter Reim, “Johannes 21 – Ein Anhang?” in *Studies in New Testament Language and Text: Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick* ed. J.K. Elliot, NovTSupp 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 330-37; and R. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Phil.: Fortress, 1988) esp. 66f.

2.2.1.1 R. Bultmann

Arguably the historical centre of scholarship on John 21 is Bultmann and his commentary on John, as it updates earlier redaction criticism and pushes discussion of the chapter towards Bultmann's broader Johannine agenda.¹⁷ This commentary itself had been so formative that it received a full-length study in D. Moody Smith's *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel*, which in turn became a seminal resource in Johannine studies.¹⁸ Bultmann's program for Johannine exegesis was built on the identification of five different strata in the final text of John's Gospel.¹⁹ The first layer, the *offenbarungsreden*, consisted of a Vorlage for the prologue. The second, a set of semeia sources for chapters 1-12. The third encompasses the materials that became the passion narrative (18:1-19:41). The fourth layer is the contribution of an ecclesiastical redactor, who created the final order of the gospel and then added chapter 21 as an appendix. And finally, a fifth stratum is the work of the evangelist himself, who is responsible for chapters 1-3.

The closest Bultmann comes to a literary description of the chapter is his assessment, "Ch. 21 is a postscript; for with 20.30f. the Gospel reached its conclusion. The only question is from whom this postscript was derived. That the Evangelist himself added it, and put it after his first conclusion, then to append yet a second concluding statement (vv. 24f.), is extraordinarily improbable."²⁰ When one adds to this Bultmann's programmatic conviction that we really can not say much about the timing of the Gospel's composition, its author(s), and its geographical origin, it becomes clear just how important John 21 is to his argument concerning the redaction of John.²¹ As it was difficult in Bultmann's era to speak with much clarity about the historical background and setting of the Gospel of John, the proof of

¹⁷ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 700-718.

¹⁸ D. Moody Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann's Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965). cf. D. Moody Smith, "The Setting and Shape of the Johannine Narrative Source," *JBL* 95/2 (1976), 231-41.

¹⁹ Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel*, xiii.

²⁰ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 700. Bultmann's provides the following rationale for affirming John 21 as a later addition, in a list including (701-702): 1. John 20 pronounces a blessing on those who have not seen and believed, yet 21 then introduces a recognition scene. 2. 20:30 is a contained, final conclusion. 3. Chapter 21 features an abrupt shift in geography, style, and 28 words new to the gospel text. 4. The Beloved Disciple is real figure in John 21, but not elsewhere in the gospel.

²¹ cf. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 11.

this claim being the major advances in Johannine studies made over subsequent decades, John 21 became the most convenient way to establish at least one key redactional step in the composition of John with any certainty.²² In the spirit of Bultmann's conjecture, the first thing we do know about the Gospel of John is that at some point it was edited by a hand other than its original author, as John 21:24 makes abundantly clear. And so only did John 21 become the key in establishing Bultmann's important fourth stratum, which is arguably the least contested stage of his redactional hypothesis, it also became the logical starting point for his entire historical-critical project.

The unique feature of Bultmann's redactional approach is not its excavation of five different strata in John's Gospel, but his attempt to reconstitute the original order of the Gospel that lies behind these strata. Smith's work in *Composition and Order* is helpful in this respect, in that he ends his lengthy discussion of Bultmann's work on John with a full publication of this rearrangement of John's gospel.²³ Seeing Bultmann's unredacted version of the Gospel of John in this format allows one to experience first-hand the rich interaction between Bultmann's strata, and the theological artistry of the hand responsible for its final order, including chapter 21. This ecclesiastical redactor, so clearly visible in John 21, becomes the crucial figure in Bultmann's scheme, as he is both the clearest and the last testimony to the origin and composition of the Gospel of John. The tendencies of this ecclesiastical redactor involve the sacramental elements found sown throughout the Gospel, any futurist eschatological overtones, sections of the text that can only be explained as Synopticizing tendencies, the frequent and often oblique claims to apostolic eyewitness throughout the narrative, and finally the Gospel's numerous "tertiary glosses."²⁴ Many, if not all, of these features are so striking in John 21 that the chapter becomes inseparable from the redactor's literary identity in Bultmann's reconstruction. Though Bultmann reserves a measure of this literary craft for other strata and hands in the gospel, as not all of the appearances of the Beloved

²² Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel*, 3.

²³ Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel*, 179-212. This section titled "Bultmann's Rearrangement" provides a wholesale republication of John by means of the chronology of Bultmann's redactional strata.

²⁴ Smith, *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel*, 215.

Disciple, one of the key features of chapter 21, can be attributed to the ecclesiastical redactor. The Beloved Disciple appears in prior versions of the text as well.

Bultmann has also been influential in codifying a set of exegetical and stylistic reasons for the idea that John 21 was written by another hand, which served as the exegetical foundation of his analysis of these unique Johannine features built on his redactional model. These stylistic and exegetical reasons, which can be generally group in three categories, became accepted as proof for his general redactional model and its subsequent historical-theological implications. For this reason, the following exegetical and stylistic points will not be repeated in subsequent sections of this survey and will only be revisited when individual scholars suggest points additional to Bultmann's core list of differences between John 21 and John 1-20, which are lexical and grammatical in scope. Others differences he notes are observations made from the narrative context of John 21. And in a third category, Bultmann also identifies a few theological differences between 21 and 1-20, which have been carried over into subsequent redactional scholarship on John.

From a lexical, and syntactical standpoint: John 21 features a different language and style than the rest of the gospel, its sentences formally connect and flow differently than the preceding context, and John 21 introduces a number of new words and phrases to the Johannine lexicon. From a narrative standpoint: John 21 abruptly describes the disciples as fishermen while this character detail had not been mentioned in John 1-20, and it is jarring to have a second resurrection narrative while chapter 20 featured such a conclusive resurrection appearance. From a theological perspective: John 21 is completely different in intent than the rest of the gospel. "The theme here is not the existence of disciple and community, not revelation and faith; rather quite special interests in persons come to the fore, and relationships in the history of the community."²⁵ In the context of John 21's interest in these specific people, a "realistic eschatology" becomes part of the foreground, which marks a radical departure from the subtle realized eschatology of John 1-20.²⁶ When all these markedly unique features are taken as a whole, it becomes obvious

²⁵ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 701.

²⁶ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 702.

to Bultmann that the chapter is an obvious addition design to explain the significance of the author and his relationship to the text.

For Bultmann, and the scholars that would follow in his articulate footsteps through John 21, the chapter is not a literary unity, but a construct built on a number of social and theological designs. This is why he can say on the one hand concerning v. 14, "So ends the story, which in the form that lies before us offers such a remarkable confusion of motifs that one can hardly say wherein the real point lies."²⁷ But on the other hand, "The purpose of vv. 15-23, and therefore in the last analysis of ch. 21 as a whole, is to substantiate the ecclesiastical authority of this Gospel."²⁸ In his final analysis, Bultmann's summary position is that John 21 is the fragmentary creation of a final redactor of the Gospel of John who was attempting to ground the gospel in a few key social and theological concerns of his immediate community. In this way, John 21 serves methodologically as the starting point of his redactional survey and historically as his designation of the conclusion of exchange between the Gospel and its community.

The programmatic irony of Bultmann's work, however, is the cursory manner in which the chapter is treated at the end of his commentary on John. Even though it is the "key and cornerstone" of Bultmann's reconstruction, it does not receive the amount of exegetical and literary scrutiny one would expect Bultmann to lavish upon it. This oversight is reproduced in Smith's publication of Bultmann's order of the gospel, which simply ends at 20:31.²⁹ The assumption can be made from this that while John 21 is important to Bultmann's overall redactional theory, its vestigial nature provides little warrant for the deeper literary and theological scrutiny he applies to other areas of the Gospel. Along with a few particulars of his argument, it is primarily this critical attitude towards the chapter that has shaped scholarship post-Bultmann. John 21 becomes the default historical setting for all compositional criticisms of the Gospel, but beyond this its presence at the end of the Gospel is insignificant from a literary perspective.

²⁷ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 710.

²⁸ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 717.

²⁹ Smith, *Order and Composition of the Fourth Gospel*, 212.

2.2.1.2 C.K. Barrett

A standard representative of Anglo-American criticism on the Gospel of John, Barrett's criticism of John 21 fits neatly within Bultmann's methodological irony, albeit with an important distinction.³⁰ In Barrett's analysis, John 21 does not fit into the Gospel's overall narrative and theological "framework," but "it is readily understandable as a supplement, especially when it is coupled with a comment on the importance of, and relation between, Peter and the beloved disciple."³¹ This latter capitulation to the supplementary nature of chapter 21 permits Barrett to critique the chapter exegetically as an extension of the original Gospel.

Much like Bultmann, Barrett's reasons for singling out chapter 21 as an independent text have to do with style, the narrative flow of John, and its preoccupation with the author. He notes that while Bultmann's argument from style is not immediately convincing, the differences do "furnish confirmation for the view that it is extremely unlikely that an author, wishing to add fresh material to his own book, would add it in so clumsy a manner."³² This description of "clumsiness" is a key feature of Barrett's contribution to scholarship on John 21. It is also problematic for Barrett that the effect of the mission charge in 20:21-23 conflicts with the representation of the disciples in chapter 21 as having returned to their previous employment and somewhat unable to even recognize Jesus.³³ Barrett also goes a step further than Bultmann by clarifying what he sees as the most probable relationship of 21:24 to chapter 21 and the rest of the Gospel. In his estimation, 21:24 refers to the author of the "gospel as a whole," and therefore could not have been written by the author of chapters 1-20. Furthermore, "this verse belongs (as will be shown below, contrary to the opinion of most scholars) to vv. 1-23, and is not to be thought of as a further addendum. Consequently it seems necessary to detach

³⁰ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978)

³¹ Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 576.

³² Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 583. cf Lindars, *John* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 622: "Really important differences are not sufficiently numerous to be decisive against Johannine authorship. Barrett judges that they do indicate a separate occasion of writing (presumably some time later), but not a different writer from the rest of the gospel."

³³ Barrett follows Bultmann in ascribing the purpose of the chapter to its explication of the governing of the church, in transition toward a hierarchical movement in the Johannine community. (Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 583.)

the whole of ch. 21 from the main body of the gospel.”³⁴ This allows Barrett to ascribe a measure of internal integrity to chapter 21 while still maintaining that 21:25 is only “somewhat feebly imitating” the conclusion of 20:30-31. Such a compromise was similarly methodologically attractive to Lindars, Schnackenburg, and other key historical-critical commentaries.

2.2.1.3 R. Brown

A detailed alternative to Bultmann did not appear until Raymond Brown's commentary on John. In Brown's outline, 20:30-31 serve as the Gospel's conclusion, “A Statement of the Author's Purpose.”³⁵ Chapter 21 is then treated as an “Epilogue.”³⁶ Brown starts with the historical datum that we have no evidence of the Gospel of John circulating without chapter 21. While this critical presupposition is far more positive than Bultmann's initially negative methodological assertion that John 21's stylistic features obviously come from a hand different than that of the earliest stages of the Gospel, it does lead Brown to ask the same questions by which Bultmann queries the text. Namely, “Was ch. xxi part of the original plan of the Gospel?” and “If not, was it added before ‘publication’ by the evangelist or by a redactor?”³⁷

Brown is correct in stating that only a few modern scholars would respond affirmatively to the first question. By and large, it is difficult to find many commentaries before Brown's era that would argue that John 21 is part of the original composition of the entire Gospel. The evidences enumerated by Bultmann, Barrett, and others proved persuasive enough to withstand subsequent scrutiny, and Brown has little else to add to this set of historical-critical reasons. He sees a clear

³⁴ Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 583ff. cf Lindars, *John*, 620: “...verse 25 is a final addition, only added after the rest has been joined to the end of the Gospel. Verse 24 seems to have been the work of the editor who was responsible for appending it, if the above remarks are correct.”

³⁵ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1053.

³⁶ cf. Steven Smalley “The Sign in John XXI” *New Testament Studies* 20 (1974), 275-288. Therefore it “does not stand so close to the Fourth Gospel that it cannot be detached from it... Nevertheless, there is to my mind insufficient reason on the other hand for regarding this chapter as non-Johannine.” (276). It comes from the “same hand(s)” (276) With Raymond Brown, Smalley describes John 21 as an epilogue rather than ‘appendix’ or ‘supplement’ (cf. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2:1078).

³⁷ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1078.

conclusion in 20:30-31, and supports this by reference to the blessing pronounced in 20:29, “blessed are those...” which seems to tie together a number of loose thematic threads of the narrative in the context of Jesus’ conclusive resurrection appearance. Brown does make a contribution to study of the chapter by raising a point of inquiry that hadn’t previously been fully addressed regarding the shift from Jerusalem to Galilee between chapters 20 and 21. This shift is so abrupt, “it is hard to believe that the events of the two chapters are in their original order.”³⁸ The author of 21 has inexplicably located the disciples in Galilee after their dialogue with the resurrected Jesus in Jerusalem. To resolve this tension, Brown identifies a chronological reversal of two different resurrection traditions entering the Gospel of John through the author of chapter 21.³⁹ In addition to the clumsiness of the writer described by Barrett, Lindars, and others, Brown asserts that this overt displacement of two resurrection traditions highlights the redactor’s substandard literary and narrative skill. One can imagine a more seamless way to integrate this final material.

Another contribution of Brown’s commentary is that he is among the first historical critics to address important literary questions posed by the chapter at length. If Bultmann set the tone for historical-critical scholarship on the chapter, Brown slightly refocused the questions that would be asked by future study. He answers his second question posed above by attempting to identify whether the chapter is “an appendix, a supplement, or an epilogue.”⁴⁰ An appendix is something without which a literary work would be complete, and therefore John 21 does not fit into this category as “It is more closely integrated into Johannine thought than the ‘Marcan Appendix’ is integrated into Marcan thought.”⁴¹ Supplements are a way to include information that was gathered after a text has been completed, but “some of the information in John xxi may antedate information in ch. xx, at least in origin.”⁴²

³⁸ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1078.

³⁹ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1080.

⁴⁰ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1078. cf. Schnackenburg’s discussion of whether chapter 21 is a postscript, appendix, or epilogue (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 344).

⁴¹ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1078. This is the first clear comparison between John 21 and Mark’s longer ending in major commentaries on John, Brown’s forward thinking in this detail has since not been taken up by scholarship.

⁴² Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1079.

Technically, John 21 could not possibly be a “supplement” as it makes use of traditions that come from the same milieu as the rest of the Gospel. Brown goes on to note that what separates John 21 from 1-20 is not simply chronological anyway, but its abrupt shift in focus toward later ecclesiological issues. We should instead think of John 21 as an “epilogue,” as it takes the “form of literary epilogue where a speech or narrative is added after the conclusion of a drama to complete some of the lines of thought left unfinished in the play itself.”⁴³ This is not substantially different than Bultmann’s “postscript,” but as Brown proves innovative by hosting this detailed literary conversation within what typically transpired as mere historical assessment of Bultmann’s ideas.

The most notable feature of Brown’s commentary is his positive idea that “An important motive, then, for adding ch. xxi was the redactor’s desire not to lose such important material.”⁴⁴ Methodologically, Brown’s exegesis belongs to the critical arc beginning in Bultmann’s work, in that he reads John 21 as a clumsy mark of a redactor in the Gospel of John from which we can extrapolate a composition history for the whole Gospel. Yet, it is Brown’s work that also provided a platform for later critics to pose more purely literary questions to the text, as he effectively provides a model for bracketing chapter 21 from the historical questions imposed on it by Bultmann to test alternative descriptions of its author. With his idea that chapter 21 is in some sense necessary by means of its inclusion of material important to the Johannine tradition, he provided scholarly warrant for proceeding to read John 21 as an independent evocation of historical traditions and literary patterns in 1-20.

2.2.1.4 R. Schnackenburg

In his commentary, Schnackenburg titles his lengthy discussion of John 21 “Editorial Conclusion.” Linking himself to the past historical-critical consensus, Schnackenburg begins by stating that the, “Style is not that of the evangelist, who has his traditions better under control.”⁴⁵ However, in distinction to previous descriptions of the chapter as “clumsy,” he observes, “a purposeful hand is at work; but it does not have very compliant material on which to work. The available

⁴³ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1079.

⁴⁴ Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1081.

⁴⁵ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 343.

traditions have to be made to fit the desired effect.”⁴⁶ Thus for Schnackenburg, the distinctiveness of John 21 lies not simply in its theological referents and redactional setting, even though these are important features in his exegesis, but there are also a number of literary points that can be made about the “varied fragments” that comprise John 21.⁴⁷

As an “editorial conclusion,” John 21 is a collection of fragmentary traditions that have been “brought together in an overlapping narrative connection.”⁴⁸ This literary feature that marks John 21 as different from 1-20 is twofold. First, it makes use of traditions that do not fit together as easily as those in the rest of the Gospel. These traditions have been edited in such a way that they fit the point the author of the epilogue is attempting to make. And second, the writer of John 21 was not as effective in Gospel writing as the author of 1-20. The evangelist does not typically weave together what Schnackenburg sees as different Jesus traditions, and this forces the author into a “mode of narration” that does not match up with John’s narrative style.

Schnackenburg’s essay also attempts to locate chapter 21 in relation to chapters 1-20 in a way that further captures its function as an epilogue. Chapter 21 does seem to presuppose the previous resurrection appearance in chapter, and therefore has a sensible connection to the preceding context, but the style, thematic tone, and composition of 21:2-13 “can hardly be understood as the intended continuation by the same author who wrote Chapter 20.”⁴⁹ From this he concludes that the evangelist did not write the Gospel with an epilogue like chapter 21 in mind, but it was composed later “from a pronouncedly ‘ecclesiastical’ point of view” through its treatment of five themes related to both to the preceding context and issues important to the community of its authorship.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 343.

⁴⁷ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 341.

⁴⁸ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 341.

⁴⁹ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 343: “The editors who added on 21:1-13, not only presuppose Jn 20, but consciously refer to it.”

⁵⁰ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 343. “Chapter 21 appears, at least in vv. 1-14, to presuppose Jn 20...The supposition that the evangelist *later* wanted to add Chapter 21 for whatever reason, and put together vv. 1-17 for this new purpose, comes up against the objection as to why he allowed the conclusion in 20:30f to stand.” On the ecclesiastical tone, cf. J.D.G. Dunn “Let John be John: A Gospel for Its Time.” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 304: “The *post-*

Based on this literary-historical reconstruction of the origin and purpose of chapter 21, Schnackenburg rejects the descriptive categories of “postscript,” “appendix,” and “epilogue.” Rather, “It is an ultimate editorial chapter having an explanatory function for the readers in the Church of those days.”⁵¹ Critical exegesis of the chapter does add detail to our understanding of the evangelist’s historical circumstance, but only as it is a later addition by the same community in which the Johannine tradition originated. Just as chapters 15-16 continue the farewell discourse of chapter 14 by applying it to issues the Johannine community was presently experiencing, so does chapter 21 seek to apply the themes of chapter 20 to questions inhibiting the life of this growing community.⁵²

This compositional reconstruction does allow for the possibility that the chapter is a collection of traditions originating with the evangelist, and then included by a later editor because these traditions were too valuable to exclude from the final edition of the gospel. Recognizing this potential effect of his argument, Schnackenburg responds from the point of view of redaction criticism with the proviso that even what we do find within the “editorial seams” in John 21 does not match up to the evangelist’s original hand.⁵³ Both the compositional style, and the traditions it is attempting to harness, are demonstrably different from John 1-20. In this way, Schnackenburg assigns John 21 the same redactional role as it has in Bultmann, while preserving within the text a positive reading of its stylistic features.

2.2.2. John 21 as an Original Composition

The idea that John 21 is a composition by the same hand as 1-20, penned at the same time or a bit later than the rest of the Gospel, is every bit a standard in

Easter retrospective is for John equally a theological program and a narrative perspective; it makes possible for the fourth evangelist to transform theological insights into narrated history.” Also, J.A.T Robinson, *The Priority of John*, 62: “this tradition is intended for the community and its liturgical use.”

⁵¹ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 344.

⁵² Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 344.

⁵³ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 350. “...the origin of 21:1-23 as being from the evangelist, cannot be defended. At most, the editors who are here at work, could have received some traditions from him (and then, presumably orally).”

Johannine scholarship as the redactional perspective surveyed above.⁵⁴ The redactional position has certainly generated more literature, critical intrigue, and controversy, yet a persistent brand of commentary seeking to locate John 21 within the original composition of the entire gospel spans the entire history of commentary on John.⁵⁵ Such commentary understands that there is a lot at stake in our exegesis of John 21 in terms of the authorship and composition history of John's gospel, and arguing for the originality of John 21 is a necessary foundation for supporting traditional attributions of authorship and connection to authentic Johannine witness.⁵⁶ As with the redactional-critical survey, the following highlights key voices in this trajectory of scholarship.⁵⁷ Rather than probing the compositional role John 21 plays in establishing the textual history of the gospel, this approach characteristically emphasizes the stylistic unity, thematic integrity, and literary relevance of John 21 to the preceding text. In some cases, John 21 is read in a balance to the prologue, which would otherwise remain unbalanced by the abrupt conclusion of chapter 20.⁵⁸ In other readings, the possibility appears that John 21

⁵⁴ For early examples of this scholarship: B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: John Murray, 1902): "This chapter is evidently an appendix to the Gospel, which is completed by ch. Xx. It is impossible to suppose that it was the original design of the Evangelist to add the incidents of ch. xxi. after ch. xx. 30f., which verses form a solemn close to his record of the great history of the conflict of faith and unbelief in the life of Christ. And the general scope of the contents of this chapter is distinct from the development of the plan which is declared to be completed in ch. xx." (299) Further, "On the other hand it is equally clear that xxi. 1-23 was written by the author of the Gospel." (299)

⁵⁵ This corresponds to another general trend in Johannine studies. As stated by Klaus Scholtissek, "Johannine Studies: A Survey of Recent Research With Special Regard to German Contributions." *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 6 (1998) 227: "Many recent studies... no longer assume the validity of source and tradition-historical criticism to be self-evident." Scholtissek traces this idea through Bultmann, Schnackenburg, Becker, and Richter.

⁵⁶ This idea is captured well by Peter F. Ellis, "The Authenticity of John 21" *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36 (1992), 17: "The Appendix was added to the completed work both as a precious addition, worthy to be preserved with the rest, and also, and indeed primarily, to guarantee the authenticity of this highly individual work. So the editor adds this note, which is comparable to the opening of the *Gospel of Thomas*." And John A.T. Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 66: [It was] "Added about the time when the Epistles were written, and that these were separated from the first draft of the Gospel by an interval of at least a decade, and probably more." cf. J.A.T. Robinson "The Destination and Purpose of the Johannine Epistles," where he claims John 21 is clearly the work of an "old man, of whom some thought that he would never die."

⁵⁷ cf. the overview in J. Breck: "John 21: Appendix, Epilogue, or Conclusion?" *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36:27-49.

⁵⁸ In defense of John 21 being composed with the rest of the Gospel, designed to be a "kind of Epilogue that balances the Prologue (1:1-18) by tying up some loose ends and

creatively recapitulates some of the key themes of the entire gospel, and is best received as actual conclusion, rather than as epilogue, appendix, or associated ancillary literary afterthought.⁵⁹

Either way, these readings tend to locate the purpose of John 21 within the original literary intentions of the author or primary editor of John 1-20, rather than within a later set of ecclesiastical concerns evidenced evoked by reference to elements of a Johannine and Petrine tradition exterior to the narrative traditions of the gospel. These traditions may be at play in the hand of an original author, but they are not the historical point of departure for a compositional analysis of the text. The history of the entire text of John remains with a single author, for whom John 21 was a necessary final step in the broader discourse of the gospel. This approach is, at face value, open to criticism of any attempt to uncover the “authorial intention” in an ancient text. However, curiously enough, the acute self-awareness of the author of John 21, who inserts multiple overt comments about the authorship and trustworthiness of the text itself, requires present scholars of John to entertain the possibility of an authorial intention discernible within the gospel as a whole. The question would remain: Is this authorial voice a feature of the Johannine tradition or an artefact of the collation of these traditions by a creative editor? This is a particularly helpful question, in that it highlights the critical strength of reading John 21 as part and parcel of the earliest stages of John’s compositional history. This approach can take John 21:24-25 at face value as an unexpectedly formative, artful conclusion to the entire gospel, rather than a mere token of redactional influence.

pointing the way forward.” see: S.S. Smalley, “The Sign in John 21” *New Testament Studies* 20 (1974), 275.

⁵⁹ N.T. Wright addresses this issue in *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). He argue that: 1. Chapter 20 was “the intended climax of the book as a whole” as it matches the prologue and culminates major themes (675). 2. Chapter 21 Remains “quite clearly an afterthought...but an important one.” (675) 3. It was not written just to provide another resurrection scene, but its inclusion must have to do with the need of the community to address two issues: a. Peter and the Beloved Disciple, b. The Beloved Disciple’s death. On point two, the readers are aware of a tradition concerning Jesus’ return (which is not in John) and one concerning the Beloved Disciple’s death (which is also not in John). The point of these stories is that they refer to events that actually took place, otherwise, there would be no misunderstanding – “This again does not settle the historical question, but sets the literary context within which it may be addressed.” (677)

Recent arguments for the integral nature of John 21 are quite similar to those of their critical ancestors.⁶⁰ Though, in a movement similar to scholarship on John 21 and its redactors, readings of John 21 as original or integral to John is marked by the increasingly sophisticated use of contemporary literary theory to re-describe the relationship between John 1-20 and 21, and the growing index of ancient literary references and patterns sharpening our perspective on the literary mechanics of the John.⁶¹

2.2.2.1 P.S. Minear

Frequently cited as a representative of the originalist perspective on John 21, Paul Minear's essay on the "Original Functions of John 21" argues that the root of all historical reasoning concerning John 21 lies in probable reconstructions of the initial function of the chapter, expressible in redactional, literary, or historical-theological terms.⁶² Recognizing that his work is swimming against the tide of redaction-criticism, Minear sums up previous scholarship by merely pointing out, "The jury of modern NT scholars has agreed with unparalleled unanimity on one issue in Johannine research: chapter 21 is not an integral part of the original gospel but was composed separately and probably by a redactor."⁶³ He thus postures his essay as an attempt to reinvestigate the evidence for this axiom of Johannine studies and build a starting point for reassessing this standard methodological trope.

Minear begins with several features of scholarly readings of John 21 that remain uncontested. First, we have no evidence that the Gospel of John has ever circulated without chapter 21. It is difficult to decide what to do with this historical fact, as it could theoretically be disproven at any time through new manuscript

⁶⁰ E.C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 669. cf H. Thyen "Johanes und die Synoptiker: Auf der Such nach einem neuen Paradigma zur Beschreibung ihrer Beziehungen anhand von Beobachtungen an Passions- und Ostererzählung" in *John and the Syntopics*, ed. A. Denaux (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 81-107. Thyen argues the Evangelist himself is the "redactor" who penned the chapter as an integral part of the Gospel.

⁶¹ Notably in Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: MA: Hendrickson, 2003).

⁶² Paul Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," *JBL* 102/1 (1983) 85-98.

⁶³ Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," 85. Fortna though does point out "the confidence with which the chapter's inauthenticity is taken for granted" (Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, pg. 7 n. 1).

analysis and discovery. But, the weight of this textual tradition renders any redactional assessment of the John circumventing chapter 21 as a key layer in the composition of the gospel questionable. Second, the vocabulary of John 21 and 1-20 are consistent and do not require the reader to envisage two separate authors behind the transition between the chapters.⁶⁴ Third, John 21 is also consistent with 1-20 both grammatically and stylistically. This last point has been a matter of controversy in the past, but Brown's and Barrett's sober analysis of these features, and judgment that they are not nearly as dissimilar as past commentary had claimed, has generally moderated this point of macro-analysis in subsequent scholarship.

Based on these points of agreement in scholarship, Minear renders the central contribution of his essay by inferring, "there is so much agreement on these three matters that attribution of chapter 21 to a separate redactor must rest on other considerations than manuscripts, vocabulary or literary style."⁶⁵ However, despite the clarity of Minear's framing of these manuscript and stylistic issues, scholars still seem resolute in affirming a redactional distinction between John 1-20 and John 21. Minear goes on to explain why this anomaly continues to persist by weighing his comments about manuscript history, style, and vocabulary against two more uncontested points of scholarship. First, chapter 20 is an obvious conclusion to the Gospel of John. Second, chapter 21 exhibits only a loose connection to the Gospel of John as a whole.⁶⁶

Minear responds in his essay to each of the last two important points. Though this is the most contested point made in his essay, Minear makes a strong case for seeing the end of John 20 as an internal conclusion to the chapter itself, rather than the entire gospel.⁶⁷ In his outline of the Gospel of John, 20:30-31 serve

⁶⁴ cf. R. Mahoney, *Two Disciples at the Tomb: The Background and Message of John 20.1-10* (Bern: H. Lang, 1974), 28.

⁶⁵ Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," 87: "It is not at all surprising that the most influential exponent of redaction, R. Bultmann, should have made little appeal to these considerations."

⁶⁶ On the first point: Brown, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2.1078. On the second point, Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 290.

⁶⁷ cf. B. Witherington, *John's Wisdom. A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 1995), 352: "When we couple this with the obvious closure that John 20:30-31 brings to this Gospel, the suggestion that this was originally a

as a preliminary conclusion to the events and themes raised by the post-resurrection context of chapter 20. John 21:24-25 are the intended conclusion for the Gospel as a whole, further clarifying the references to authorship and witness raised initially by 20:30-31. This reconstruction contrasts the redactional-critical motif of registering chapter 21 as an appendage; shifting our sense for where the gospel actually ends. In Minear's reading, then, the material between the dual conclusions of John 20 and John 21 constitute an extended conclusion to the gospel. John 20:30-31 signaling a final narrative movement of the gospel achieved with finality by John 21:24-25.

Having restructured the flow of the Gospel of John so that one moves seamlessly from John 20 to John 21, Minear is able to ascribe a different set of range of literary functions to this final chapter. Rather than chapter 21 being a repository of disparate traditions relating only tangentially to the gospel, but specific to the *Sitz im Leben* of a final redactor, it becomes a way for the Evangelist to "bring to a conclusion a number of motifs anticipated in early chapters but not covered in chapter 20."⁶⁸ It provides a narrative conclusion to the interwoven story of Peter and the Beloved Disciple, who have been in the foreground of the Gospel since chapter 13. It brings to fruition the themes of faith and discipleship that have been so central to 1-20 in such a way that "the chapter expresses a strong and continuing interest in disciples of the second generation."⁶⁹ Perhaps most importantly, it clarifies the relationship between the Evangelist and the Beloved Disciple. And it clarifies the boundaries of a list of linguistic symbols that have been at the centre of John's narrative world since they began appearing in Prologue. According to Minear, "It is of course possible to explain these features as due to the clumsy efforts of a redactor to gain acceptance of his additions, but by far the simplest explanation is to accept both passages as the fingerprints of the same narrator."⁷⁰

Although many points of Minear's robust articulation of an alternative to the consensus on John 21 have since been taken up by later scholars, his work has been consistently critiqued specifically on the point that John 20:30-31 represent a preliminary conclusion, and do not constitute a conclusion to the entire gospel.

free-floating tradition that the evangelist placed here after having written the Gospel seems most likely."

⁶⁸ Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," 91.

⁶⁹ Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," 94.

⁷⁰ Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," 97.

Despite this critique, Minear's understanding of John 21 as part of the original design of John's gospel represent a notable shift in exegesis in several ways. It has highlighted possible, and previously underappreciated, thematic connections between John 1-20 and John 21. It has also reset the tone for scholarship taking John 21 as an original composition by rendering the question as one of function. As argued by Minear, the readers of John's gospel would have received John 21 as conclusion effectively linking the gospel to their present social and ecclesial circumstances. This observation of a shift in narrative and historical time in John 21 is a feature of redaction criticism, articulated by Bultmann and others in locating John 21 traditions in the present life of the Johannine community. Minear's use of this observation is innovative, however, in its ascription of this shift in narrative time to the original composition of the gospel as a whole. If John 21 is borne out of the original narrative ordering of Jesus traditions in John's gospel, the chapter becomes a mark of a vivid narrative artifice. This innovative functional description of the chapter provided a new potential direction for criticism of the end of John.

2.2.2.2 T. L. Brodie

Brodie's commentary reassesses the overall structure of John's gospel in a novel and sophisticated narrative organization of its themes. This discourse-analytical scheme affords John 21 a position in the overall literary and thematic flow of the gospel in a marked departure from the traditional redaction-critical pattern.⁷¹ Brodie describes his positioning of the chapter by claiming, "The thesis here is that chap. 21 far from being secondary, is central to the gospel."⁷² Such a statement is rare in this history of interpretation and reads the compositional origin of chapter even more positively than Minear, who can only say that it "has something of the character of an epilogue."⁷³ As is the typical pattern in John 21 scholarship, Brodie

⁷¹ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁷² Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 576. cf. Breck, "John 21: Appendix, Epilogue or Conclusion?," throughout which he contends that John 21 is a conclusion rather than epilogue. He arrives at this conclusion on account of: 1. Johannine patterns of double endings (1 John 5:13 and 14-21); 2. 20.30-31 and 21.15 form a chiastic "inclusion-conclusion." 3. 20.30-31 is just a conclusion for chapter 20. 4. 21.14 renders 21.24-25 as a conclusion to the whole gospel. 5. It is intrinsic to the nature of epilogues that they appear at first glance to be superfluous. (cf. Keener, *The Gospel of John* 1219-22.)

⁷³ Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 574.

surveys the classic reasons why the chapter has generally been considered a later addition and offers a series of thematic, exegetical, and compositional rebuttals relatively unique to his commentary. Firstly, John 21 is part of the “larger conclusion” of John’s gospel, consistent with a literary pattern previously articulated by Kysar.⁷⁴ Per Brodie, “The essence of the larger pattern is that it is concerned not only with the gospel’s destination (the purpose of writing, 20:30-31) but also with its origin (the reliability of the underlying witness, 19:35). Both elements are necessary, and they are synthesized in the final verses (21:24-25).”⁷⁵ This otherwise unique perspective somewhat mitigates the problem with Minear’s limitation of John 20:30-31 as a conclusion to chapter 20, and for Brodie becomes a way of proposing a macro-structure for the Gospel of John anticipating the necessity of chapter 21. Secondly, Brodie attempts to answer the consistently raised issue of the “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” benediction of 20:29 as a problem for chapter 21, in that the visible reappearance of Jesus may contradict this concluding Johannine conviction affirming that readers of the gospel, at a material remove from the resurrection appearances, have an authentic and effective faith. In order to explain the logic as to why another resurrection appearance follows this concluding benediction, Brodie posits that chapter 21 does not actually talk about the disciples physically “seeing” Jesus in the same way Thomas touched and beheld Jesus in the prior chapter. There is a real, historic interaction occurring in chapter 21, but “verbs of seeing are absent” and thus the chapter “tells of a time when interaction with Jesus will occur at another level.”⁷⁶

A third, more compositional argument in Brodie’s commentary pertains to the description of the disciples as “fishermen,” a characterization common to the Synoptics, but only present here in John. This odd feature of the chapter is one of several elements behind its consensus description in scholarship the chapter as a clumsy, ineffective addition drawing from extra-Johannine material. For Brodie this textual feature signals an advance in the Johannine tradition, introducing additional material to the prior gospel narrative as a means of rounding out the

⁷⁴ In this reading, John 19:35-37, 20:30-31, and 21:24-25 serve as a series of related conclusions culminated in the final conclusion of chapter 21. We read the conclusion of John as a cascading set of conclusions increasing in finality until we reach the last two verses of John 21.

⁷⁵ Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 575.

⁷⁶ Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 575.

characterization of both Jesus and his followers. He compares this “advance” to what happens between chapters 5 and 6, and 9 and 10, both transitions introducing character-oriented material significantly contributing to the development of the gospel’s narrative. Brodie concludes by echoing Schnackenburg in saying that the chapter features an “interweaving of different threads.”⁷⁷ Chapters 1-20 interweave many themes and traditions, reading with and against the Synoptic traditions in different locations, as the narrative progresses. Chapter 21 both continues and concludes this compositional strategy. Even if Brodie’s attempt to locate John 21 within the broader thematic strategies of the Gospel of John is closely linked to the idiosyncratic program of his commentary, the coherence of his argument entails an important attempt to move the discussion forward.

2.2.2.3 D.A. Carson

That John 21 is a “kind of Epilogue that balances the Prologue (1:1-18) by tying up some loose ends and pointing the way forward” is perhaps the clearest statement of the consensus on this originalist side of John 21 scholarship.⁷⁸ Having previously explored the purpose of the role John 20:31 plays in articulating and affirming the purpose of John’s gospel, namely that it is “primarily evangelistic after all,” Carson works in his commentary towards an historical contextualization of John 21 reading against the redactional-critical model.⁷⁹ Just as “in recent years discussions of the purpose of John’s Gospel have largely ignored John 20:30-31,” so the redactional-critical perspective rests on evidence which though “superficially overwhelming, is far from unassailable.”⁸⁰

Carson’s exegesis of the chapter turns on an interesting question, “Where, then, can one find reliable literary criteria to distinguish between the addition of an Epilogue to complete a work *at the time of composition*, and the addition of an Epilogue *some time later* by the same author.”⁸¹ All the suggested possibilities of the composition history of John 21 are subject to available immediate evidence, which

⁷⁷ Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 575.

⁷⁸ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 655.

⁷⁹ D.A. Carson, “The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered.” *JBL* 106/4 (1987) 639-651.

⁸⁰ Carson, “Purpose of the Fourth Gospel,” 639.

⁸¹ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 656.

resides in the stylistic, linguistic, and thematic elements of the chapter. Even though such evidence may be interpreted different ways based on one's redactional or compositional lenses, the evidence that it is original to the completed Gospel of John is at least coherent enough to be assumed in subsequent exegesis.

He summarizes the debate by means of four key issues. The linguistic considerations raised by Bultmann have been demonstrated to have had little value in distinguishing the hand of a redactor in John 21.⁸² On the issue of John 20 being the conclusion, Carson refers back to his commentary on John 20:17 and 22 as a way of pointing out this long standing assumption is as problematic as severing John 21 from the Gospel. If it can be demonstrated that John 20 does not serve the ultimately conclusive function ascribed to it by redaction-criticism, then the purpose of John 21 becomes far clearer. Carson does agree that John 20 represents the significant climax to the Gospel of John, but, "as in a 'whodunit' where all the pieces have finally come together in a magnificent act of disclosure, there remains certain authorial discretion: the book may end abruptly with the act of disclosure, the solution to the mystery, or it may wind down through a postscript that tells us what happens to the characters..."⁸³ Furthermore, the difficulty presented by conclusion of John 20 can be moderated by placing John in the context of the Synoptics, which characteristically end with affirmations of the missiological significance of the resurrection and post-resurrection appearances.⁸⁴ The third issue involves the question about what John 21 actually contributes to the Gospel. Those assuming the absolutely conclusive function of John 20 usually read John 21 as superfluous and imitative of the original ending of the gospel, whereas those attempting to argue for the coherence of John 21 to the Gospel do suggest several conceivable narrative and theological contributions made by the chapter. These contributions at the least suggest that the alternative compositional structure of John which includes John 21

⁸² Such as the case of *exetazo* in place of the expected *erotao* (21.12) and *paidia* rather than *tekniá* (21.5, cf. 1:12). Carson explains this lexical feature of John 21 in terms of John's penchant for synonyms. cf. a longer list of lexical list of similarities between John 1-20 and 21 in A. Plummer, *Gospel According to John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 348-357.

⁸³ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 656.

⁸⁴ Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 656.

has historical and textual merit. And finally, Carson closes on the manuscript tradition, in which we never find the Gospel circulating without this chapter.⁸⁵

This approach allows Carson to move seamlessly between commentary on chapter 20 and 21, highlighting ways in which chapter 21 reads with the rest of the gospel. Later in his exegesis, Carson considers the possibility that the chapter is the product of “a different amanuensis,” or “a group of associates entrusted with writing down these last narratives as the Evangelist had repeatedly taught them.”⁸⁶ But even if this were the case, he does not think it would contradict the arguments for the integral nature of John 21. Even if his arguments are not conclusive, Carson finds that assuming the literary integrity of John 21 is “reasonably firm,” and provides the best compositional frame for reading John as a whole.

2.2.2.4 W. Vorster

Vorster proceeds with his tour of John 21 by noting that not only has the chapter been regarded as an “addition to the original Gospel,” but is also usually assumed to have undergone compositional changes over time.⁸⁷ After surveying the classic evidence for and against different positions on John 21’s placement, Vorster demurs from Minear’s dismissal of the stylistic evidence in claiming that “evidence for or against chapter 21 as an addition is inconclusive.”⁸⁸ This uncertainty signals a methodological need to identify alternative ways to access the compositional history of John 21, and more specifically for Vorster, by allowing our understanding of the “making” of John 21 to regulate our description of its “growth” within the history of John. Consistent with Neiryck’s work on the same point, Vorster links John 21 to related passages in the Synoptics, and in a nod to Brown’s commentary, the

⁸⁵ Cf. Lindars, *John*, 618: “As it comes after the conclusion to the Gospel, it cannot be regarded as part of the formal structure of the book. But as it was included in all MSS., it is certainly not a late addition. It has been added soon after the time of publication to a wider audience than the immediate circle for whom the Gospel was written.”

⁸⁶ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 660.

⁸⁷ Vorster, “The Growth and Making of John 21,” 2207-2221.

⁸⁸ Vorster, “The Growth and Making of John 21,” 2207.

Galilean setting of John 21 to texts like Mark 16:7 and its hint toward a Galilean post-resurrection appearance tradition.⁸⁹

Vorster makes the key contribution of his essay by describing the author's role in the "growth" of this incredibly complex mapping of traditions onto the end of John. The actual "making" of John 21 is far too unclear, and this lends confusion to the debate as to how precisely the author, evangelist, redactor, editor, or editors are involved. Until this relationship between the "growth" and "making" of the chapter can be clarified, such confusion will persist.⁹⁰

In studies on John 21, "the phenomenon 'text' has been conceived in causal terms."⁹¹ Redaction and source critical approaches have attempted to isolate ways different sources or layers reveal the dependency of the author or authors of John 21 on the use of Jesus traditions in other texts. Following this cue, Vorster works on establishing an alternative framing of source-criticism in texts like John 21, by grafting in different perspectives on the "phenomenon 'text' and also the role of the interpreter" which in turn leads to a different set of questions than those bound to historical criticism.⁹² Citing Kristeva's brand of "intertextuality" as his inspiration, Vorster abandons the source-critical goal of diachronically positioning one later text with respect to its earlier sources for the synchronic reading of a text within the narrative space defined by earlier sources irretrievably imbedded within it.⁹³ Locating and deciphering texts within texts is problematic in cases where "the cited text is reworked in such a manner that the former texts are often hardly recognizable," which is manifestly the case in John 21's reliance on Synoptic allusion and post-resurrection Johannine tradition.⁹⁴ In textual reliance on prior traditions in the production of such a chapter, the author effectively enacts an entirely new network of references greater than the sum of these earlier contexts. In this way, "John 21 is

⁸⁹ Brown, *Gospel According to St. John*, 1094, wherein he also includes the Gospel of Peter as a text belonging to this setting.

⁹⁰ Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2213.

⁹¹ Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2214.

⁹² Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2214.

⁹³ He cites the famous mantra of J. Kristeva Σημειωτική. *Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1969), 146: "tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre text."

⁹⁴ Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2215.

an excellent example of a text in which author/redactor has succeeded in making a completely new text.”⁹⁵

In this radical hermeneutical departure from source and redactional criticism, Vorster finds a new starting point for surveying extant historical and traditional data embedded in the chapter. John 21 has been such a difficult chapter for historical criticism to compute because it simply does not provide the type of information historical criticism is designed to process. Redactional and source-critical methods as applied to John 21 can access significant aspects of its composition, but as tools, their limitations are felt in encounter with the artful and literary features of the chapter. The reader begins to sense a careful hand within the ordering of these character details and conversations, regardless of their prior history, and any meaning in the text migrates with the reader to this final form of John 21 as a seamless convergence of multiple streams of tradition.

In Vorster’s reasoning, by way of Kristeva, the level of intertextuality we encounter in John 21 renders the significance of any prior settings or contexts for these disparate traditions obsolete. Instead of outlining the growth of John 21 in historical-critical terms, the historian of the text simply need focus on key points along the way of its “making” to provide substantial commentary on its function and composition. Bypassing traditional argumentation concerning whether the chapter is an “epilogue,” “appendix,” or perhaps even integral to the Gospel, he attempts to “approach the question from the perspective of the reader.”⁹⁶ John 21 can, with little interpretive effort, be read as part of the overall storyline of John and “as the product of the person who wrote the Gospel or edited it in its final form.”⁹⁷ From this readerly perspective, there is no obvious reason why a reader would take 20:30-31 as the end of the book, while it could be taken at face value as a form of internal review by means of an impassioned plea to faith in the witness of John 20. Even if a reader had assumed 20:30-31 was an ending of sorts, the subsequent reading of John 21 would refine and resolve this initial perception of where John ends.

For example, 21:1-14 may refer back to the tradition behind Luke 5:1-11, John 21 dislocating this pericope from its initial source and transposing it to a post-

⁹⁵ Vorster, “The Growth and Making of John 21,” 2215.

⁹⁶ Vorster, “The Growth and Making of John 21,” 2219.

⁹⁷ Vorster, “The Growth and Making of John 21,” 2220.

resurrection setting to substantiate the revelatory scale of Jesus' appearance to the fishermen disciples in Galilee. The key critical work of reading in John 21 should take place in observing the success of this transposition, its coherence with the overall composition of John, and overall effect on this artful struggle to bring the gospel to a close. This same line of reasoning extends to the characters of John 21, a pool of symbols common to John 1-20 and 21, and the bold attribution of authorship that closes the chapter. In these features of the chapter's "making," Vorster marshals a thick line of evidence for the idea that the chapter is integral to the gospel. And thus, "the time has come to study John 21 from perspectives other than its origin."⁹⁸ One can certainly question the circularity present in his distinction between the "making" and "growth" of the chapter, but his advances here remain instructive, nonetheless.

2.3 Conclusion: History, Composition, and John 21

Reflecting on the state of the art of historical-criticism of John 21, Neiryck supposes, "If I am not mistaken, we can observe that in recent studies the two positions, the evangelist's addendum or the appendix of a post-Johannine redactor, come closer to one another: the redactor sometimes takes the shape of an evangelist, and ch. 21 is studied as part of the Fourth Gospel."⁹⁹ This is indeed true, as a notable feature of recent arguments for the integral nature for John 21 is their specific engagement with the insistence of redactional readings on noting the ecclesial contours of the chapter. Readings emerge from this state of the question that, while resistant to Bultmann's distinctions between source and redactor, are also able to comprehend the text as a composition within the context of a developing tradition. Likewise, as in the case of Neiryck's reading to be addressed in due course, redactional readings of John 21 as an addition to the text are beginning to recognize creative intention in its connections to similar features and patterns of adaptation in chapter 1-20.

Still, what ultimately distinguishes the two lines of argumentation appears not in their particular orientation towards the lexicographical, stylistic, or thematic

⁹⁸ Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2221.

⁹⁹ Neiryck, "John 21," 336.

features of the chapter. As Brown demonstrated and Vorster reiterated, these points of exegesis are inconclusive either way. In either trend of analysis, the necessary conclusions flowing from each side of the argument regarding the original function of the text, are the actual source of tension. If John 21 is an addition, then it is a redactional index to the gospel whether it is a clumsy addition or thoughtful later interpolation of traditions the author thought important to the Johannine community. If it is original to the composition of John's gospel, then our ability to use it as the "key or cornerstone" of a larger compositional history of 1-20 is limited to the final few verses of the gospel.

The disservice, however, done by Neiryck's summation of the state of the question is to deflect attention from the real locus of the current impasse. On the surface, the history of interpretation of John 21 is polarized by final conclusions regarding its original function as an addition, epilogue, or conclusion. And on the surface, a few more contemporary readings seem to be carving out a mediating position in the literature. Yet the critical anxiety constituting this history of scholarship is not based in the various pros and cons of these oppositional readings, rather it lies in the raw material by which these representative conclusions have been made. The source, and tradition-critical arguments on which redactional readings rely remain inconclusive. Likewise, stylistic and thematic arguments appealed to by advocates of the unity of the chapter still feel like conjecture in light of the problems posed by the compositional history of the gospel as a whole. Neiryck has only described a superficial rapprochement that does not quite penetrate the ambiguity of the raw data any side of the argument must contend with. This abiding ambiguity, unresolved by centuries of debate on John 21, is in large measure responsible for the rise of literary-critical scholarship on John, as addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Literary Criticism and John 21

In the introduction to *The Gospel of John as Literature*, Mark W.G. Stibbe draws a firm line between historical criticism on John and the literary critical studies appearing sporadically in the early 20th century, and then with increasing frequency after the publication of R. Alan Culpepper's *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*.¹⁰⁰ While he charges this still emerging field of scholarship with what Gadamer referred to as a "loss of historical consciousness" in their wholesale abandonment of historical critical scholarship on John, he is insistent on demonstrating their success in salvaging the Gospel of John from what Gadamer also called the "loss of aesthetic consciousness."¹⁰¹ Two features generally characterize literary studies on John, a programmatic rejection of historical critical concerns and methodologies, and a startling lack of reference to the past centuries of Johannine scholarship. At the risk of overstating this distinction from the prior survey of historical-critical work on John 21, the following survey intends to evidence this transfer in method as a helpful corrective to the traditional impasse. Though Stibbe eventually proposes "some kind of betrothal" between historical criticism and literary-critical concerns in the study of John, the collection of essays presided over by his introduction is now a standard reference for literary criticism on John and the potential its "new" readings hold for Johannine scholarship.

Perhaps in response to Stibbe's apt criticism of the shallow roots of literary-criticism in the broad past of Johannine scholarship, F. Segovia has charted the

¹⁰⁰ Mark W.G. Stibbe, ed *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993) Introduction, 1-13. Comparable critical reflection abounds in the work of Culpepper, Segovia, and others in *Semeia* (53) (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991). In the introduction to *The Gospel of John as Literature*, Stibbe includes Hans Windisch as an early pioneer along these lines, notably in H. Windisch, "Der Johanneische Erzählungsstil," in *Eucharisterion: Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Festschrift für H. Gunkel* vol. II (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1923), 174-213.

¹⁰¹ Mark W.G. Stibbe, *John As Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1.

history of Johannine scholarship from historical, to literary, to cultural studies, analysing foundational approaches to the tradition history of John in each of these methodological settings.¹⁰² This survey attempts to relocate the study of the Johannine tradition somewhere between redactional-critical studies of John and the number of these critical practices loosely collected under the umbrella of literary-criticism.

In Segovia's synthesis, "critical attention would encompass not only a reading of the Gospel as such – the production of a 'text' – but also a reading of other readings of the Gospel – other such 'texts.'"¹⁰³ These secondary 'texts' include the socio-historical location of the author and the socio-theological context intended or implied readers. This literary turn in Segovia's scholarship results in a radical departure from previous reconstructions of the Johannine tradition, as it trades the functional priority of "perceived aporias" in the text of John for a chance to read the complete text of John as it is.¹⁰⁴ And even though he reluctantly identifies John 15, 16, and 21 as evidence of a final redaction of the Gospel, he makes the critical step of identifying this redaction "in terms of perceived changes in the rhetorical situation of the implied readers by the implied author of the Gospel."¹⁰⁵ Thus limiting the tradition history of John to the simplest possible compositional strata, he argues for a "maximalist view" of the Johannine tradition transmitted in the Gospel of John by means of finely tuned theory of intertextuality.¹⁰⁶

In Segovia's essay one can find all of the key features of literary-critical scholarship on the Gospel of John. It is birthed in a response to the fragmentary results of redaction criticism and its inability to produce more global, socio-rhetorically literate readings of the Gospel of John. It is focused on identifying the social and literary networks at work in the production of the Gospel and their signifying presence in its final form. And making use of the critical vocabulary standard in literary criticism proper, such studies are often complicated by finely nuanced theoretical constructions of an "implied author," "intended reader," and

¹⁰² F. Segovia, "Tradition History in the Fourth Gospel," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: W/JK, 1996), 179-192.

¹⁰³ Segovia, "Tradition History in the Fourth Gospel," 184.

¹⁰⁴ Segovia, "Tradition History in the Fourth Gospel," 186.

¹⁰⁵ Segovia, "Tradition History in the Fourth Gospel," 186.

¹⁰⁶ Segovia, "Tradition History in the Fourth Gospel," 187.

sophisticated “intertextuality.” Thus, literary criticism on the Gospel of John does not simply re-engage the traditional historical issues raised by the text, but actively resigns them to an alternate history of interpretation to engage with the text by means of methodologies designed isolate and respond to an entirely different range of Johannine features. Scholars like Segovia do provide new answers to old questions, but chart progress toward an entirely different set of questions.

This radical transition in the posture of scholarship towards the Gospel of John is most notable in critical attitudes towards John 21. Where historical criticism continually wrestles with the problematic redactional gulf between John 20 and 21, literary criticism responds by privileging the final chapter as our key point of contact with both the author and the readers of the Gospel, whether it is an original composition or not. Instead of brushing it aside as the clumsy composition of a later editor, literary criticism highlights evidences of its author’s competency, allowing the chapter to read with and against other relevant areas of the Gospel. And where historical criticism has reached a series of stalemates on questions concerning the Beloved Disciple, and the authorship and provenance of the chapter, literary criticism has reached relative consensus on a number of key socio-literary questions.

The most fundamental element of this consensus is that John 21 is part of a final text, regardless of its possible compositional dissociation from 1-20, thus enabling readings that relate its thematic and literary features to chapters 1-20 in potentially more coherent socio-historical contexts.¹⁰⁷ In this way, such synchronic readings have exposed connections between 1-20 and 21 not previously detected by historical criticism, whether in a redactional or originalist mode. This is not to say that literary criticism has succeeded where historical criticism has failed, but that it offers new lines of inquiry, many of which result of reading John 21 in ways only made possible by means of alternative critical vocabularies.

As with the survey of historical-critical readings, literary criticism on John rests on a rather broad spectrum. At one end of the spectrum is commentary on the text made through the application of various movements in general literary criticism,

¹⁰⁷ Such as: Gail R. O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), and Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* SBLMS 45. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 13.

such as the work of Seymour Chatman, Wayne Booth, or Frank Kermode. Such studies attempt to negotiate the unique issues posed by John 21 with the vocabulary of these emerging schools of thought. At the other end of the spectrum are studies verging on historical-critical readings attempting to identify and read certain literary features of John 21 in light of analogous contemporary literary patterns. What distances literary criticism in John from previous historical-critical studies is not merely the different sets of vocabulary posed by individual literary analyses, but the performative value of articulating the difference between literary questions and compositional questions. Literary-criticism has provided a way to read John 21 as an isolated unit, an integrated unit, and a literary composition among many others in the Greco-Roman world.

3.1 R.A. Culpepper

Just as Bultmann cast a shadow on the entire spectrum of historical-critical readings of John 21, so does Culpepper on contemporary literary-criticism on the Gospel. Though his work has not passed without criticism, Culpepper was the first to bring together the advances in literary criticism of the 1950's and 1960's and apply them in detail to features of John proving problematic to scholarship of the past.¹⁰⁸ In fact, Culpepper anticipates the objection that "literary criticism ignores the gains of historical criticism and the nature of the gospels as historical accounts.", and responds with what to this day remains an formative series of programmatic methodological reflections.¹⁰⁹ *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* does not assume there is no historical background to the Gospel of John, but simply recognizes that "using historical data as aids to interpretation is quite different from using the gospel as a story for historical reconstruction."¹¹⁰ This movement beyond the socio-historical,

¹⁰⁸ One of the more pointed criticisms is that found in Stibbe, *John As Storyteller*, 11): "Gospel narratives share in the subtleties of ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman narratives, not in the more self-conscious subtleties of modern novels."

¹⁰⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 11. Gaventa notes that although he brackets out historical questions, they slip back in and "create interesting conflict. After all, if chapter 21 was added following the completion of the Gospel itself, how can it also be the Gospel's 'necessary ending'?" (B. Gaventa, "The Archive of Excess: John 21 and the Problem of Narrative Closure," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 241) Further, "Unlike Culpepper, Segovia manages to disentangle himself from questions of the history and origins of chapter 21, but the notion of a 'linear and progressive development' from John 20 to John 21

lexical, and composition-critical data at the centre of historical Johannine discussion allows Culpepper to explore this same territory with an eye strictly on the narrative mechanics of the text. This reading does not operate in a Johannine literary vacuum however, as after this alternative critical methodology has exhausted the text a “rapprochement” will have to be made with the concerns of historical criticism.¹¹¹

While Culpepper led the narrative-critical charge in *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, his *Johannine School* famously argues for the formation of the Johannine community’s understanding of the Paraclete in light of the dominant presence of the Beloved Disciple.¹¹² He is well versed in what he points out is traditionally the compositional-historical importance of verses involving this figure in the Gospel such as 19:35 and 21:14-25. Rather than treating these verses as a constellation of mere redactional data, which they certainly are in Culpepper’s estimation, they become meaningful for the reader and historian on the left side of Seymour Chatman’s influential diagram of the author-reader relationship.¹¹³

By removing the identity of the Beloved Disciple, and the author of John’s Gospel in general, from the its worn set of associations with historical criticism, and placing it on the axis of Chatman’s narrative theory, Culpepper places John 21 on an entirely different footing.¹¹⁴ Rather than trying to unravel the historical identity of this figure, Culpepper simply attempted to negotiate between the different authorial categories evoked by the text. Are we dealing in John 21 with references to a “real author,” and “implied author” evoked by the narrative, or a “narrator” who is a rhetorical device that “tells the story and speaks to the reader.”¹¹⁵ It is most probably the latter who is, historically, the textual source of the asides in the Gospel of John, and its high-frequency of literary self-consciousness.

reduces chapter 21 to a commissioning account...and glosses over the repetition between these chapters.” (Gaventa, “The Archive of Excess,” 242).

¹¹¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 11.

¹¹² Culpepper, *Johannine School*, 266-270; cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 43.

¹¹³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 43.

¹¹⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 44.

¹¹⁵ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 16-17. Even more directly put: “In short, the narrator tells us what to think.” (17)

This positioning of the narrator also allows Culpepper to untangle some of the Gordian knots at the end of John 21. From this perspective, the chapter reconfigures our understanding of the relationship between story and history in the gospels, since “By employing the device of a narrator who speaks retrospectively, the author shows that he is not attempting to record ‘history’ without interpreting it, for to do so would mean that the reader might miss its significance.”¹¹⁶ This move also submerges the discussion of the composition and order of John’s gospel in a broader discussion of how the narrator is telling a story to an audience directly aware of his influences, such as apostolic memory, other scripture, the Spirit, and the troubled history of the Johannine community.¹¹⁷ It enables us to nuance distinctions between the implied and intended readers of John’s gospel, which may help resolve the difficult transition between the conclusions of John 20 and 21.¹¹⁸ It also reframes the debate about the historicity of John’s gospel as a literary question, subject to historical inquiry in literatures contemporary to the final text.

Ultimately, “Reliability is a matter of literary analysis, historical accuracy is the territory of the historian, and ‘truth’ is a matter for believers and historians. While readers may be oblivious to the first and disinterested in the second, they cannot escape the narrator’s challenge with reference to the third: John 20:31.”¹¹⁹ In 19:35, the narrator is speaking retrospectively as a way of affirming the witness of the Beloved Disciple, who by chapter 21 we discover is the implied author of the Gospel.¹²⁰ In one of few historical-critical comments, hinting towards this rapprochement noted earlier, Culpepper points out that this key literary move in the

¹¹⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 28.

¹¹⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 30.

¹¹⁸ cf. Rene Kieffer, “The Implied Reader in John’s Gospel,” in *New Readings In John*, ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 54: “we see how the readers are invited to accept the implied author’s ideology which is constituted above all by a high Christology.” However, this move has not gone without criticism, as noted by Geert Hallbäck, “The Gospel of John as Literature: Literary Readings of the Fourth Gospel” in *New Readings in John*, ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999): “That the hermeneutical leap from implied to intended reader marks a methodological downfall is one of the crucial items in Jeffrey Staley’s criticism of Culpepper.” (37).

¹¹⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 33.

¹²⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 44. For Culpepper, virtually every part of John 21:24 is open to multiple interpretations except ‘this disciple’ who must be the Beloved Disciple (cf. Stephen S. Smalley, *John, Evangelist and Interpreter*. [Exeter: Paternoster, 1978] 80-81).

Gospel of John, “The separation of the narrator from the implied author, which is without parallel in ancient literature, probably came about, therefore, as a result of the idealizing of the Beloved Disciple and the comment of an editor rather than as a sophisticated ploy by an individual author.”¹²¹

The end result of the argument of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* is the description of a gospel intent on convincing readers that its presentation of Jesus should be accepted, as the reader is led to make a series of mental moves toward belief, directed by the subtle and trustworthy revelatory mechanics of the text.¹²² It is ultimately a work of persuasion, in which the reader finds themselves participating with each character’s journey toward belief. Generally speaking, as this is a fairly universal assumption of literary criticism on John, a reader establishes the meaning of a text by establishing a satisfactory relationship between a “fictional world” that is the product of an author and narrator, and the “real world” to which it refers. John 21 is a key in this process for the reader of the John’s Gospel.¹²³ It effectively bridges the gap between the story and its reader, who by the end of John’s gospel has hopefully become a part of the story itself. The “fictional world” creatively evoked by this organization of the Jesus traditions, and its internal commentary proceeding as the voiceover in a documentary, merges with the life situation of the early Christian reader as one commissioned in John 21 with extending the life of Jesus into the world.

3.2 P. Spencer

Spencer’s analysis of the “narrative echoes in John 21” seeks to bring about a convergence between readings of John 21 emphasizing its dissimilarity with 1-20 and readings emphasizing its original coherence.¹²⁴ In one of relatively few journal

¹²¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 48.

¹²² Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 98.

¹²³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 82, cf. Culpepper, *The Gospel and the Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 245-246: “It is possible, even probable, that the account of an appearance in Galilee, while the disciples were fishing, originally circulated independent of other appearances as the first appearance... Similarities are sufficient to point to a common tradition lying behind both Luke 5 and John 21... Probably by the time John 21 was written Peter had already died a martyr’s death during the persecution under Nero (in the 60’s).”

¹²⁴ Patrick Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection.” *JSNT* 75 (1999): 50. Readings that emphasize its dissimilarity

essays dedicated to John 21 apart from issues involving the Beloved Disciple, the 153 fish, or various particularities that have garnered commentary, Spencer set out to fill a lacuna in literary-critical studies on John by clarifying the precise nature of this chapter to the rest of the Gospel.¹²⁵ Taking his cue from Culpepper, he wishes “to bring about a rapprochement between these two views by reading the Gospel and, more specifically, ch. 21 from what Wayne Booth describes as a ‘conduction’ or ‘critical re-reading’, whereby the reader probes the text for deeper meaning, searching for a better understanding of the principles or structures that determine an author’s act of composition and how these affect readers.”¹²⁶ By applying Booth’s literary technique, Spencer supplants historical-critical scrutiny of the composition history of John 21 with his description of the difference between “implied readers” and “authorial audiences.” The former is a “text-based function,” embedded in discernible rhetorical moves made by the text, the latter is an “extra-textual entity,” describable as the most probable intended readers of the text.¹²⁷ John 21 affords us unique access to the latter, as its composition is clearly related to an original audience of the Gospel.

Spencer disagrees with Vorster and Minear that we can argue for the literary integrity of chapter 21 by posing 20:30-31 as the conclusion to chapter 20. Instead, Spencer builds a case that while the compositional relationship between 1-20 is unclear, its literary integrity with John’s Gospel is remains clear and important. In a move characteristic of literary studies on John 21, Spencer asserts, “As a narrative revision, the addition of ch. 21 to chs. 1-20 creates a rhetorical effect distinct from the one evinced by the earlier version.”¹²⁸ Not only does its presence at the end of John effectively alter the reader’s perception of the preceding narrative, but it is best approached as inextricably bound to that narrative. Regardless of its compositional

would include Gail R. O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim*, and Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel*.

¹²⁵ Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” 49-68.

¹²⁶ Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” 50.

¹²⁷ Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” 52.

¹²⁸ Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” 54.

relationship, it is literarily inseparable in that it took shape as consciously reading with and against 1-20.¹²⁹

The key literary phenomenon Spencer identifies is the complex echo of 1-20 in 21, which he attributes to the “intertextual interpretation of the implied author.”¹³⁰ These echoes are picked up by the implied reader, who is assumed to be aware of the intratextual interplay between 1-20 and 21, and encouraged to now read the Gospel of John through retrospection. The reader is constantly travelling forwards and backwards in John, a movement brought to a gratifying and constructive close in John 21. We are led by the implied author to link echoes of 21 with their derivations found scattered throughout in chs. 1-20. Images of the feeding of the five thousand in 6:1-71, Jesus’ washing of his disciple’s feet, Peter’s three denials, and the parable of the Good Shepherd are all evoked and brought to bear on the new narrative context of the post-resurrection. This reading of John 21 is by no means new either to Spencer or literary criticism, as historical criticism has also noted many of these thematic links and redactional cues. Spencer, however, claims that his approach is innovative in that while earlier readings have rightly noted some of the intratextual relationships between 1-20 and 21, his reading focuses on the shift made in John 21 between its intertextual and intratextual context. Situated with the reader within this shift, we can begin to trace ways in which John 21 reads with and against the rest of the Gospel, while experiencing the rhetorical effects of these relationships.

This leads Spencer to draw a few conclusions beyond the specific literary focus of his argument. Having traced a clear set of connections between John 21 and the rest of the gospel, it is possible to ascribe to it an articulate literary genius far removed from the pejorative descriptions of historical criticism. It is clearly consistent and coherent with the Gospel, rather than a clumsy afterthought.

¹²⁹ Spencer, Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” 55.

¹³⁰ Spencer, Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” 57. cf. C.H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 248-264. Talbert also treats 20 and 21 together by positing parallels between the two chapters as well as a series of literary patterns within individual units. Per Talbert (242): “An inclusion regarding Peter and the Beloved Disciple marks off the unit (20:2-10 and 21:20-23) which consists of two parts (20:1-31 and 21:1-25), each of which contains two cycles of resurrection narratives...”

Additional to this, we may further articulate how the rhetorical effects of the chapter relate to the historical position of its composition in the history of the Johannine community. Spencer speaks of John 21 in terms of the “actualization by the authorial audience.”¹³¹ Since the chapter was written later than the gospel, probably at the “end of the first century CE” where “The actualization of the symmetry and dissonance created by the interplay between the implied author’s intertextual interpretation and the implied reader’s intratextual connection by the authorial audience affects their reading location.” The chapter links the gospel to the Eucharist, the restoration of estranged church members, and deals with the questions about Peter and the Beloved Disciple as important authority figures in their respective communities. Spencer’s argument is a key example of how literary criticism can push the study of John 21 beyond the limitations of historical exegesis, and frame our reading of the chapter with thicker descriptions of its provenance and effect.

3.3 B. Roberts Gaventa

Gaventa’s essay on John 21 pivots on a play of words, in that not only is John 21 apparently “an excess ending,” but it is also “an ending that is concerned with excess.”¹³² This remarkable contribution to literary criticism on John, and gospel studies in general, posits that John 21 does not just close the gospel, it quite intentionally challenges conventional literary notions of “closure” in general. The unique features of John 21 are bound up in the questionable possibility of even writing a gospel conclusion. Is there ever an actual end to the story brought to life by the Jesus traditions? Critiquing Culpepper’s problematic reticence to disentangle the literary and historical issues of the chapter, and Talbert’s reductionistic attempt to link John 21 to John 20 based on thematic elements, Gaventa simply proposes that, “...whatever the history of the material in chapter 21, it now constitutes the end of the Gospel and, as such, it merits attention.”¹³³

¹³¹ Spencer, *Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection*, 64.

¹³² Gaventa, “An Archive of Excess,” 242.

¹³³ Gaventa, “An Archive of Excess,” 242.

A simple answer to the contested issues posed by chapter 20 and 21 as different conclusions is that they are “dual endings,” and many of the classic interpretive difficulties raised by the chapter are really just a result of this odd schematic of closure.¹³⁴ The most constructive way to relate the two endings is as parallel conclusions. If it were not for the reference in 21:14 to the “third resurrection appearance, chapter 21 would follow naturally on from 19. The fishing scene makes sense if they haven’t yet seen the risen Christ, the apostles don’t recognize Jesus, and the drama becomes more significant if read in parallel to chapter 20.”¹³⁵ John 20:30-31 then is only a circular conclusion, designed to allow for the parallel conclusion of 21 to be read in tandem as a partner in the poetic problem of bringing an end to the drama of resurrection.

Gaventa’s article offers an extremely literary turn in the study of John 21. Applying the scholarship of D. A. Miller on literary endings to the issues raised by the chapter, Gaventa proceeds under the critical assumption that narrative is built around the literary emplotment of a state of affairs that “disrupts things as they are.”¹³⁶ A story begins when it fictionally envisions a state of affairs different from our own, an alternative and coherent narrative world. A story ends when this fictional state of affairs has, through narrative art, been brought to a close. One can imagine the opening of a book or text as the enactment of a new narrative space, which exists as long as the narrative is sustained by elements of character and plot. Closure happens when this narrative moves through its own suspense to a psychologically compelling resolution of these tensions. The reader closes the book, as the narrative and its disruptions are left ordered and contained.

If literary closure is the process of re-establishing the order broken within narrative and returning the reader to an orderly state of affairs, then literary closure becomes problematic for the gospels. The post-resurrection context of Jesus in

¹³⁴ Gaventa, “An Archive of Excess,” 242. Further, “Rather than reading John 20 as the ending of the Gospel and John 21 as an epilogue or appendix, these chapters might better be understood as two separate endings, relatively independent of one another, each of which brings the Gospel to a kind of closure.” (245) Gaventa borrows the phrase “archive of excess” from David McCracken, *The Scandal of the Gospels: Jesus, Story, and Offense* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 151.

¹³⁵ Gaventa, “An Archive of Excess,” 245. However, “Demonstrating that chapter 21 can also be construed as an ending to the Gospel independent of chapter 20 is more complicated.” (245)

¹³⁶ Gaventa, “An Archive of Excess,” 248.

John is anything but a closure, as instead of returning the reader to an orderly state of affairs mapped out in the Prologue and traced through vignettes of the divine Logos healing, restoring, and recreating, it permanently disrupts one's sense of time, history, and belief. By means of the dual conclusions of John, Jesus "shatters the quiescence that precedes him."¹³⁷

In John 20, Jesus leaves behind a stable group of followers affirmed in their faith by the physical manifestation of Christ and his commission. But then chapter 21 effectively erases this conventional literary closure by reopening these traditions, depicting the disciples in an abiding state of questioning, receiving, and following.¹³⁸ The Jesus they recognized in John 20 is obscure, disclosed no longer through tradition alone but through the interactive and revelatory gestures of resurrection. John 21 resists the complacency of closure. It extends the story of Jesus, expands the resurrection narrative into traditions of Jesus' repeated appearances, now overlapping in the chapter with practices of Eucharist and the performance of apostolic authority. If the reader at the end of John is seeking closure, as readers are naturally programmed to expect, they find only the risen Christ beckoning the believer in John 20 into the ongoing life of the church. If Gaventa is correct about the way John 21 problematizes the very concept of literary closure, the chapter becomes a locus for significant historical conversation about the nature of post-resurrection traditions and the theological position of John among the gospel accounts.

3.4 W. Braun

Braun's oft-cited essay, "'Resisting John: Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel,'" is a robust attempt to describe the function of John 21 in literary-critical terms by negotiating assumptions regarding who these readers are and what their expectations may have been.¹³⁹ Braun accepts

¹³⁷ Gaventa, "An Archive of Excess," 248.

¹³⁸ Gaventa, "An Archive of Excess," 249. As Gaventa poetically asserts: "The ending of John 21, however, both recalls a series of scenes throughout the Gospel and signals that this narrative cannot close on a world whose equilibrium is restored or only modestly altered. Following this narrative, nothing can remain unchanged." (249)

¹³⁹ Willi Braun, "Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel," *Studies in Religion* 19 (1990) 59-71. cf Werner Kelber "Metaphysics and

Culpepper's redactional presupposition that John 21 both disrupts and completes the Gospel of John. But in a radical distinction from Culpepper, Braun explores the possibility that John 21 reopens an originally closed gospel, allowing readers to question the legitimacy of many of its ethical claims: "John 21, the continuation of a previously closed work, thus constitutes the gospel's permission for the reader to question the sufficiency of its claims concerning 'the truth' and to expose the dark underside of its justly celebrated and eloquent appeal to love."¹⁴⁰ Braun provides a sustained critique specifically of Culpepper's programmatic point that in the process of reading John, readers adopt the perspective of the author on the story he is narrating.¹⁴¹

For Culpepper, the narrator of John, who becomes prominent in 21, does a good job, and early readers would have readily assented to his creativity. For Braun, this simply "reflects the habitual assumption among biblical scholars that readers of biblical texts were and are good readers who agree with and submit to the author's perceptions and claims."¹⁴² Instead, Braun proposes a counter-model that presumes the existence of "ungrateful, even resistant readers."¹⁴³ Drawing on Frank Kermode's work on literary endings, Braun suggests that John 21 affects an "undoing" or a "scattering" of the original ending. As a supplement it violates the authority structure carefully established by 20:30-31, undoing this formalization of the tradition such that it becomes open and adaptable to new social settings.¹⁴⁴ John

Marginality in John," in *What is John – Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 129-154.

¹⁴⁰ Braun, "Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel," 60.

¹⁴¹ In response to Culpepper's statement that: "Readers dance with the author whether they want to or not, and in the process they adopt his perspective on the story" (Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Gospel*, 233), Braun replies "This conclusion, however is far from irresistible if, as I will argue, one holds to a different phenomenology of reading and if one takes a less benign view of John's narrative inconsistencies." (Braun, "Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel," 61)

¹⁴² Braun, "Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel," 62.

¹⁴³ Braun, "Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel," 62.

¹⁴⁴ Braun does note that Käsemann had made a similar point: "The redactor who in 21:25 fell back upon and interpreted 20.30 has understood quite correctly. John's Gospel is and remains an abbreviation, and the same applies to his doctrine. His doctrine provokes interpretation and kerygmatic unfolding instead of freezing and absolutizing it." (E.

21 provokes interpretation and an openness to the unfolding of the kerygma instead of freezing and absolutizing it.

This “resistant” reading of John 21 ascribes to it a literary function seemingly without precedence in canonical gospel literature, as it disrupts the authority structure inherent to the organization of its traditions. As a second conclusion, the chapter belongs to intimately to the Gospel, but only on the terms of this new literary strategy it ascribes to the text as a whole. In this way, chapter 21 is ultimately ambivalent to the Gospel of John.

Per Braun, “To realize this incentive to resist John we need a method of narrative analysis that honours Culpepper’s call to read the text as we now have it but that does not dismiss the significance of the narrative disruptions in the text.”¹⁴⁵ To this end, Braun turns to Bloom’s influential concept of the “anxiety of influence.” Just as Q and Mark are used by Matthew and Luke, John could be marked by the anxiety of influence imposed upon it by previous traditional sources.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, as an addition to a pre-existing gospel narrative, John 21 itself is marked by the influence of the Gospel of John. The description of a staged, telescopic influence of John and other Jesus traditions on John 21 allows Braun to suggest an innovative solution to the problem of double conclusions of 20:30-31 and 21:24-25. A key flaw in Culpepper’s work is that its focus on the final form of the text, which includes John 21, divests 20:30-31 of its obvious conclusive status.¹⁴⁷

Following Mahoney, Braun explains that John 21 is an unnecessary ending. John 20 provides formal closure, teleological closure, Christological climax through the resurrection, and it bridges Culpepper’s important author and reader gap by

Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* [London: SCM Press, 1968], 54).

¹⁴⁵ Braun, “Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel,” 64

¹⁴⁶ John 21 then is a response to the “strong text” of John as John is a response to the “strong texts” of the Synoptics. cf. D. Foster, “John come Lately: The Belated Evangelist,” in *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition*, ed. Frank McConnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 113-131.

¹⁴⁷ Even though it is apparent there are two endings, Culpepper’s model of analysis only permits one. (cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Gospel*, 96). Here Braun explores the possibility of there being an “aporia of ending” in John, in that one solution here may be that instead of their being two endings present, John 20 and Joh 21 effectively cancel each other out and leave us with no sense of closure at all. This idea derives in Braun from J. Hillis Miller, “The Problematic of Ending in Narrative,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33 (1978):3-7).

finishing in the first person.¹⁴⁸ In contrast, chapter 21 charts an entirely new course through the gospel. It simply “did not arise from the same narrative situation that sponsored the rest of the gospel which neither anticipates nor needs and addendum.”¹⁴⁹ Identifying the intention of John 21 would require us to read its compositional strategy in light of its point of continuity with the socio-historical development of the Johannine community. For while John 21 is not at odds with 1-20, as it mimics the initial conclusion by retracing its sense of authority and purpose, it does ensure a new reading of the gospel that would not be possible without its existence.

3.5 In Summary: Story and Craft in John 21

Noticeably absent from this section on literary criticism is the work by Stibbe on the Gospel of John. In *John as Storyteller*, Stibbe critiques what he sees as the anachronistic application of modern literary studies on literature produced by ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman culture.¹⁵⁰ This remains a crucial critique. However, Stibbe is not interested in abandoning literary or narrative criticism, but simply refining it by putting it in contact with the historical questions of tradition and community that are so foundational to Johannine studies more broadly. In the place of literary criticism, he suggests a “practical criticism” that follows the lead of social-science.¹⁵¹ As Stibbe describes his own method, “Practical criticism begins with a reading of the narrative as it is. It begins with an imaginative openness to the text’s narrative world. It then proceeds to detailed analysis of the narrative dynamics which elicit the responses we experience.”¹⁵² Focused on the rhetorical movements made within John’s gospel, Stibbe’s work sharpens critical focus on the literary mechanics of the text itself, unmediated by networks of methodology already laden with their own sets of rhetorical and even ideological issues.

¹⁴⁸ Mahoney *Two Disciples at the Tomb*, 15-16.

¹⁴⁹ Braun, “Resisting John, Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel,” 69

¹⁵⁰ Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 11.

¹⁵¹ cf. Stibbe, *John As Storyteller*, 61 “The future of redaction criticism of John’s gospel depends on its moving away from the hypothetical reconstructions of Martyn and Brown and towards the more sociological approaches of Wayne Meeks and Bruce Malina.”

¹⁵² Stibbe, *John As Storyteller*, 23.

This nuanced rejection of literary criticism as applied to the Gospel of John in the manner of the above examples is a fitting way to end this survey. On the one hand, we can see in Stibbe a model of the contemporary desire of biblical studies to express rhetorical features of gospel texts in historical-critical terms. On the other hand, we can see the difficulty contemporary biblical studies, particularly in gospel studies, has in effectively negotiate literary criticism as either a supplement to or corrective of historical-critical work on John. Stibbe's desire to employ a "practical criticism," which employs a great deal of literary-critical terminology for an exegetical-rhetorical approach to gospels criticism, is symptomatic of the difficulty both historical-criticism and literary-criticism are both having in maneuvering discussion on John forward, particularly as applied to John 21.

Yet, this is an idea that the four test cases occupying the latter half of this thesis will have to explore in more detail. Any critical methodology that will be practical for John 21 will need to adequately address its unique and overt literary features, while interacting cogently with its complex presence in historical and literary criticism. Stibbe is correct to read John's gospel with what Ricoeur would refer to as a "second naivete." But any findings of literary criticism must be made available to, and conversant with, historical-critical work on the chapter, or they may simply produce the same impasse we find in the history of historical-critical scholarship on John. It is telling that the rapprochement envisioned in Culpepper's pioneering literary work on John did not come to fruition in the context of his scholarship at this early stage in literary and rhetorical work on John. Subsequent advances, such as those made by Gaventa, Braun, and others continue to orbit the classic historical questions with little refined and constructive contact. As the four case studies in this thesis aim to demonstrate, John 21 is an ideal place to begin working out what such a rapprochement may look like, and even demonstrate that such a convergence of historical and literary interests are essential to understanding its form and provenance as the end of John's gospel.

Chapter 4

Testing the Rapprochement in John 21

Why revisit John 21? As the end of John's gospel in a historical and literary sense, our understanding of the Gospel of John as a whole is directly linked to our reading of John 21. Yet, the complex history of scholarship on the chapter poses no definitive consensus in response to the puzzling aspects of its composition. This disparity continues to reside in Johannine studies, its affect discernible in contention around key questions of authorship, composition history, setting, and the nature of its initial reception. Several clear points of contention have dominated discussion of the chapter. In historical-critical terms, it is alternately assumed as either redactional index to the gospel or the original conclusion of the text. Neiryneck's premonition that these two dominant and programmatic claims had begun to functionally converge in a mediating position founders in a continued posture in commentary on the chapter as a space to simplify definitive claims about the origins of the gospel. This over-reliance on traditional historical claims about John 21 bears itself out in the repetition of classic arguments characterizing either side of the historical-critical impasse described in detail in the above survey of the history of scholarship. Likewise, Culpepper's similar sense for rapprochement in Johannine studies through John 21 remains subject to the elusive findings of literary-critical methods.

These shortcomings in method exist in parallel, mirror images of each other, both seeking to refine our sense of John's conclusion while remaining subject to a mirage of consensus. The following will move toward addressing these dual concerns, defining a methodological approach informing an initial close reading of John 21 in Chapter 5, and the four case studies to following in Chapters 6-9.

If the problem of typical historical criticism of John 21 is that it fosters a focus on the compositional-historical concerns raised by its ambiguous literary status, then a problem typical of literary criticism of John 21 is that it brackets these historical and redactional issues out of their lines of inquiry as if they are subsidiary matters.

In literary criticism, the narrative mechanics and literary features of John 21 gain an articulate voice, or even a chorus of voices, but as Culpepper suggested, the task of literary criticism cannot be considered effective until a rapprochement with the classic redactional concerns can be met. The above key moments in the history of scholarship on John 21 indicate that the state of the question is as important as it is provisional, a growing critical anxiety in historical criticism over its unanswerable questions only being met with literary criticisms forged in the methodological anxiety of post-modernity. The plain similarity between the results of each brand of criticism is that while coming at the chapter from opposite directions, any rapprochement is made difficult by virtue of the different pathways by which they made it to common territory. A further difficulty to note is that the same anxiety attending historical criticism attends literary criticism on the chapter, in that as readings multiply, so does a sense of the ambiguity of John 21. Perhaps rapprochement or convergence among the consensus findings in either guild is best sought in an alternative body of research on John 21.

4.1 Convergence of the Literary/Historical in Recent Scholarship

A body of research distinct from scholarship specifically engaging in either historical-critical or literary-critical discussion of John 21, and therefore not shaped by the methodological aims of these trajectories in scholarship, can be found in a few recent monographs attempting to read features of John in light of its contemporary literary conventions. It would be too simplistic to say that this recent set of monographs and articles serve as an alternative to the related trends in scholarship outlined above, but rather that they work more concretely with data previous scholarship either reserves for footnotes or is not able to engage with as insightfully. Starting with questions regarding particular points of literary artifice, and reading these points of interest in light of contemporary parallels in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature, this trend in Johannine scholarship is able to evade the interpretive excesses or reductions of historical criticism or the disassociation in literary criticism of the text from the history of the Johannine community.

In an initial contribution to this brand of Johannine analysis, Segovia has provided what he terms “a beginning stage in intercultural criticism, namely, a

literary-rhetorical analysis of John 20:30-21:25.”¹ Though this essay is couched in technical literary-critical terminology, it draws on Segovia’s work on the literary-history of biographical conventions in John’s gospel. As an example of ancient biography, John’s gospel, and its last two chapters in particular, follow identifiable conventions in the genre. With respect to John 21, Segovia refers to the “Farewell Type” scene prominent in the Jewish literary tradition and Greco-Roman narrative of the same period. In this analysis, John 21 forms an important part of John’s overall biographical structure, providing further detail about the lasting significance of Jesus and his resurrection for early readers of his biography. John 20:31-21:25 follow John 20:1-15 in a natural biographical progression. The early part of John 20 follow typical patterns of a biographical subject’s final moments, bookending an initial birth and origin record, with the remainder of the gospel making various claims about the importance of the subject in context and as a model for life and vocation.

In Margaret Davies’ *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, a number of links are drawn between the Gospel of John and conventions in classical Greek literature. Rather than reading the narrative of John as an isolated work of Christian imagination, the gospel is read as one narrative at the end of the first century among many narratives, each characterized by discernible patterns of rhetoric and reference. Even though her work draws heavily on technical literary theory, it does so in the service of networking theological and thematic points in John to the historical mechanics of the text. In this way, it is a model of converging literary and historical data in the Johannine context.

As Davies states in her introduction, “How a story is told determines what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded or omitted. Similarly, any historical mistakes affect the persuasive force of the rhetoric.”² The identification of literary strategy in the gospel of John must always be directed towards, and moderated by, the fundamental connection between formal means and historical context observable in the pattern of rhetoric and reference present as the raw data for this identification. This is particularly the case in John 21, as shall be argued later, as it is uniquely bound up in its own intentional literary rhetoric.

¹ Segovia, “The Final Farewell of Jesus: A Reading of John 20:30-21:25,” *Semeia* 53 (1991), 169.

² M. Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, JSNTSup 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 20.

Tovey's *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* is one of the first major studies to distance itself from past approaches and align itself specifically with attempts "to bring together issues of literary and historical criticism," such as had been previously attempted by Davies and Stibbe.³ Tovey's work proceeds in conversation with Ashton's work on John, which Tovey describes as focused only on the "*primary context*" of John, including historical analysis of the authors and readers of the text, to the exclusion of observation of the meaning of certain historical features of the gospel.⁴ For Tovey, gospel writing was a process of an author encoding and a reader decoding the Jesus traditions through narratives written in Koine Greek. Emphasizing this basic point highlights the Gospel of John in particular as not just a gospel text, but a "dynamic literary communication situation" that requires more nuanced critical skill than that supplied by traditional historical criticism.⁵

The study begins by also positioning itself in relation to the more interesting findings of literary-critical studies in the Gospel of John. He agrees with Culpepper that implicit to the narrative is some sort of historical relationship between a real author and the Beloved Disciple.⁶ Staley's suggestion that the "implied reader" of the Gospel of John is the reader who falls for the narrator's persuasive strategies, but is eventually brought back on track by the implied author is important to Tovey's understanding of "narrative act" in the text.⁷ Staley's point here is quite complicated, but he envisions a movement interior to the reader as they are reading the gospel, by which they are initially under the dramatic spell of the gospel and then come to recognize the fuller effect of the text as historical and theological witness. He also adopts Stibbe's identification of "time shapes" in the Gospel that provide theological

³ D. Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, JSNTSup 151 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997),

⁴ Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 18.

⁵ Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 19.

⁶ Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 25. In addition, Tovey's reading of 21:24 proposes a "three person theory" of identity between the Beloved Disciple, implied author, and real author. These may refer to one or two historical figures, though the text leads the reader to assume the presence of a single author.

⁷ J. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 37-41.

direction for its readers, and Davies comparable historical attention to rhetorical patterns evoking the same effect.⁸

However, Tovey goes on to distance himself from a large network of literary-critical work on John making use of Seymour Chatman's communication theory. Instead, Tovey proposes that we replace the inflexibility of Chatman's key diagram with the work of Franz Stanzel, which is able to deal far more naturally with the text than this previous model.⁹

Focused more on the concept of implied authorship, Tovey seeks to identify this text-based entity based on cues offered within the final structure of the Fourth Gospel.¹⁰ This structure, itself the primary narrative art of the gospel, provides the background for John's various literary devices, symbolic emplotments, character arcs, and narrative strategies scattered throughout the text.¹¹ This narrative art then produces the various narrative performances effected by the discourse for the reader. John is always communicating to the reader, messages encoded in form and device, beyond the mere words one would hear in a reading of the text. In terms of John 21, Tovey's restructuring of the narrative-critical issues of the Gospel is provocative. Rendering literary elements of the Gospel as communication strategies enables him to turn to tools like speech-act theory to engage the text, in particular, a speech-act reading of John 21:24-25. As a result, Tovey demonstrates how we experience John 21 not as an appendix or text to be treated independently of the Gospel.¹² When read with the Gospel, it becomes a vital element in the overall

⁸ J. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel*, 27: "In particular, Stibbe shows how the evangelist's historical redescription is governed by 'time shapes' some of which outline the progress of chronological time, and give the narrative its sense of causality and logic... and others which indicate the theological significance of the events."

⁹ Tovey, 30. "I believe... a fundamental statement of the Fourth Gospel's rhetoric (which operates at the level of interaction between implied author and implied reader) Culpepper is correct to state, *pace* Staley, that 'there is no reason to suspect any difference in the ideological, spatial, temporal, or phraseological points of view of the narrator, the implied author and the author.'"

¹⁰ Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 30: "I believe... a fundamental statement of the Fourth Gospel's rhetoric (which operates at the level of interaction between implied author and implied reader) Culpepper is correct to state, *pace* Staley, that 'there is no reason to suspect any difference in the ideological, spatial, temporal, or phraseological points of view of the narrator, the implied author, and the author.'"

¹¹ Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 35.

¹² Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 92.

communication strategy of its author. And in a narrative dealing broadly, in chapters 1-20, with the identity of Jesus, John 21 can then be described a second wave of climax precipitated by Thomas' recognition of Christ in John 20:30-31.¹³

An incidental benefit of Bryant's *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* is the uncovering of a number of interesting parallels between John 21 and its literary environment.¹⁴ There does not seem to be any parallel in contemporary literature to John's two epilogues, but Bryant has found that "the two sets of closing lines taken together with John 21 fulfill the functions of a theatrical epilogue and contain elements by which the audience is invited to express approval of the performance just witnessed and is then returned to its own time and place."¹⁵ Such theatrical epilogues were self-aware, a conscious insertion of the authorial voice, in that they draw attention to the author and artifice of the preceding play, reviewed the thematic accomplishments of the script, and signalled the actual end of the play and point at which the audience was free to respond with applause.¹⁶

Such conclusions found in Euripides and Sophocles invite us to "judge the composition worthy of praise and marshal opinion in favor of its claims."¹⁷ Likewise, the conclusion of John 20 directs the reader's attention to the purpose and process of the writing of John's Gospel, while John 21 then goes a step further by attempting to shape and instruct the audience's reaction to it.¹⁸ The use of οἴμαι here turns this hypothetical literary observation into a Johannine rhetorical device. "By implication, the evangelist's task of sorting through the material and weighing it would have been a Herculean labor deserving of applause."¹⁹ And this second conclusion parallels the

¹³ Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*, 111.

¹⁴ JoAnn A. Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Hendrickson: Peabody, MA, 2004).

¹⁵ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 64.

¹⁶ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 64: "A quick glance at Euripide's prologues and epilogues reveals a consistent pattern in which the dramatist makes direct references to the literary and selective nature of the composition."

¹⁷ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 65.

¹⁸ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 65-66.

¹⁹ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 66.

use of similar endings in Greek theatre to bridge the gap between a play and reality, concluding the former by making it relevant to the latter.²⁰

A related congruity between John's conclusions and Bryant's parallels is the role narrative time plays in John 21. Just as these theatrical epilogues would bridge the performative gap between the stage and the audience, the performance of tradition in John's gospel works to effectively relate these past dramatic events to the present circumstances of its readers. As the prologue initiates the reader into the "discourse time" of the Gospel, the epilogue closes this time by revealing its function to the audience and affirming its performative value.²¹ Furthermore, in a striking recovery of a classic historical-critical point, Bryant observes that if John 21 is mimicking this convention of tragic theatre, it is a clumsy imitation.²² The abrupt shift in the chapter from Jesus' conversation with the characters in the scene to the narrator's commentary on these sayings is not as much due to inexpert redaction as it is simply poor literary skill. Reflecting on this latter point, Bryant suggests that such parallels contradict the past consensus built by Brown and Martyn that the Gospel, and even specifically this chapter, is written to address the needs of a specific community. Rather, in the spirit of related theatrical epilogues, the chapter provides instruction for how the audience itself is to appropriate this story about Jesus, rather than providing collective instruction to a broader community. One could, though, presume the opposite conclusion as well. Many of the theatrical examples drawn on by Bryant in her work have performative value for shaping and directing social networks and communities, rather than the virtuous formation of individuals in the audience.

This brief review of related readings of John 21 in contemporary scholarship is indicative of a third way in the midst of historical and literary interest in John. In each of these examples, stale questions about the placement and composition of John 21 are enlivened through reference to networks of literary and rhetorical practice which can, in different degrees, be ascribed to the author or editors of

²⁰ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 66: "Besides encouraging the audience to affirm that what it has just witnessed has merit, the final words of the tragedy end the eternal present action of the plot by sending the characters on stage off to a life in the mythic or historic past and by returning the past to its own present."

²¹ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 70.

²² Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 69.

John's gospel. The efficacy of these lines of inquiry is evident in the way this scholarship has reshaped a few key questions about John's gospel, through reliance on data relevant to features of John which are open to verification and falsification as continued research in these fields progresses.

4.2 Defining Literary-Historical Criticism in John

A recent methodological apology for such literary-historical readings is exemplified by Craig Keener in the introduction to his voluminous commentary on John, which has often been criticized for the excessive compiling of first and second century Greco-Roman and Jewish sources relating to specific texts in the gospel even if their lack of material connection remains tenuous.²³ Keener counters this objection in the introduction by posing his exhaustiveness as "a necessary foundation for any more thematic, integrative approach."²⁴ He recognizes that "Contemporary literary and historical approaches, with their respective intrinsic and extrinsic concerns, have moved beyond their earlier frequent impasse towards more of a relationship of mutual benefit," and attempts in his work to provide a more stable footing for this continuing rapprochement.²⁵ Though I think Keener is overly positive concerning the status of this integration, especially in the case of John 21, which is arguably precisely where such an integration needs to occur in Johannine studies, his broadly ranging eye for literary parallels in the most probable historical location of the writing of John's gospel informs the boundaries of this study. When it comes to various points of literary-historical detail, Keener differentiates between "some evidence" and "strong evidence."²⁶ In the prior category, some evidence derives from cumulative readings of rabbinic and Greco-Roman sources that may or may not have demonstrable chronological or geographical connection to John's text, yet remain socio-historically valuable in the way they establish precedent for many of the literary strategies of the gospel.

²³ Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003).

²⁴ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, xxv.

²⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, xxvi.

²⁶ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, xxvi.

James Kelhoffer's study of the longer ending of the Gospel of Mark and Theodore Heckel's study of John 21 in his monograph on fourfold gospel collections provide additional methodological context for this study.²⁷ Both of these studies will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 10. But it is important to note from the outset that they provide helpful boundaries for studies of gospel texts attempting to align literary and historical detail. Kelhoffer exemplifies a method by which we can read a gospel epilogue in its particular socio-historical context, as these types of texts in particular provide a unique set of historical data by which early readers, communities, and their patterns of belief or practice can be described. Heckel similarly attempts to align the probable historical location of John 21 with its literary intentions and effects.

Kelhoffer's work is not just ground-breaking as a study of Mark's reception and the provenance of Mark's longer ending. His study is a model of social and historical precision within a set of distinctly literary questions. This work reads the longer ending of Mark as a text produced by a community with a definable set of theological and social particularities. The longer ending of Mark then addresses these concerns by placing them within the authoritative orbit of the gospel narrative itself, substantiating the identity of this community and providing theological boundaries for its unique practices. Heckel's study argues that John 21 is a later addition to the gospel, attempting closure for the entire four-fold gospel canon including Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This bold thesis proceeds by exploring the unique and characteristic self-reflectiveness of the gospel genre, as can be seen concentrated in the longer ending of Mark, Luke's prologue, and John 21. In John 21, this canonical self-reflectiveness is rooted in the redaction of synoptic material in such a way that the chapter becomes a summary Johannine digest of the synoptic narrative, a brief but effective harmonization of the four-fold gospel that literally book-ends its production in the early second century. Both of these studies set an important literary-historical precedent for scrutinizing John 21 as an epilogue more carefully, an artefact of early Christian literary, social, and theological practice exercised at the end of the codification of the canonical gospel traditions.

²⁷ James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), and Theo K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium Markus zum veirgestaltigen Evangelium* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1999).

4.3 In Summary

The following chapters are indebted to this methodological groundwork surveyed in the preceding. Chapter 5 offers a more traditional close reading of John 21 with attention to the literary and historical details that will be explored more fully in Chapters 6-9. These four chapters elaborate in specific ways on what these narrative mechanics and literary strategies communicate about the historical location of John 21 as a first-century biographical epilogue, a late Christian gospel text, and a key moment in the formation of what would later become the four-fold gospel canon. This thesis does not intend to reinvent the methodological wheel spinning in the work of scholars like Tovey, Bryant, and Davies, but rather to build on their work in a more extended conversation specific to John 21. It may permit a historical glimpse of the singular literary features in the chapter as interrelated points of evidence for the creative art of John 21 as the end of John in every historical and literary sense of the term.

Chapter 5

John 21 And Its Contexts

Charles Hill begins his study of the reception of John in the second century with a description of what he terms “Orthodox Johannophobia.”¹ He uses this as a methodological term for a hesitancy in the history of New Testament scholarship to think certain ways about a gospel that was supposedly used primarily by Gnostics rather than more orthodox communities birthed in the Synoptic tradition. In the history of interpretation of John 21 we can see a more focused phobia on the chapter itself. This phobia is not specifically linked to the same assumed historical trajectories critiqued by Hill in his study, but more to the ambiguity of the chapter as a conclusion and its implicit association to an historical community to which the gospel affords us little access. Redactional criticism is proficient at describing the text as a key point in the gospel’s compositional history, but is hesitant to take it seriously as a significant development in Johannine theology. As a later addition, it is sufficiently disconnected from the development of John’s thought to be thematically irrelevant to this more fundamental relationship between the text and its community. Conversely, more traditional approaches to John’s authorship are hesitant to consider the possible effects of a larger community involvement in the development of John 21, as this would call into question its compositional integrity. Either way, a fear of tipping the precarious balance in John 21 between its compositional history and effect as the conclusion of the gospel is a dominant mood in its exegesis.² The fact that, at least to our current knowledge, the gospel never circulated without John 21 only exacerbates the apprehension commentators express towards thicker descriptions of its content.

¹ Charles E. Hill. *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). He surveys Walter Bauer and J.N. Sanders, who is the “chief architect of the current paradigm on orthodox Johannophobia” (15) in arguing that the 2nd century orthodox Christians didn’t use John whereas the Gnostics did.

² This may be best exemplified in the above conversation about Willi Braun’s ascription of an ambivalence of John 21 to its readers. He succinctly captures an historical-critical phobia of the chapter in a literary-critical terms.

The following few sections will attempt to provide the foundation of a remedy for this long-standing methodological phobia by cycling through the key relationships of John 21. First, we have John 21 as a relatively independent set of stories and traditions that can be richly engaged with little reference to the rest of the gospel. A second relationship is that between John 21 and the rest of the gospel, one that encompasses its historical provenance and literary effect as a conclusion, appendix, epilogue, or any number of structural descriptives. And thirdly, inasmuch as John 21 is such a late gospel text, it is relevant to factor in its relationship to parallel themes, traditions, and images in the Synoptic gospels. In this exegetical review, the sets of ambiguities and inaccessible historical references made by the chapter will be particularly emphasized, as the lack of close readings of the chapter with an eye on these literary-historical features is what allows limiting historical preconceptions of its function to persist. It is necessary to develop an effective literary-historical awareness of the setting and intent of these features before we let a specific methodology commit to potentially flawed interpretations of them.

5.1 Exegesis at the End of John

5.1.1 A note on the textual history of John 21

R.H. Lightfoot notes that the chapter is omitted in one Syriac manuscript.³ But as Lightfoot offers no further details, no one has been able to track down what manuscript he is referring to.⁴ We do know, however, that Lightfoot cannot be referring to the Old Syriac witnesses, since one Old Syriac witness to John includes 21, and the other is missing all of the final chapters. Lightfoot then must be referring to a later Peshitta version, in which the tendency is towards corrections of the Old Syriac where it diverges from the Greek text. As this is the case, a Peshitta version of John with 21 is historically implausible. In *The Johannine Question*, Hengel argues on stylistic grounds that v. 24 and 25 are additions to the original gospel. He places two manuscript issues into discussion as well: the omission and addition of

³ R.H. Lightfoot. *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary*. ed. C. F. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 63.

⁴ Leon Morris claims: 'he [Lightfoot] does not say which it is, and other authorities do not appear to mention it' (L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 858 n 1). It is also not mentioned in the Pusey-Gwilliam edition of the Syriac text.

25 in Siniaticus.⁵ Hengel also argues for the disconnection of these last two verses from John 21 on the basis of textual criticism based on a catena discussed by John Chapman.⁶ But this has been critiqued by Birdsall as a misreading of Chapman's argumentation, who is in turn relying on Von Soden's dismissal of the catena as having no merit.⁷ Additionally, Hengel cites a scholion which claims that verse 25 is an early addition that was accidentally accepted into the textual history of the chapter, but this specific scholion is actually an anonymous inclusion with little critical merit.⁸ There is similarly dubious material in Theodore of Mopsuestia.⁹ More recently a Coptic fragment of the end of John has been put forth as a possible version of John simply ending at chapter 20.¹⁰ It is a single leaf containing John

⁵ Pointed out first by Tischendorf as an addition, later corrected by Milne and Skeat in *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* (London: British Museum, 1938). Birdsall, "The Source of Catena Comments on John 21:25." *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994): 271-279, points out that two separate minuscules place 25 on a separate leaf from the earlier verses.

⁶ Hengel's evidences stem from John Chapman, "We know that his testimony is true," *JThS* 31 (1930): 379-387. On 386, Chapman states "catenae contained the observation that the verse was omitted by 'others'." This is so because the copyists of said manuscripts ("others") found the conclusion too over the top. On catenae in general see Devreese, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*. Supplement, Fascicles III-V: 1084-1233 (Paris, 1928).

⁷ Birdsall, "The Source of Catena Comments on John 21:25," 273ff, citing Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte [The Writings of the New Testament restored to their earliest attainable Text-form on the Basis of their textual History]*. The first reference to catenae on John 21:25 is found in Wetstein (*Novum Testamentum Græcum editionis receptæ, cum Lectionibus Variantibus Codicum MSS., Editionum aliarum, Versionum et Patrum, necnon Commentario pleniore ex Scriptoribus veteribus, Hebræis, Græcis, et Latinis, historiam et vim verborum illustrante* Amstelædami, 1751, 1752. 2 vols. Reprinted in Graz, Austria by the *Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt* in 1962).

⁸ He also cites a scholion in Coislin Gr.20 (ms.36). Scholz lists scholion in eleven different manuscripts, the Coislinianus being the first. (Johann Martin Augustin Scholz, *Novum Testamentum Graece. Textum ad fidem Testium Criticorum recensuit, Lectionum Familias subjecit, &c.* Leipsic: 1830, 1836. 2 vols). Tregelles and Tischendorf's 8th version both refer to items already listed by Scholz.

⁹ The one in Vallicelianus gr.E.40 is ascribed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, which claims, "these words are not from the gospel, but by some other lover of knowledge? enetethh." Birdsall traces all the catenae to Theodore of Mopsuestia, which is little more than an early example of "higher criticism" (Birdsall, "The Source of Catena Comments on John 21:25," 277). Joseph Reuss a collection of patristic excerpts that mimic the "books" reference in 21:25 in J. Reuss, *Johannes-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (TU 89, Berlin, 1966), 357ff.

¹⁰ MS Copt.e.150(P), surveyed in Gesa Schenke, 'Das Erscheinen Jesu vor den Jüngern und der ungläubige Thomas: Johannes 20,19-31' in *Coptica - Gnostica - Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk*, ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier (Les presses de l'Université Laval / Peeters, 2006), 893-904. Most date it in the 4th century.

20:19-31 on its verso and a large block of space beneath this text with no indication that there is a continuing chapter. The random beginning of this leaf with 20:19, which could make this fragment of text an isolated pericope from the gospel may indicate that it is not from an entire copy of the gospel but a collection of independent texts. These five preceding possible witnesses to a copy of the gospel of John circulating without chapter 21 are the only ones to be debated within the papyrological record, and none have been insufficiently rebutted as misinterpretations of catenae, conjectural readings of fragments, or in Lightfoot's case, flat out missing. Lightfoot's references remains one the great mysteries in commentaries on John.

5.1.2 A Translation of 21:1-25

Jesus' Appearance to the Disciples

1. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias.¹¹ And he revealed himself in this way: 2. Simon Peter, Thomas (who is called Didymus), Nathanael (who was from Cana in Galilee), the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples of his were together. 3. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." "We will go with you," they replied. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4. When it was already the break of day,¹² Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus 5. So Jesus said to them, "Children, do you not have any fish?" "No," they said to him.¹³ 6. He told them, "Throw your net on the

¹¹ Here, Μετὰ ταῦτα is indefinite, simply indicating that this event transpired some time after the appearance in the previous chapter. This contrasts with the specificity of the appearance in 20:26, which occurs μεθ' ἡμέρας ὀκτώ, and accords with an apparently long enough passage of time that the disciples have returned to fishing. Τιβεριάδος also occurs in 6:1 as a place name for this same lake.

¹² A, B, C, E, L, pc replace γινομέν with the present participle (cf. John 16:9 and 13:2). The NA²⁷ is a little inconsistent here, but either word can be translated the same way.

¹³ προσφάγιον only occurs here in the New Testament. In Hellenistic Greek it can either refer to fish or a dish made of fish that was eaten with bread. The context here seems to indicate that Jesus is referring to fish. Syntactically, the construction of this question is one that requires a negative answer, hence the slight note of sarcasm in this translation.

right side of the boat, and you will find some.”¹⁴ So they threw the net,¹⁵ and were not able to pull it in because of the great number of fish. 7. On account of this, the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his outer garment (for he wasn’t properly clothed), and jumped into the sea.¹⁶ 8. But the other disciples came with the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from land, only about a hundred yards.¹⁷

9. When they got out on the beach, they saw a charcoal fire ready with fish placed on it, and bread. 10. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just now caught.” 11. So Simon Peter went aboard and pulled the net to shore, full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. But even though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12. “Come, have breakfast,” Jesus said to them. And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. 13. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁴ In P66, 01C1, Y, vg mss, there is a harmonization with Luke 5:5: δι’ ὄλης νυκτὸς κοπιᾶσαντες οὐδὲν ἐλάβομεν.

¹⁵ “Net” is only implied by the verb, a more literal translation would be something along the lines of, “They casted, and were not able to retrieve.”

¹⁶ The Greek states literally that “he was naked,” but this is typically understood to mean he was “stripped for work.” He only had on a basic outer garment or a loincloth, which Peter considered inappropriate attire for greeting the risen Jesus. The picture posed by such translations are still confusing, as it makes little sense for one to put on their clothes before swimming a reasonably long distance (100 yards). In this light, Brown’s suggestion that διεζώσατο does not necessarily refer to putting clothes back on, but tying them around oneself for ease of movement (cf. 13:4-5) seems the best solution. (R. Brown, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2:1072). The explanatory clause here has been put in parentheses to indicate its status as an aside; one of many in the following text.

¹⁷ πηχῶν διακοσίων, or “two hundred cubits” equates to about 100 yards.

Jesus' Conversation with Peter

15. Then when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John,¹⁸ do you love me more than these do?”¹⁹ He replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”²⁰ Jesus told him, “Feed my lambs.” 16. Jesus said a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus, told him, “Shepherd my sheep.” 17. Jesus said a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” and said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” He²¹ replied, “Feed my sheep. 18. Truly, I say to you, when you were young, you tied your clothes around yourself and went wherever you wanted, but

¹⁸ Many mss (A C² Θ Ψ Ë^{1,13} 33 Ì sy) read “Simon, the son of Jonah” in 15, 16, and 17, but the reading “Simon, son of John” has more solid attestation in ¹κ B C* D L W (κ* simply has “Simon”). The former readings are typically assumed to be assimilations to Matthew 16:17.

¹⁹ The translation here reflects an interpretation of the question that will be described in more detail in the next chapter. But we have three options for the reference of τούτων: 1. It is neuter and refers to “these things” that encompass the boats and nets of this occupation that Peter has returned to. This would require us to assume that Peter has now returned to fishing in rejection of Jesus’ commission, and is here being challenged by the risen Lord to return to the task of missions, but nothing in the subsequent text indicates this is the case. Peter’s insistence that he does “love” Jesus more than τούτων seems to indicate the opposite. 2. It refers to the other disciples in the sense that Jesus is asking Peter if he loves him more than he loves his co-workers. The tension between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, as well as Peter’s abandoning of his co-workers in the boat when he sees Jesus on the beach contradicts such a reading. 3. It refers to the other disciples in the sense that Jesus is asking if Peter loves him more than the other disciples love him. This reading is consistent with the characterization of Peter through John’s gospel (13:37) as well as his action in the brief space of this fishing narrative.

²⁰ There is an alternation in this question and answer session between ἀγαπᾷς and φιλῶ. In 15 and 16 Jesus uses ἀγαπᾷς while Peter responds with φιλῶ. In 17, Jesus uses φιλεῖς and Peter responds with φιλῶ. Typically, these words are all translated “love” regardless of their difference. In the Gospel of John, both are interchangeable (cf. 3:16, 3:35, 5:20, 11:3, 11:5, 13:34, 15:19, 16:27).

²¹ A Θ Ψ Ë¹³ Ì have ὁ Ἰησοῦς here. B C have an anarthrous Ἰησοῦς. κ D W Ë¹ 33 565 simply have λέγει αὐτῷ. Even though NA²⁷ has ὁ Ἰησοῦς in brackets, it is most probable that the article and name were inserted for additional clarity in this back and forth conversation.

when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another²² will tie you up²³ and take you where you do not want to go.” 19. (Now Jesus said this to depict by what kind of death Peter was going to glorify God.)²⁴ After he said this, he told Peter, “Follow me.”

20. Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them. (This was the disciple who had leaned back against Jesus’ chest at the meal and asked, “Lord, who is the one who is going to betray you?”) 21. So when Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” 22. Jesus said to him, “If I want him to live²⁵ until I come, what does that have to do with you?²⁶ You follow me!” 23. (The saying circulated among the brethren²⁷ that this disciple was not going to die. But Jesus did not say to him that he was not going to die, but rather, “If I want him to live until I come, what does that have to do with you?”)

²² There is a switch from ἄλλος to ἄλλοι in D, W, P, f1, 22, 33, 565, pc. As this is referring to a crucifixion, the pluralization makes sense.

²³ The translation here attempts to preserve the word play that while Peter was once free to tie his clothes around himself and go wherever he wants, he will one day be tied up and taken somewhere against his will.

²⁴ The parenthesis here clarifies what Jesus is talking about as martyrdom, as Jesus has used common vocabulary of martyrdom. (cf. Leon Morris, *John*, 876) There is some evidence that the early church understood this and similar phrases (one of them in Isa 65:2) to refer to crucifixion (for a detailed discussion of the evidence see L. Morris, *John* [NICNT], 876, n. 52). This term probably relates to the Roman practice of tying a prisoner’s hands to the crossbeam of a cross (O. Cullmann in *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* [LHD], 88).

²⁵ This is translated “to live” even though the verb is the more generic “μένειν” because the point of Jesus’ comment is that Peter’s destiny of martyrdom has nothing to do with the Beloved Disciple’s alternative destiny of witness through the preparation of a gospel. It may be the ambiguity of μένειν here that led to this initial confusion.

²⁶ NA²⁷ has τί πρὸς σέ in brackets because it is omitted by: 01*, 22, 565, pc, a, e, Sy-S, Sy-Pal mss, arm. It may have been added by other manuscripts to harmonize with the previous verse.

²⁷ In this aside τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς is a gender comprehensive shorthand that refers to the ecclesial community in which such a rumour would have gained traction.

The Author's Last Word

24. This is the disciple who testifies about these things and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. 25. There are many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world itself could not contain the books that would have to be written.²⁸

5.1.3 An Exegesis of John 21:1-25

21:1-6 Jesus' Appearance to the Disciples

1 Μετὰ ταῦτα ἐφάνερωσεν ἑαυτὸν πάλιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Τιβεριάδος· ἐφάνερωσεν δὲ οὕτως. 2 ἦσαν ὁμοῦ Σίμων Πέτρος καὶ Θωμᾶς ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος καὶ Ναθαναὴλ ὁ ἀπὸ Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ οἱ τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ ἄλλοι ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο. 3 λέγει αὐτοῖς Σίμων Πέτρος, Ὑπάγω ἀλιεῦν. λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Ἐρχόμεθα καὶ ἡμεῖς σὺν σοί. ἐξῆλθον καὶ ἐνέβησαν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον, καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ νυκτὶ ἐπίασαν οὐδέν.

The connection of Μετὰ ταῦτα to the preceding context involves the essence of all debate on the compositional provenance of the chapter, and will be covered in more detail below. But in terms of narrative, the preposition establishes nothing else than a generic sequence of events.²⁹ The first verse draws particular attention to the manner of Christ's revelation, this time at the Sea of Tiberias, which itself as a unique geographical reference for the Sea of Galilee only draws attention to the exceptional status of this pericope in the canonical record.³⁰ The next several verses are a dense description of the odd appearance, which is almost upstaged by an

²⁸ C² Θ Ψ Ë¹³ Ì lat end the chapter with ἀμήν. It is omitted by κ A B C^{*3} D W 1 33 pc. It was probably added in some of the mss to match with the frequent appearance of the term as a conclusion in other gospels and epistles. The entire verse had been omitted in 01* and was corrected in a colophon by scribe A after v. 24. This was then erased and re-inserted as verse 25 with a fresh colophon by scribe D.

²⁹ C.F.D. Moule, "The Post-Resurrection Appearances in the Light of Festival. Pilgrimages" *NTS* 4 (1957): 58-61 cf. John 3:22 for a similar sequencing.

³⁰ Sea of Tiberias is only found in John, alternative for Lake Galilee (Carson, *Gospel of John*, 334). The appearance language here underscores it as a revelatory act.

unexpected setting, cast of characters, and narrative context. Here we have seven apostles rather than the twelve that have featured so prominently throughout the gospel, with an emphasis placed on the presence of Peter.³¹ This is the first time that we meet the “sons of Zebedee” in the gospel, which is strange in light of the Synoptic tendency to pair them. Thomas and Nathanael strike an interesting contrast, in that while Nathanael was one of the first to confess faith in Jesus, Thomas is seen in the previous chapter to have been the last disciple to express a fully realized faith. The other two disciples are unnamed, though we soon learn that one of them is the Beloved Disciple.³² Barrett takes the fishing account as a missional metaphor, but there is nothing at face value in the narrative to suggest this is the case. Rather, the beginning of John 21 depicts a return of the disciples to their day to day routine on the heels of the climax in John 20, in which they were commissioned (20:21) and given the Holy Spirit (20:22) along with associated charismatic gifting and authority. Here, these seven disciples, which includes the Beloved Disciple, have come full circle in a return to the very place and activities they were called from initially (1:40-44).³³ Taken in the context of later exhortations,

³¹ He is called Simon Peter 14 times in John’s gospel, only this way in Matthew 16:16 and Luke 5:8. Simon Peter first here “probably because he was the unofficial leader” (Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 668).

³² Thomas is identified by Greek and Aramaic names (11:16, 20:24). These two unknown disciples may have been Andrew and Philip, but were probably disciples “in the wider sense of the term.” (B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* [London: John Murray, 1908], 300) “The list of persons has another purpose and hardly reflects on the identity of that disciple.” (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 352.)

³³ Are Peter et al. to be blamed for going fishing? Bruce claims that this return to fishing represents a hiatus in the apostle’s ministry between appearances of Jesus, probably awaiting fresh instructions (F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 399). Or as Carson says, It is a pre-pentecost, post resurrection story (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 634). Blaine, in contrast, suggests that it is improbable that these professional fishermen would have had such difficulty catching fish, and thus this redactional story precedes their empowerment by the Holy Spirit or represents “a period of despair suffered by the Johannine community in the wake of BD’s death” (B. Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John: The Making of an Authentic Disciple* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literary, 2007], 146). The latter supposition is an anachronism. Rather, the fishing is a fitting inclusion for the gospel (M. Franzmann and M. Klinger, “The Call Stories of John 1 and John 21” *SVQT* 36 [1992]:7-16) Or as Beasley-Murray suggests: They are in Galilee because of Mark 14:28 and 16:7. Peter had already seen the risen lord (Lk. 24:34, and 1Cor. 15:5). But the appearance in Galilee undercut their expectation of what resurrection means. It isn’t the end of history, as its connection with Jerusalem implied. Rather it was a reworking of history. “The only thing they knew about the resurrection of the dead was that it comes at the end of the world; and one place where it may be confidently be expected *not* to be revealed was Galilee!” Here in this narrative we glimpse some of the perplexity shared by the apostles in this period. (Beasley-Murray, *John* [Waco: Word, 1987], 399).

this record of their return to fishing is emblematic in a period of the apostle's career during which their missiological self-identification had not yet been fully embraced.³⁴ It is only the later exhortations of the risen Jesus in the chapter that give their future ministry specific shape.

4 πρωΐας δὲ ἤδη γενομένης ἔστη Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλόν, οὐ μέντοι ᾗδεισαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν. 5 λέγει οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς, Παιδιά, μὴ τι προσφάγιον ἔχετε; ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ, Οὐ. 6 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Βάλετε εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ μέρη τοῦ πλοίου τὸ δίκτυον, καὶ εὐρήσετε. ἔβαλον οὖν, καὶ οὐκέτι αὐτὸ ἐλκύσαι ἴσχυον ἀπὸ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ἰχθύων.

It is often thought that the disciples' inability to recognize Jesus is an indication of the presence of later post-resurrection scenes in the redactional composition of this text, but this type of recognition scene is common in similar traditions.³⁵ What is striking is Jesus' manner of address, *Paidi/a*, which has provocative similarity to language used in 1 John for members of the church, but here it is probably simply consistent both in tone and intent with John 13:33.³⁶ Though Jesus' command to fish on the right has inspired a few metaphorical readings, the specificity of the story simply suggests that like other miracle scenes, obedience to Jesus' direction will have assured supernatural results.³⁷ Though the strength of the pericope is based on the return of the disciples to the mundane task of fishing, the magnitude of the catch begins to point the reader towards possible overtones of evangelism that are given clearer voice later in the chapter.³⁸

³⁴ Other examples of night symbolism in the gospel include 3:2. 19-21; 13:30; 20:1.

³⁵ As in the appearances of Luke 24:31 and John 20:14-20.

³⁶ This possible echo of the promise in 13:33 is more intriguing than a broader theological description of the disciples (as in Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998], 113, and H. N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Exegesis* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 660).

³⁷ In Augustine (*Homilies*, 122:7), the fish representing eternal life, in contrast to goats who are always on the left. Morris suggests that Jesus simply saw the fish (L. Morris, *Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 762).

³⁸ cf. M. Hooker, *Endings* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 77, who deciphers possible narrative connections here to Luke 5. Carson cites Brown's commentary (2:1090),

21:7-14 Jesus' Provision for the Disciples

7 λέγει οὖν ὁ μαθητῆς ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ Πέτρῳ, Ὁ κύριός ἐστιν. Σίμων οὖν Πέτρος ἀκούσας ὅτι ὁ κύριός ἐστιν τὸν ἐπενδύτην διεζώσατο, ἦν γὰρ γυμνός, καὶ ἔβαλεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, 8 οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι μαθηταὶ τῷ πλοιαρίῳ ἦλθον, οὐ γὰρ ἦσαν μακρὰν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἀλλ' ὡς ἀπὸ πηχῶν διακοσίων, σύροντες τὸ δίκτυον τῶν ἰχθύων. 9 ὡς οὖν ἀπέβησαν εἰς τὴν γῆν βλέπουσιν ἀνθρακίαν κειμένην καὶ ὀψάριον ἐπικείμενον καὶ ἄρτον. 10 λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐνέγκατε ἀπὸ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὧν ἐπιάσατε νῦν. 11 ἀνέβη οὖν Σίμων Πέτρος καὶ εἴλκυσε τὸ δίκτυον εἰς τὴν γῆν μεστὸν ἰχθύων μεγάλων ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα τριῶν· καὶ τοσοῦτων ὄντων οὐκ ἐσχίσθη τὸ δίκτυον.

Consistent with his role throughout the gospel, it is the Beloved Disciple that recognizes Jesus first and then directs this revelation to Peter.³⁹ The characterization of these two disciples throughout 1-20 is consummated in this response to the risen Lord; a confessional reaction marked by their distinct personalities.⁴⁰ While a variety of interpretations have been offered for Peter's quick decision to clothe himself, the simplest reading seems to be that Peter did not want to meet the risen Lord without any clothes on.⁴¹ Jesus is already cooking fish when the rest of the disciples reach the beach, this apparent redundancy is typically taken as an indication of a seam between a miraculous catch tradition and a recognition

wondering how Peter could have not recognized what was going on after having gone through this same thing in Luke 5. (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 670).

³⁹ cf. R. A. Culpepper, "The Plot of John's Story of Jesus," in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical & Social-Scientific Approaches*, ed. J. D. Kingsbury (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 198. T. Thatcher, "Jesus, Judas, and Peter: Character by Contrast in the Fourth Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 446. T. Söding, "Erscheinung, Vergebung und Sedung (Joh21)" in *Resurrection in the New Testament*, ed. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002). Also, E. Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Robert Funk (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984), 233: "In chapter 21, he shares his conviction with Peter: 'It is the Lord,' but he remains glued to the spot and does not seem to have communicated his conviction to the other disciples."

⁴⁰ And roles: Carson notes that the narrator stays with the boat rather than Peter, which is an interesting eyewitness detail (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 671).

⁴¹ cf. Keener, *Gospel of John*, vol. 2, 1229 for references to nakedness in the NT as they relate to Peter's self-consciousness here.

scene being stitched together here into one representatively Johannine post-resurrection scene. Though this abundance of fish may also serve simply to enhance the characterization here of the risen Christ as one who is able to supply for himself what he has tasked his disciples with gathering, which is a stark reminder of the disciples' role in Jesus' predicted absence. It is in this specific context that Peter and the Beloved Disciple are emphasized as iconic responses to the missiological commissions in the previous chapter. Peter singly responds to Jesus' request αὐτοῖς that they bring in the rest of the fish. Due to the large size of the catch, this would have been impossible for one person.⁴² As the text indicates that Peter single-handedly accomplished the task, many commentators take this as a cue that something less literal than actual fish are being spoken about, which in context must have a missional reference.⁴³ This turn of the text towards the non-literal is compounded by the puzzling reference to 153 fish, which has engendered dozens of symbolic and mathematical interpretations.⁴⁴ Hoskyns claimed that if we

⁴² cf. T. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 586, and A. Shaw, "Image and Symbol in John 21" *ET* 86 (1975): 309ff.

⁴³ On these potential metaphors, cf. Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to John*, 3.365-66; Brodie, *Gospel According to John*, 586; and Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John*, 155 for a range of options. In contrast Bultmann interprets this image as a reference to apostolic preaching (Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 709. cf. E. Ruckstuhl, "Zur Aussage und Botschaft von Johannes 21" in *Die Kirche des Anfangs*, ed. R. Schnackenburg, J. Ernst, and J. Wanke (Freiburg: Herder, 1978), 345ff.)

⁴⁴ C. Marrucci "Il Significato del Numero 53 in GV 21,11" *RivB* 52 (2004): 403-440 surveys the history of interpretation of these 153 and divides them into four categories: "historicist" (it is just specific, no symbolic function attached), "ichthyologico-symbolical" (refers to different nationalities that will be affected by missions), "numerico-symbolical" (has reference to some numerical pattern), and "gematric" (has reference to Jewish symbology). The literature aligns with these categories as follows: Historical: H.E. Edwards, *The Disciple Who Wrote These Things: A New Inquiry into the Origins and Historical Value of the Gospel According to St. John* (London, 1953); Brown, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2:1076; Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2003), 315; Also Plummer. National: Barrett Jerome, Migne *PL* 25,474C in commentary on Ez. 47:12 reports that it was commonly known there were 153 types of fish among learned writers on nature in Latin and Greek, citing Oppianus Cilix as a references. cf. R. M. Grant, "One Hundred and Fifty Three Large Fish (21:11)" *HTR* 42 (1949): 273; A.M. Hunter, *The Gospel according to John* (CBC Cambridge, 1965), 194. Numerical: Augustine, *On The Gospel of John* 122.8 *NPNF* 1, 7:443; Cyril of Alexandria, *In Jo. Lib.* 12, ad loc. (*PG* 74, col 745); M. Pole, *Synopsis Criticorum Aliorumque Scripturae Sacrae Interpretum et Commentatorum*, vol. 4 (1712), col. 1311 cited in J.A. Emerton, "The Hundred and Fifty-Three Fishes in John XXI.11" *JTS* 9 (1958): 87 n. 3; These fish refer back to the 153,600 foreigners in 2 Chron. 2:1, G. Salomon, *Zahlen der Bible* (Lahr-Dinglingen, 1989) 118-125; F.H. Colson, "Triangular Numbers in the New Testament" *JTS* 16 (1914): 67-75. Gematria: O.T. Owen, "One Hundred and Fifty Three Fishes," *ExpTim* 100 (1988): 54; J.A. Emerton, "The Hundred and Fifty-Three Fishes" *JTS* 10 (1959). In G.J. Brooke, "4G252 and the 153 Fish of John 21:11," in *Antikes Judentum und Frühes Christentum*, ed. B. Kollman et al. BZNW 97 (Berlin,

ascribe the odd number to an eyewitness record, then we miss the whole point of the narrative, especially as there are a great deal of significant numerals scattered throughout chapters 1-20 (e.g. 1:39, 2:20, 5:2, 5:5, 19:39).⁴⁵ On account of the opacity of this reference, Brown speaks for most when he points out “where there is smoke there is fire.” It means something even though we can’t decipher it, and the context implies it is missiological in tone, the untorn net pointing towards the unity of this growing church.⁴⁶

12 λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Δεῦτε ἀριστήσατε. οὐδεὶς δὲ ἐτόλμα τῶν μαθητῶν ἐξετάσαι αὐτόν, Σὺ τίς εἶ; εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ κύριός ἐστιν. 13 ἔρχεται Ἰησοῦς καὶ λαμβάνει τὸν ἄρτον καὶ διδωσιν αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὸ ὄψάριον ὁμοίως. 14 τοῦτο ἦδη τρίτον ἐφανερώθη Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν.

The narrative cycles once again through the initial confusion as to Jesus’ identity, which casts a hue of ambiguity around the entire scene. If all the fishing references were ambiguous, this extension of the recognition scene into a meal scene with Eucharistic overtones is even *moreso*. It is possible that along with a literalist interpretation of the 153 fish, we could also accept the meal scene at face value, but the narrative echoes set up by Jesus sharing bread and fish with the

1999), Brooke relates the 153 to 4Q252. There are almost two dozen more alternatives that can be cited here. More recently: Richard Bauckham “The 153 Fish and the Unity of the Fourth Gospel.” *Neotestamentica* 36 (2002): 77-88. Ruckstuhl has strengthened his earlier argument for the integral nature of John 21 with 153 stylistic features that demonstrate the homogeneity of the Gospel (in Eugen Ruckstuhl and Peter Dschulnigg, *Die literarische Einhart des Johannesevangelium: Der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Erforschung*. [Freiburg: Paulus-Verlag, 1987], cf. E. Ruckstuhl, “Johannine Language and Style” in *L’Évangile de Jean: Sources, redaction, théologie*. Synopse des Quatre Evangiles en Français (III. Paris: Cerf, 1977).

⁴⁵ For Westcott this is an indication of the presence of an eyewitness (Westcott, *Gospel of John*, 301). Cf. Bauckham “The Audience of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. R.T. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Louisville: WJK, 2001) and Paul Trudinger, “Subtle Ironies and Word Plays in John’s Gospel and the Problems of John 21” *St Mark’s Review* 162 (1995): 23, who claims that pointing out such mundane details is contrary to the John’s gospel. Also J. Werlitz, “Warum gerade 153 Fische?” in *Johannes aenigmaticus, Studien zum Johannesevangelium für Herbert Leroy*, ed. S. Schreiber, A. Stimpfle (Regensburg, 2000), 133, who points out that they would not have had time to count the fish. F. Bovon, “Names and Numbers in Early Christianity” *NTS* 47 (2001), 267 makes a similar point.

⁴⁶ Brown, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2:1075.

disciples are difficult to overlook. Even if there are no definitive lexical or redactional references in the verse to other Eucharistic traditions in the canonical record, the very image of a post-resurrection Jesus sharing a meal of fish and bread with his disciples, that he himself has prepared, has inescapably ecclesial overtones.⁴⁷ The only thing that mitigates against such a reading is the fact that the gospel of John is characteristically non-Eucharistic. Apart from John 6:54, there is nothing else in the gospel that would create the necessary symbolic framework in which the fish and bread here could be specifically identified as Eucharistic images.⁴⁸ This symbolic polyphony in the Johannine record is reduplicated in early Christian art, which applies a constellation of ideas to gospel images, rather than linking fish or bread with a specific event or concept.⁴⁹ As with the specific number of the fish, we have another image here that has symbolic freight simply by virtue of its link to the risen Lord. There may not be a definable reference that can be ascertained by contemporary readers of the text, but the presence of Christ enlivens these

⁴⁷ As noted by Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 710: The original meaning of the story is changed by v. 13. The original conclusion must have been a saying of Jesus after the meal or an act of homage by the disciples, as “it is a replica of the Lord’s Supper.” This comports with the editor’s addition of 6.51b-58. The formulaic words are absent here because this is the Risen Lord. “It is first to be said that the fellowship of the earthly Jesus with his disciples is continued after Easter, in a similar and yet in a new way.” (Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to John*, 359). But, the ecclesial setting of the chapter inclines this reference towards the Eucharist. It also potentially relates geographically to the theologies of Ignatius and Justin, who had strong interest in the Eucharist.

⁴⁸ See J.M. Perry, “The Evolution of the Johannine Eucharist,” *NTS* 39 (1993) and J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (Harper: San Francisco, 1991), 398-399, 402.

⁴⁹ The definitive work is L.H. Kant, “The Interpretation of Religious Symbols in the Graeco-Roman World: A Case Study in Early Christian Fish Symbolism (3 vols. Ph.D. Dissertation Yale University, 1993) cf. In this dissertation he rebuts the idea that a symbol will produce a single meaning and the Christian symbol characteristically grew out of a network of secular connotations. (cf. Edwin Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 5 *Fish, Bread, and Wine* (New York, 1956), 31-71.) It is possible that the fish here stands for Christ and believers. (Which we also see in Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 13.10 and Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 1). It is associated with eucharist in early iconography. (contra R.A. Jensen, “Dining in Heaven: The Earliest Christian Visions of Paradise” *BRev*, 14 [1998]: 36.) In Augustine, *In Evangelium Ioannis* 123.2 *NPNF* 1, the roasted fish is the suffering Christ, “Piscis assus, Christus est passus,” a thought traced by Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon* 55.6, the Syballine Oracles 8.217-50 (most notably in J.H. Charlesworth, ed *OTP* (Garden City, New York, 1983) 1:423-424) and in Tertullian *On Baptism* 1 *ANF* 3:669. Is this necessarily a Eucharistic feast? The only sacred fish meals of which we have evidence are from pagan sources, other than the meals of fish and bread that appear in catacomb iconography from 4th to 5th centuries (A. Gray, “The Last Chapter of St. John’s Gospel as Interpreted by Early Christian Art,” *HibJ* 20 [1921-22]: 698, and G.R. O’Day, “The Love of God Incarnate: The Life of Jesus in the Gospel of John,” in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John’s Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005).

mundane details with ecclesial and missional significance. There is a natural division here at the end of verse 14 that serves as a transition from the miracle and recognition scenes to a tone of discourse throughout the rest of the chapter that brings remarkable clarity to the rich arrangement of so many tradition types within the span of one short narrative. There is a great deal accomplished in these first verses, as if the post-resurrection context can only be articulated by an array of scene types functioning at the same time.⁵⁰

John 21:15-25 Jesus' Conversation with Peter

15 Ὅτε οὖν ἠρίστησαν λέγει τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρῳ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τούτων; λέγει αὐτῷ, Ναὶ κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ, Βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου. 16 λέγει αὐτῷ πάλιν δεύτερον, Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με; λέγει αὐτῷ, Ναὶ κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ, Ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου. 17 λέγει αὐτῷ τὸ τρίτον, Σίμων Ἰωάννου, φιλεῖς με; ἐλυπήθη ὁ Πέτρος ὅτι εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ τρίτον, Φιλεῖς με; καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ Ἰησοῦς], Βόσκει τὰ πρόβατά μου. 18 ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ὅτε ἦς νεώτερος, ἐζώννυες σεαυτὸν καὶ

⁵⁰ A summary of the possibilities: It is a miracle story (M. Hasitschka, "Die beiden 'Zeichen' am See von Tiberias: Interpretation von Joh 6 in Verbindung mit Joh 21,1-14," SNTSU 24 (1999): 85-102; J.S. Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John* (SBL Academia Biblica: Leiden, 2003) 137; Fortna traces this to the third miracle of the Signs Gospel (Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, 99), cf. Alan Shaw, "The Breakfast by the Shore and the Mary Magdalene Encounter as Eucharistic Narratives," *JTS* 25 (1974): 16. It is an appearance story: Rudolph Pesch in *Der reich Fischfang (Lk. 5,11/Jo.21,1-14): Wundergeschichte-Berungserzahlung-Erscheinungsbericht* (Dusseldorf, 1969) distinguishes the fishing tradition (2,3, 4a, 6, 11) from an appearance tradition (4b,7-9, 12-13) making 1,5,10, and 14 editorial (Pesch, *Der reich Fischfang*, 39-51, cf. Neiryneck, 322-324). Fortna also separates these as two appearance stories (Fortna, *Gospel of Signs*, 97); Schnackenburg relates the meal to the appearance tradition (Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to John*, 3:346). It is a meal story: This is in accord with other post-resurrection appearances (e.g. Luke 24:30-31, 42; Acts 1:4, 10:40-41; Mark 16:14). This scene is slightly different, though, in that while Jesus provides the food, but he does not eat. Brown sees this as the combination of a fishing story and a meal story (Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2:1094-1095) that had longstanding history as a tradition and bore sacramental symbolism. Matthias Rissi claims that the author only takes 9, 12a, and 13 from the meal tradition. The meal is just about the fish on the fire as seen clearly in 13. (Matthias Rissi, "'Voll Grosser Fische, hundertdreiundfunzig': Joh. 21, 1-14" *TZ* 35 [1979]:75). He also sees a relationship between 6 and 21 through the echo in 11. It is a recognition scene: Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 72-86; Tobias Micklas, "'153 grosse Fische' (Joh 21,11). Erzählerische Konomie und johanneischer Überstieg," *Bib* 84 (2003): 373. It is simply a shared meal: S.O. Abogunrin, "The Three Variant Accounts of Peter's Call: A Critical and Theological Examination of the Texts," *NTS* 31 (1985): 587-602.

περιεπάεις ὅπου ἤθελες· ὅταν δὲ γηράσης, ἐκτενεῖς τὰς χεῖράς σου, καὶ ἄλλος σε ζώσει καὶ οἶσει ὅπου οὐ θέλεις. 19 τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν σημαίνων ποίῳ θανάτῳ δοξάσει τὸν θεόν. καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι.

After the meal scene, the chapter turns towards the two iconic figures its initial traditions highlighted by drawing attention to the characteristics ascribed to them through chapters 1-20 in this decidedly post-resurrection context. The ambiguous ecclesial references serve to identify the role of Jesus in the missional aims of the church as one who prepares, directs, and sustains the fulfilment of a commission resulting in a unified church. This Christologically descriptive narrative culminates in a quasi-Eucharistic meal scene that provides a natural segue to the second half of the chapter, which serves to identify the roles of Peter and the Beloved Disciple as iconic figures of witness. The entire chapter pivots on the verses in which Jesus offers bread and cooked fish to his disciples, an act undoubtedly repeated often over the course of his ministry with them, but now taking on a greater significance in this post-Easter context as a symbolic ecclesial event. This turn in emphasis towards Peter and the Beloved Disciple is not necessarily an indication of a redactional seam in the text, as these conversations flow very coherently out of the preceding narrative.⁵¹ Peter's question can be taken several ways, but the interpretation that has gained the most popularity is that Jesus is asking Peter whether he loves him more than the other disciples love him, which would make τούτων the subject of an implied verb.⁵² On the basis of Peter's re-

⁵¹ The Beloved Disciple and Peter story is one of several in which BD and Peter appear together (13:23-25; 20:3-10; 21:20-22, possibly 18:15-16). The need to explain the relationship between these two characters is often cited as a reason for the inclusion of John 21. (S. Agourides, "The Purpose of John 21" in *Studies in the History and Text of the New Testament – In Honor of K.W. Clark* ed. B.L. Daniels and M.J. Suggs [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1967], contra Wiarda, who argues that this pericope is about Peter, not the Beloved Disciple and Peter. [Wiarda, "Narrative Unity," 56].

⁵² cf. L. Hartman, "An Attempt at a Text-Centered Exegesis of John 21," *Studia theologica* 38 (1984), 34. On the two senses of "love," the latter makes sense for Carson (*Gospel According to John*, 676). On seeing a semantic difference between the two verbs of love. On seeing a semantic difference between the two verbs in Carson's comprehensive argument for abandoning this distinction, the argument is as follows: 1. The two verbs are interchangeable 3:35, 5:20/11:5,36/both are used of BD. 2. LXX uses both interchangeably. 3. For its classical usage, Robert Joly argues that *agapao* came into prominence from 4th BCE onwards partly because *phileo* started to take on the meaning 'to kiss' in some contexts as a replacement for *kynéo* 'to kiss' which sounded too much like *kuno* 'to impregnate' and became a bit of a problematic pun. (Robert Joly *Le vocabulaire chrétien de l'amour, est-il orginial?* [Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1968]). 4. *agapao* does not always have a

affirmation, he is given a distinctly pastoral charge.⁵³ The repetition of this charge from feeding lambs, to tending sheep, and to feeding sheep is an outline of the type of ministry emblemized by Peter within the narrative of John.⁵⁴ Peter's imitation of Jesus as shepherd would even extend to his death as a witness to the pattern of discipleship established by Jesus' death and resurrection.⁵⁵ The significance of this repetitive conversation lies in the way it is backlit by the ecclesial symbology of the preceding verses, and then the way it provides a natural segue to Jesus' description of the Beloved Disciple, which in turn becomes a fitting conclusion to the Gospel.

20 Ἐπιστραφεὶς ὁ Πέτρος βλέπει τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀκολουθοῦντα, ὃς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν, Κύριε, τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παραδιδούς σε; 21 τοῦτον οὖν ἰδὼν ὁ Πέτρος λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ, Κύριε, οὗτος δὲ τίς; 22 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σέ; σύ μοι ἀκολούθει. 23 ἐξήλθεν οὖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὅτι ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει· οὐκ εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει ἄλλ', Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σέ];

Peter then turns to the Beloved Disciple, who has been trailing their conversation, and inquires about his fate. The way the author phrases Jesus' response, couched in asides concerning traditions regarding the Beloved Disciple

good object in mind (2 Tim 4:10). 5. Since the semantic domains do not exactly match we can interpret a difference here, but this is true of all synonyms. cf. James Barr, 'Words for Love in Biblical Greek' in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament*, ed. L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 3-18. 6. There is disagreement within the ranks about how, if there is a difference, each one is to be interpreted.

⁵³ This three-fold confession is typically taken as a reversal of Peter's denial (A. Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* [New York: Continuum, 2001] 60). Ridderbos, *Gospel According to John*, 667, disagrees.

⁵⁴ cf. A.J. Simonis, *Die Hirtenrede im Johannes-Evangelium* (Rome: Päpstliche Bibelinstitute, 1967), 63.

⁵⁵ Reference to Peter's martyrdom as crucifixion is found in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25 and *Acts of Peter* 37.8, and "stretching out hands" was often a euphemism for this form of capital punishment (Justin, 1 *Apology* 35, Epictetus 3.26.22, Seneca, *Ad Marciam de Consolatione* 20.3). There are, however, commentators that find other ways of deciphering the euphemism (Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 713; Porsch, *Johannes-Evangelium*, 224). Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) contains significantly more detail on the question.

that had spread on account of this original exchange, sets up the Beloved Disciple as a representational witness of a different sort than Peter. Peter's ultimate martyrdom as a faithful disciple stands in distinction to the witness of the Beloved Disciple. Just as Peter's ultimate martyrdom would in form culminate the teleology of his ministry, so would the Beloved Disciple's death be marked by his consistent characterization throughout the gospel of John. Peter's questioning of Jesus is not as indicative of a personal struggle between the two disciples as it is a general curiosity regarding the fate of the pillar of the Johannine tradition that would have serious consequences for the readers of this gospel. As the Beloved Disciple has died at the point that John 21 was written, Jesus' depiction of Peter and the Beloved Disciple as parallel representative witnesses is an effective apology for his unexplained presence throughout chapters 1-20.⁵⁶

24 Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν. 25 Ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἅπανα ἐὰν γράφηται καθ' ἓν, οὐδ' αὐτὸν οἶμαι τὸν κόσμον χωρῆσαι τὰ γραφόμενα βιβλία.

Though verses 24-25 are typically disconnected from the preceding text, there is a sense in which verse 24 is still part of the answer to Peter's question.⁵⁷ It is a description of the form of witness that would be undertaken by the Beloved Disciple, one that we now discover has resulted in the Gospel of John itself. τούτων

⁵⁶ The Beloved Disciple must be real figure, as there is a tradition about him. Has the Beloved Disciple died at this point? If yes, at the death of the last eyewitness, Ch. 21 was written and included, with the assumption that the death of the Beloved Disciple initiates a conflict in early Johannine eschatology. We could alternatively assume the Beloved Disciple is still alive and is here intent on correcting the rumour/tradition before he dies. Carson says: "This point is strengthened if John's intended readers are Jews, proselytes and God-fearers who know something of the truth but are holding back from conversion to the risen Christ. They, too, have heard something of these rumours..." (Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 682).

⁵⁷ As Carson explains, some separate vv. 24 and 25 from the rest of the Gospel, but v. 24 is better seen as part of the answer to question asked in v. 23 (Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 554). See also C.H. Dodd, "Note on John 21, 24" *Journal of Theological Studies* 4 (1953) 212-213, which claims v. 24 is related to v. 23, which itself is disconnected from the previous context as v. 24 is posed as the authority behind v. 23. Per Dodd, "They appear to be addressed to the same situation" (212). ταῦτα thus refers to v. 23 specifically and its context, either from 22, 20, 15 on, or the whole chapter.

thus refers not just to the immediate context, but the entirety of the narrative that has given John 21 its shape. The effectiveness of this ministry is immediately validated by the third person singular in the concluding attestation. This has been interpreted many different ways, but by necessity refers to the author of John 21 and the readers of the Johannine community that already have an estimation of the Beloved Disciple's veracity.⁵⁸ The "we" of verse 24 are related to the same people group or readers to which the asides of 21:19 and 23 are directed, those who are already familiar with the traditions now collected as a conclusion to John's gospel.⁵⁹ The corrective of verse 23 gives shape to the "we" in that it specifically addresses those to whom this post-resurrection re-narration of key Johannine themes in chapter 21 is directed. The concluding reference to βίβλια, which underscores the somewhat paradoxical fact that John 21 is an attestation of the trustworthy writtenness of the Beloved Disciple's witness.

5.1.4 *The Composition of the End of John*

It is a rite of passage for interpreters of John to stake their claim in the range of possibilities offered by the shift from the third person in 21:24 to the startling first person of 21:25, and it would be difficult to proceed any further if I were not to produce a provisional description of the author, intention, and timing of John 21. Based on the shift to the first person in 21:25, the narrative coherency of the chapter as delineated in the above exegesis, and reference to the Beloved Disciple in

⁵⁸ There are generally five possibilities: 1. The "we" refers to the elders at church of Ephesus (Westcott, *Gospel of John*, 2:374) 2. "We" refers to those closely linked to the disciple (Schlatter, *John*, 376). 3. "We" comprises the church where he belonged, not necessarily Ephesus (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 717-718). This option has the advantage of consistency with the Muratorian Canon, which reports that John wrote his gospel at the insistence of others. 4. "We know" refers to an indefinite expression like "as is well known" (Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1953, 212-213). 5. It refers to John himself, a "royal we." Bauckham cites Dionysius of Halicarnassus on *Demosthenes*, along with John 3:11; 1 John 1:1-15; 4:14; and 3 John 9-10, 12. Bauckham calls this "the 'we' of authoritative testimony" (R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* [Edinburgh: Alban, 2006], 371). Further: "Thus the Johannine Jesus uses 'we' as a substitute for 'I' only on the one occasion when the 'we' of authoritative testimony is required by Johannine style... In light of the previous examples, it is now unmistakable that 21:24 uses the 'we' of authoritative testimony." (Bauckham, 379). cf Harnack, "Das 'Wir' in den Johanneischen Schriften" *SPAW/Philosophisch-historischen Klasse* (1923), 96-113.

⁵⁹ "We" in the sense that "the community knows that the testimony of the beloved disciple is always true..." (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 718).

continuity with chapters 1-20, it is clear that John 21 was written by someone both steeped in the details of the Beloved Disciple's historical witness and the writing style of 1-20. The writer is very theologically attuned to the narrative, literary, and historical intentions of 1-20, and in chapter 21 transcribes them to this post-resurrection setting. The movement from the fishing miracle to a recognition story, and then from an ambiguously Eucharistic meal tradition into the personal discourse of Jesus with Peter about himself and the Beloved Disciple is indicative of the ecclesial intention of the chapter. This author is aware of a need to bridge the gospel which lacks an ascension narrative and the contemporary needs of a community that has lost its fundamental witness.

Though it is not necessary to postulate the Beloved Disciple's death to make sense of 21:23, the self-awareness of this writer and his editorial authority, which compliments the impersonality of reference to the Beloved Disciple at all points through the chapter, at the very least indicates that this chapter has been produced independently of his direct involvement. John 21 is the work of an early Christian writer schooled in the art of gospel-writing. The timing of the chapter's composition is related to the completion of a final edition of the gospel. It is the end of John in two ways. First, it is the natural conclusion of chapters 1-20 in the way it brings closure to themes and characterizations that have been developed throughout the gospel. But it is also the end of John in the sense that its living witness is no longer present; chapter 21 the final word of a community that he has given shape. As can be seen in the history of interpretation of the chapter, it is difficult to pin down a definitive chronological relationship between the final edit of 1-20 and the writing of John 21, but on the basis of the following discussion of narrative and literary patterns of coherency between them, it is a reasonable presumption that they are historically connected.

5.2 John 21 and the Gospel of John: Patterns of Conclusion

Having surveyed the history of interpretation of John 21, and now briefly covered the most pressing issues in the exegesis of the chapter, it is possible to turn in more detail to the question of how John 21 relates to the rest of the gospel. There have been several movements in scholarship regarding this ambiguous relationship, at some times focusing on the locus of its origin within the composition history of the Johannine corpus, at others emphasizing the range of functions the chapter serves

from a literary perspective. These different phases of analysis accord with general shifts in emphases in Johannine studies from proto-historical criticism to classic source and redaction criticism and eventually through the new criticisms to the various literary descriptions in practice today. Such methodological shifts accord with gospels studies in general, only appearing so sharply in readings of John 21 due to its unique placement both at the end of the gospel of John and the production of canonical gospel literature.

It has been shown that John 21 has been the proving ground for both large-scale theories regarding the composition history of John and more detailed arguments concerning its authorship, provenance, and purpose. For this reason, it would be safe to refer to John 21 as a key text for the study of the Johannine corpus and its spectrum of potential early readerships. And it would also be within reason to refer to the dominant redactional perspectives on the chapter initiated by Bultmann and taken up in various ways by everyone from Barrett to Brown to Schnackenburg serve as an axiom of Johannine studies. Along with the assumption that John's audience was largely Hellenistic, Kellum adds the idea that the Farewell Discourse is a now unified discourse created from disparate traditions to the list of Johannine axioms that have held dominance until subsequent critique.⁶⁰ To this we could also add versions of Bultmann's redactional perspective on John 21, which only in recent scholarship has found itself under consistent critique. Along with this particular Johannine axiom comes a typical set of descriptions of John 21, as epilogue, appendix, conclusion, addition, and a few related terms. Such working definitions in the history of scholarship are legion, some posed more definitively than others. But the benefit of creating a working definition of its relationship in this post-Culpepper

⁶⁰ L. Scott Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse: The Literary Integrity of John 13:31-16:33* (London: T&T Clark: 2004). Johannine Studies is fairly controlled by axioms. For example, prior to J.A.T. Robinson's "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel," it was simply assumed that John had a Hellenistic audience and background (J.A.T. Robinson, "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel" in *Twelve New Testament Studies* [London: SCM, 1962] 94-106). This argumentation was later updated by Robinson in J.A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone, 1987), 36-44. Likewise, Kellum critiques one of the axioms pertaining to the Farewell Discourse, namely that it is a fragmentary discourse made up of disparate traditions (cf. Fernando F. Segovia, *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition: agape/agapan in 1 John and the Fourth Gospel* SBLDS, 58 [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982], 82. The dominant assumption here is typically based on what appears to be a gap, or aporia, of three chapters between "Arise, let us depart from here" at the end of chapter 14 and the completion of that action in 18:1.

era is that one is now able to incorporate a broad range of exegetical, historical, and literary perspectives in one fully-orbed glimpse.⁶¹

It is entirely possible that we can now move beyond these axiomatic descriptions holding critical scholarship at such an impasse. The problem with the dominant redactional-critical perspective is that it hasn't been able to disengage itself from the micro-historical level of text and tradition to address more broadly important literary-compositional issues in the Gospel of John, only able to address John 21 with clumsy terms like "addition". The problem with more recent literary-critical responses is that many fail to do justice to the articulate historicity of the Johannine tradition, and end up with de-historicized perceptions of John 21 that miss its conclusive relationship with its original community of readers. The problem with many classic originalist responses, holding to the initial coherence of 21 with 1-20, that have implicitly attempted to mediate between these two critical approaches is that they founder on predetermined notions of the authorship and purpose of the gospel. All the ambiguities of John 21 become lost in the regimen of traditional argumentation. In the following, a more robust definition of this key literary and textual relationship in John will attempt to navigate the successes and errors of these competing interpretive schemas. As John 21 crosses so many genres and traditions at the same time, it seems necessary that our vocabulary regarding its literary function be characterized by the same flexibility.

A recent reappearance of the Bultmannian reading of John 21 is in Herman C. Waetjen's commentary, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*.⁶² While leaning heavily on Martyn to establish the idea that we have a two-level drama functioning in the subtext and foreground of the gospel, he turns to Culpepper to posit that the

⁶¹ By "post-Culpepper" I am simply referring to the contemporary context of Johannine scholarship in which it is no longer possible to proceed with historical criticism on John as if literary criticism, and its reasonable findings or observations, does not exist.

⁶² A crucial element in H. Waetjen. *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) for this context: "The answer not only depends on the text-critical principle of *lectio difficilior lectio potior* (the more difficult reading is the more probable reading); it necessarily involves a determination of the relationship of chapter 21 to the Gospel and the function that apparently it was intended to perform as an addendum... It is the objective of this study to demonstrate that the first edition of the gospel originated in Alexandria, Egypt and, consequently, the second level of the narrative world into which the ministry of Jesus was projected reflects the context of the Jewish community of Alexandria some time between the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish revolt of 115-117." (Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*,xiv)

gospel then needs to be read synchronically, taking the drama of its narrative at face value. The gospel operates on these levels because each level corresponds to a differing edition of the gospel, one produced in Alexandria without chapter 21, and then a later one produced in Ephesus that includes chapter 21 and attempts to identify the Beloved Disciple with the apostle John, posing him as the author of the text. Though the idea that the author of 21 also added complimentary material into 1-20 is no innovation, to speak of the addition of chapter 21 and this material at such a later date as a new edition is a bold advancement on the dominant redactional model.⁶³

Waetjen's argument faces a number of linguistic and exegetical problems, as is characteristic of any attempt to distinguish too sharply between John 1-20 and 21. But his line of argumentation also fails to factor in the literary-critical consequences of such a historical configuration, such that the author of John 21 as described by Waetjen can only be construed in Brauns's terms as "ambivalent" towards the text of 1-20. Even if Waetjen's proposed author of the second edition of John, who has also introduced complimentary strains of redaction to 1-20, is working with the grain of the original text in an effort to update it for a similar readership, his redactional expansion of the text has committed an irreparable violence to the Johannine Jesus tradition.

As can be seen from Braun's essay on John 21, inherent to any reading of the function of John 21 is an assessment of how much its presence as an epilogue or conclusion affects the preceding text. For readings of the chapter that take it as integral to the gospel, written at the same time as 1-20, John 21 does not alter the text as an addendum, but completes it as either an intentional conclusion or epilogue.⁶⁴ Its absence would lead us to read the text differently than its presence, but as its absence isn't even an historical possibility such a notion does not play a dominant role in exegesis. For readings of the chapter that take chapter 21 as a

⁶³ Painter, for example, speaks of the addition of chapter 21 at the same time as other material in the gospel (John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah* 2nd ed. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993], 131.)

⁶⁴ Vorster and Minear have argued that 20:30-31 is the conclusion chapter 20, rather than the entire gospel, as addressed in the prior chapter on Literary-Critical readings of John 21. This approach has the benefit of then allowing them to explain why John 21 was initially written as the original conclusion of the entire gospel, rather resigning it to being a mere consequence of a later addition.

later addition, the critic is then left with a number of choices. Either it is a complimentary addition by an author, editor, or group of editors related to the witness responsible for the final form of 1-20, it is an addition by a later editor or redactor intent on updating 1-20 for its contemporary local audience, or it is an addition by a later redactor tailoring the gospel for a completely new set of circumstances.⁶⁵ There are a number of nuances that lie behind these three generalizations, but Waetjen's proposal falls neatly in the third. The consistency in these three redactional approaches is that each implicitly describes an addition to the text of the gospel that alters the way it was previously read. This is not to say that any redactional alteration would have an inherently negative affect on the Johannine tradition. But some formulations of this alteration do, and apart from Braun and a few others, this negative affect is either ignored or overlooked in the course of exegesis.

In Waetjen's case, which manages to reprimarize both Martyn and Bultmann in one fell swoop, we have a clear example of this tendency in the dominant redactional model of John 21. Waetjen's attempt to link the addition of John 21 to a new edition in the publication history of John's gospel requires us to attribute an "ambivalence" towards the text of the gospel at some stage in the history of its composition.⁶⁶ Though we cannot ascribe this level of violence in regard to 1-20 to every redactional reading of John 21, a certain level of ambivalence must be assumed in the historical background to this literary shift in the Johannine tradition. It is important to point out that this point in and of itself could have little significance as a criticism of a redactional-critical reading of John 21. It could easily be taken in stride, and the addition of 21 described as a positive contribution to the Johannine tradition effectively clarifying obscure, misleading, or incorrect traditions in John 1-20. But if it can be demonstrated that John 21 fits seamlessly within the composition history of the gospel, giving us no indication of altering or correcting historical, theological, or ecclesiastical points made previously in the gospel, then any literary-

⁶⁵ In an extreme example, for the idea that this story was the original ending of Mark, cf. P. Rohrbach, *Die Berichte über die Auferstehung Jesu*, repr. of 1898 ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 355; and O. Cullman, *Petrus* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1960), 202.

⁶⁶ I am here using Braun's language, but Waetjen proposes a different sort of ambivalence. His work essentially proposes that at one point, 1-20 was not enough to meet the needs of a particular community and needed to be updated, with a John 21 type text, if it were to be of any value.

historical reconstruction of the text that even ascribes an implicit ambivalence towards 1-20 behind the addition of 21 is unreasonable and unnecessary. Stated differently, for any reading that assumes chapter 21 has been added in order to solve some inadequacy in 1-20, the burden of proof lies upon this reading to first demonstrate that either 1-20 is inadequate as a gospel in some fashion, or that at least the author of chapter 21 thought this to be the case.

However, not all critics who have described the chapter as an addition to the gospel that ignores the original conclusion of John 20:30-31 would be willing to argue either of these historical-critical conditions. For many, such as Barrett, the chapter is simply a “clumsy” addition added to further contextualize the gospel of John in the ecclesiastical setting of its early readers, clarify the tradition behind the rumor regarding the death of the Beloved Disciple, or to simply include a set of traditions belonging to the same source as 1-20 that the final editors felt it was necessary to include. Yet the same consideration that applies to Waetjen’s redactional model also applies to critiques that simply read the chapter as a “clumsy” addition. The burden of proof lies on these readings to demonstrate that it is literally clumsy, that it is aesthetically unbalanced, and materially vestigial to the proper Johannine tradition as expressed in 1-20. While these two considerations have not been expressed in recent literary-critical and exegetical attempts to define the integral nature of chapter 21 to the rest of the gospel, they nevertheless provide a key methodological motivation for such studies. As literary criticism on John post-Culpepper has ably demonstrated, the first fallout that comes from this implicit ambivalence towards the Gospel of John enacted by redaction criticism is an inability to allow natural narrative, literary, and historical patterns in the text to cohere. A literary-historical reclamation of these patterns, birthed in thicker descriptions of key features of the chapter, may provide precisely the kind of vocabulary that will grant John 21 new footing in critical discourse. To that end, the next three sections broadly define three ways in which John 21 networks with the gospel of John, which provide the necessary context for the four key literary-historical features of the chapter that will be treated over the next few chapters.

5.2.1 John 21 as the Culmination of a Narrative Pattern

Vorster and Minear have independently argued that 20:30-31 is the conclusion of chapter 20, rather than the entire gospel, which enables them to depict

John 21 as the original conclusion of the entire gospel rather than the makeshift recapitulation of a later addition.⁶⁷ An alternative, albeit similar, line of argumentation for scholars seeking to explain the conclusive presence of John 20:30-31 and John 21 is to identify a broader narrative pattern of conclusions within the gospel, staged in several cycles of text and internal review culminating in the statements of John 21:24-25. The first of these patterns, from a narrative perspective, is adduced by Patrick Spencer, who disagrees with Vorster and Minear that we can argue for the literary integrity of chapter 21 by posing 20:30-31 as the conclusion to chapter 20.⁶⁸ In response, Spencer exposes a network of intentional narrative allusions in John 21 to various key stages in the narrative of 1-20 that in his argumentation are linked to a redactional acumen on the part of its author.⁶⁹ Drawing on this redactional-historical configuration, Spencer concludes that chapter 21 is in essence an interpretation of 1-20 that has been added as a way in shifting the “reading location” of the authorial audience towards a Eucharistic and ecclesial reading of the high points of John’s narrative. The means by which this shift in reading location is enacted is by the intertextual interpretation of 1-20 made by chapter 21 which are evidenced in echoes between 21:1-14 and 6:1-71; 18:15-18, 25-27 and 21:15-19; 13:3-5, 36-38 and 21:7; and 21:15-19 and 10:1-8. The presence of such clever connections indicates that “ch. 21 – because of its narrative discourse manifests an intertextual interpretation of certain aspects of chs. 1-20 – cannot be understood apart from its connection with and against chs. 1-20.”⁷⁰ Despite the fact that Spencer locates chapter 21 in a late stage of the composition of

⁶⁷ Again, cf. Minear “Original Functions of John 21,” 85-98 as a well-argued example of this approach. In a narrative sense, the precise reference of the narrative aside in 20:30-31 is not just the four appearances in 20, but to all the signs in the gospel. Additional formulations of this linkage between John 21 and the rest of the gospel have been addressed in preceding chapters.

⁶⁸ Patrick E. Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection,” *JSNT* 75 (1999): 49-68.

⁶⁹ It is difficult to ascertain where Spencer locates his work in relation to previous redactional work on John, as he does not cite any in particular works for the statement: “an overwhelming number of scholars view ch. 21 as an appendix, added by a redactor after the Gospel was written in order to address certain ecclesiastical concerns.” (Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21,” 49) He does thank Waetjen in a prefaced note, and clear similarities to Waetjen’s commentary seems to indicate that his essay is best read in light of this historical analysis.

⁷⁰ Spencer, “Narrative Echoes in John 21,” 54-55.

John's gospel, the form of his argument for the integral nature of 21 to 1-20 is an important advance in redaction criticism of the chapter.

And despite the fact that all of Spencer's identified "echoes" tend to be weighted towards the ecclesiastical reading of John 21 that also characterizes classic redactional commentary on John, Spencer's ultimate critical description of these echoes provides a helpful point of departure for understanding its relationship to 1-20. Spencer's work does, I think unintentionally, navigate the consideration posed earlier to Waetjen's work regarding his presupposition of an ambivalence in John 21 to an earlier stage of the gospel. Even though Spencer ascribes chapter 21 to a later date, he articulates a way of effectively reading it as integral to the gospel, as a thoughtfully crafted conclusion enabling one to read 1-20 retroactively, with greater clarity and insight. As noted earlier, Spencer is trying in this essay to forge a rapprochement between readings that highlight the dissimilarity of 21 and 1-20 and readings that highlight their similarity. Ultimately, however, Spencer's attempt becomes obfuscated by his attempt to link the intertextuality of 21 to a second layer of redaction in the gospel. His argument can just as easily be posed based on the presupposition that 21 was written at the same time as the gospel, as these narrative echoes would resound in 1-20 very similar ways. Just as Waetjen's commentary shares the fate of Martyn's specific proposal of a two-level drama in John, as it is difficult to provide the necessary historical data that would actually prove the existence of this theoretical construction, so do Spencer's echoes lack definite a historical context.⁷¹ To continue Spencer's metaphor, it is clear that there are echoes of 1-20 in 21, but it is not clear exactly off of which interior literary-historical or source-critical elements of John these echoes are bouncing.

Thus, Spencer's attempt at rapprochement succeeds in that it does find a literary-critical balance between similarity and dissimilarity in John 21 and its attendant tradition at the level of narrative, but it fails to do so in a way that will enable us to make qualified, verifiable statements about the literary relationships of features shared by John 21 and 1-20. The literary-critical presupposition that John 21 is part of the larger narrative pattern of John's gospel is entirely correct, but one

⁷¹ For an extended critique on this point: Martin Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993); Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); and Robert Kysar, "Expulsion from the Synagogue: A Tale of a Theory" in *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

must resist the temptation to allow a presumed historical setting for these patterns to shape our reading of the patterns themselves.⁷² Stated more generally, John 21 and its particular set of literary-historical issues should be described in isolation, as unique textual issues, before their narrative relationship to 1-20 can, and should, be properly constructed.

5.2.2 John 21 as the Realization of a Literary Pattern

Henry James describes an epilogue as, “a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks,” which Chatman more critically defines as an “element of *nachgeschichte* (after-history) for the stories main characters.”⁷³ This is to say that narrative epilogues entail the realization of sets of expectations for characters that have been established throughout a preceding storyline. The “prizes” and “pensions” of John 21 involve the representative status accorded to the distinct pastoral roles of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the early church, though Jesus has few “cheerful remarks” to pass on to either. A number of scholars working from either side of the redactional debate on the chapter have explored this function of epilogues in some detail, charting the way that John 21 is the conclusion of a cycle that makes sense of its abrupt shift in focus to these post-Easter aspects of its main characters.

One of the more complex descriptions of a literary pattern in John that ends in chapter 21 can be found in Brodie’s labyrinthine commentary on John.⁷⁴ Brodie’s commentary completely overhauls the redactional outline of John’s composition by

⁷² As is the case with N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). Wright claims the these new texts in John 21 conflict with the way John 20 recapitulates John 1 (667). Wright indicates that chapter 20 was “the intended climax of the book as a whole,” evidenced in the way it matches the prologue and culminates major themes of the Gospel, and chapter 21 then remains “quite clearly an afterthought... even if it is “an important one.” (675) Thus, in Wright’s pattern, John 21 was not written just to provide another resurrection scene, but to address the need of the community to settle issues with Peter and the death of the Beloved Disciple. In Wright’s case, the controlling features of John 21 are the presumed historical context of their composition. This presumed setting leads us to conclude it was drafted in haste; a corrective afterthought. Yet, alternate historical scenarios for the chapter could be proposed that preserve the reader’s experience of its narrative coherence and elegance.

⁷³ S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 118.

⁷⁴ T. L. Brodie *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

describing a network of intentional thematic and narrative patterns that have John 21 as their eventual aim. Following Kysar, Brodie claims that the conclusion of the gospel actually begins in 19:35, is internally reviewed in 20:30-31, and then finalized in 21:24-25. The reference to the Beloved Disciple in 19:35 conclusively underscores the reliability of the gospel's chief witness, the purpose of which is then defined after intervening narrative in 20:30-31. It is only in chapter 21, which through this dual conclusion becomes a natural direction for the gospel to flow, that these two aspects of the reliability and function of the Beloved Disciple's witness become coordinated. It is the case that John 21:24-25 brings these two aspects of the final chapters of John together, but it is problematic to consider 19:35 as part of a conclusion to the gospel. A more natural reading would identify the Beloved Disciple's witness to Jesus' death in chapter 19 as a complimentary witness to the references from Psalms and Zechariah in the following verses. In this case, there are two forms of witness to Jesus' death in John's gospel, the first being the Hebrew Scriptures, and the second being the interpretive presence of the Beloved Disciple at the actual events as they occurred. While I disagree with Brodie on the particulars, there is in John 21 the collusion of lingering references to the gospel's reliability and purpose.

More recently, Bauckham has argued that 21:24-25 is the other half of a conclusion begun in 20:30-31.⁷⁵ He notes that every point made in 21:24-25 is a direct expansion of a parallel point in 20:30-31. Not only were "many other signs" performed, but there were so many that all the books in the world couldn't contain them. No longer are they just "signs," but "deeds." The purpose of the gospel is not just to generate belief, but faith in the events to which the Beloved Disciple testifies.⁷⁶ Bauckham's solution is surprisingly original, and is an innovative

⁷⁵ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 365.

⁷⁶ The two conclusions are not exactly in parallel, in that at every point possible, the latter expands on the former. (Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 365) Bauckham's riveting explanation here proceeds as follows: The second conclusion expands "signs" to include deeds, particularly the deeds of Jesus. The first conclusion speaks of disciples; the second of one disciple. The first conclusion only implies witness; the second conclusion makes this witness explicit. The first does not mention the author; the second features the author pointing to himself. The first conclusion links to 1:7, "so that you may believe." The second conclusion uses witness language for the Beloved Disciple recalling John the Baptist, which naturally follows this first conclusive reference to 1:7. In relation to the immediate narrative context: the first conclusion builds on the confession of Thomas and describes how those who do not see the risen Christ can also come to believe; the second conclusion builds on the confession of Thomas with the conversation about Peter and the

description of the inherent continuity between John 1-20 and 21. However, it is entirely possible that a creative later editor or redactor could have created 21:24-25 to look exactly how Bauckham describes it, thus rendering the arguing from lesser to greater relationship of John 20:30-31 and John 21:24-25 more a matter of redactional artifice than intended literary craft.⁷⁷ The complex network of patterns in which Brodie's threefold conclusion is one part makes such a possibility less probable, but these two demonstrations of the congruity of 21:24-25 with the rest of the gospel are a formidable critique of redactional readings that simply disconnected the verses from the rest of the gospel.

Operating at a more literary-theoretical perspective is Segovia's argument that John 21 is a "farewell-type scene" with distinct similarities to ancient biographical narratives, John 21 being the concluding stage of their characteristic three-stage format.⁷⁸ In this last stage, the focus typically shifts to the death of the protagonist and their lasting historical significance. But when this generic convention is transposed to the gospel context, the traditional mode of describing Jesus' lasting historical significance invariably takes place in an ascension narrative. At first glimpse, this is problematic for the Gospel of John, which instead ends in the appearance and discourse of Jesus with these representative disciples. However, when John 21 is read as part of a pattern of biographical conclusion which highlights the lasting influence of Jesus' life and death, it becomes a direct address by Jesus to the church through his discourse with Peter and the Beloved Disciple that enables

Beloved Disciple. On this last, fairly complex, point, Bauckham says: "Thus the Gospel withholds the revelation that the Beloved Disciple wrote the Gospel until this can be shown to be the hidden meaning of a cryptic saying of Jesus. This particular disciple's writing of a Gospel is finally authorized by the explanation that he did so in fulfilment of the role that Jesus assigned to him" (Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 368)

⁷⁷ The data are clear. John 21 is a text constructed with an eye toward Johannine detail. It is simply the case that a highly skilled redactor could be responsible, rather than an original author closer to the drafting of 1-20. An example of this skill is the correspondence between the prologue and epilogue, confirmed by numerical composition. In Bauckham's estimation, the prologue is 496 syllables which is both the triangular number of 31 and is a perfect number and the numerical value of *monogenes*. The Epilogue has 496 words. (Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 364-365). (cf. M.J.J. Mencken *Numerical Literary Techniques in John: The Fourth Evangelist's Use of Numbers of Words and Syllables* NovTSupp 55; Leiden: Brill, 1985) and R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1993) 390-393). In addition, the first and second conclusion each have 43 words, though this only works for 20:30-31 if we remove *autou*. (cf. C. Savasta "Gv 20,30-32 e 21,24-25: Una Doppia Finale?" *BeO* 43 [2001]: 130.)

⁷⁸ F. Segovia. "The Final Farewell of Jesus: A Reading of John 20:30-21:25." *Semeia* 53 (1991): 167-90.

an ascension, “not within the confines of the story world of John, but beyond the text into the extra-textual world of the reader.”⁷⁹

This reading is consistent with Gaventa’s description of John 21 as an “archive of excess” that creates a literary open-endedness which functions hermeneutically as a type or literary, formal echo of ascension.⁸⁰ Walter Crouch recapitulates the pattern by explaining how the author of the gospel becomes simultaneously self-aware and ceases to exist in the conclusion of John 20:30-31, after which this newfound self-awareness of the author can have no more effect. But, in a type of ascension, “The epilogue of chapter 21 resurrects the narration on the level of story world, the narrator descending from the previous metanarrative level.”⁸¹ In all three of these readings, chapter 21 is the realization of a literary pattern that mimics the synoptic kerygma itself, the ascension component taking place in the actual act of believing what has been written.

A far more esoteric literary pattern has been detected by Counet’s deconstructionist reading of the gospel, which takes its cues from John’s awareness of oppositional language through its opposing symbols of light and dark, life and death, faith and unbelief.⁸² A more fundamental line of literary craft through which the gospel directs readers to abandon a logocentric conception of the gospel for the movement towards faith represented by the anonymous presence of the Beloved Disciple involves an *inclusio* set up by the acute literary self-awareness of 21:24-25 with its direct references both to the author and itself as a “book”. In John 1, the

⁷⁹ Segovia, “Journeys of the Word of God,” 107: “The expectation created in the reader by this anticipated event goes unsatisfied as the epilogue ends with Jesus on the shore of Galilee...In this sense, the character Jesus has ascended, not within the confines of the story world of John, but beyond the text into the extra textual world of the reader.”

⁸⁰ In *The Print’s First Kiss*, J. Staley describes a fivefold division in the gospel (1:1-18; 1:19-3:36 – first ministry tour; 4:1-6:71 – second ministry tour; 7:1-10:42 – third ministry tour; 11:1-21:25 – fourth ministry tour) Each section is similar in structure, even concentric, with centres in the prologue and the motif of a “journey of Jesus.” This symmetry is designed to provide continual closure as the reader keeps coming back to the same starting place; this closure is never final because it is always re-opening the plot, to re-read the opening in light of the previous closing; it allows the reader to see the same thing over and over again while looking more closely. (J. L. Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* SBLDS 82 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988]).

⁸¹ W. B. Crouch, *Death and Closure in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 106.

⁸² P. C. Counet *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel* BIS 44 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

gospel begins with λόγος, and then in John 21 ends with βιβλία. In Counet's reading, the gospel traverses this inclusion by describing how the same world created by the Logos is the one which could not contain all the books written about him. According to Counet's deconstructionist exegesis, "One can also put it this way. In the beginning, where the Gospel pretends to possess the Logos and the Truth, and also at the end, not only the author, but the whole library of books (which could still be written about Jesus, and for which the world does not have enough space), are kept outside the logos of the text."⁸³ In Counet's stunning reading, the ascension in John 21 involves the final elevation of the entire gospel to the apophatic experience of faith it has created in its readers, and has been exemplified by the Beloved Disciple.

5.2.3 John 21 as the Clarification of an Historical Pattern

As the chapter in which the readers of John's gospel are most directly addressed, drawing attention to the source and reliability of its composition, John 21 is also the final step in the historical pattern that gives the gospel its unique form. This is the reason that the chapter is the cornerstone of all redactional criticism, as whether one disassociates the chapter from the rest of the gospel or not, it is the literary end of the Johannine tradition. This is part of the reason that Hengel's influential work on John posits that 21:20-25 is key in identifying the overall historical location of the gospel.⁸⁴ In Hengel's reconstruction of the long period of time over which the gospel was composed as a blend of John the Elder's eyewitness and various Synoptic sources, John 21 is necessarily marked by indications of editorial self-awareness and reference to the veracity of its now absent primary source.⁸⁵ The

⁸³ Counet, *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel*, 329

⁸⁴ Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 83

⁸⁵ Hengel's has several assumptions about John's development, relevant to this point: 1. The Gospel was written over time as the deposit of John the elder, completed after his death. 2. An archaic Jewish/Palestinian layer of the Gospel may be present, but otherwise it is impossible to reconstruct what, if any, sources inform the work. 3. Aporias are best explained by the slow rate of composition of the gospel. 4. The author was not a very good writer. 5. The author primarily instructed by oral teaching, of which the writings are by-products. 6. The tendency to criticize the work in a way that resolves its "contradictions" may destroy the theological fabric of the work. 7. John the Elder was not able to complete the

“we” of 21:24, which includes both the readers and final editors of the gospel, have now effectively become part of the Johannine tradition over this long compositional history.⁸⁶

A similar approach to the chapter can be found in Schnackenburg’s description of the author of John 21 as someone writing creatively in the spirit of chapters 1-20, but having difficulty merging the disparate traditional material he has at hand into a cohesive narrative.⁸⁷ Chapter 21 is engaged thematically, literarily, and historically with John 1-20 by means of authorial and material connection. It doesn’t just have stylistic affinities with 1-20, rather, John 21 flows with varying degrees of success out of the same literary-theological mind responsible for the preceding text. Schnackenburg ascribes this coherency to the presence of editors in the construction of John 21 from the same pool of testimony that stands behind 1-20, as signalled by the shift to third person in 21:24-25.⁸⁸ What distinguishes John 21 from the rest of the gospel is the ecclesial emphasis of its symbolic fishing narrative and recognition scene, and the references to traditions about the apostles that are embedded in the following discourse.⁸⁹ This is the natural end for a composition history that has begun in and outlived the witness of its community’s founder.

In conclusion this discussion of three differing patterns of coherency in the text (narrative, literary, and historical) demonstrates that John 21 brings closure to all the patterns of connection it holds to John 1-20 in such a way that we can legitimately posit historical connections between the texts. First, John 21 cannot be

work (cf. an authorial analogue in Ovid, ref. *Metamorphoses* in *Tristia* I, 7, 35-40) 8. Therefore, of all the possibilities, multiple redactions is the most improbable.

⁸⁶ “we are to suppose that he has died... It follows from this that the Gospel was first edited and put into circulation by a group of disciples, though given the concluding *oimai* in v. 25, an individual may have written on their behalf.” (Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, 84)

⁸⁷ Per Schnackenburg: “A purposeful hand is at work; but it does not have very compliant material on which to work. The available traditions have to be made to fit the desired effect.” (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 343).

⁸⁸ “So editors are here indicated, who, by means of the comments in vv.1 and 14 which form a framework, wanted to connect the narrative vv. 2-13 with chapter 20, and at the same time, to set off vv. 15-23 against this appearance to the disciples.” (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 341).

⁸⁹ Again, Schnackenburg articulates this well: “The entire added chapter has been written from a pronouncedly “ecclesiastical” point of view, from the viewpoint of the Church at the time it was compiled.” (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 344).

read as a text distinct from the literary and thematic development of John 1-20. The apparent connections between these texts are foundational to the entire gospel, and not simply to either of these texts in isolation. Second, the connection between John 1-20 and John 21 is one that would not simply have appeared organic and seamless to readers, due to its credible literary craft as an epilogue, addressing the reader in specific and conclusive ways.

5.3 John 21 and the Synoptics

The discussion of John's use of the Synoptics is still an active field of inquiry, motivated by the current consensus that John is in some fashion dependent on one or more of the Synoptic accounts.⁹⁰ Typically, this conversation centres around the possibility that the similar story in Luke 5:1-11 is the source behind the fishing scene of 21.1-14. In order for this to be the case, what we would have in the fishing scene of John 21 is the redactional blending of Luke 5:1-11 and a recognition scene tradition comparable to Luke 24:13-35. The watershed moment in this regard is Neiryck's essay on John 21 that has since served as a contemporary appraisal of the state of the art on scholarship in this area and an attempt to inject the discussion with fresh issues for consideration.⁹¹ Under the influence of R. Pesch and R. Fortna, the dominant position on this issue is that the narrative of the large catch of fish in John 21 is a recontextualization of the tradition found in Luke 5.⁹² In this redactional theory, John 21 utilizes a pre-resurrection Jesus tradition and transposes it to the

⁹⁰ The idea is dominant until mid-century that John should be read in light of the Synoptics, with the notable exception of J.A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J.F. Coakley (SCM Press: London, 1985). He makes the case that dependence on the Synoptics can no longer be presumed (i.e. it may well be the case, but the hypothesis need no longer be assumed). Robinson: "the priority of John does not depend on which Gospel was actually begun or finished first. Nor does it deny that John knew and presupposed traditions that he did not use... What we shall not assume is that John has to be slotted into the Synoptic picture. On the contrary, we shall ask what is to be learned by making the opposite presumption" (Robinson, *The Priority of John*, 4).

⁹¹ "F. Neiryck, "John 21," *NTS* 36 1990 321-336.

⁹² R. Pesch, *Der reiche Fischfang. Lk 5,1-11/Jo 21,1-14* (Patmos: Düsseldorf, 1969); R. Pesch, "La rédaction lucanienne du logion des pêcheurs d'hommes (Lc., V, 10c) in *L'évangile de Luc*, ed. F. Neiryck BETL 32 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 135-154; R. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs* SNTSMS 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and R. Fortna *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 65-79. See also, H.-P. Heekeren, *Die Zeichen-Quelle der johanneischen Redaktion* SBS 113 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1984), M.-É. Boismard and A. Lamouille, *L'Évangile de Jean* (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 476-85, and Beasley-Murray, *John*, 397.

post-resurrection setting, bringing with it a host of thematic and theological connections that would have been made by the earliest readers familiar with this exchange.⁹³ Apart from the supposition that John 21 is the second of two very similar fishing narratives, the only historical-critical alternative is that offered by G. Klein, which has not been well accepted.⁹⁴ In this reversal of Pesch and Fortna's position, Luke 5 is a post-resurrection tradition seen again in John 21 that has been retrofitted to the beginning Jesus' ministry. Either way, Neiryneck is intent on establishing that the similarities between the two pericopes are relevant enough that they require some fashion of comparative scrutiny.

The consensus view, which attempts to link Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:1-14, is based on a source-critical perception of seams throughout the latter passage, which is supported by the consistency of this miracle with other Galilean signs in John's narrative that also match the original context of Luke's pericope. Boismard goes so far as to note specific words and stylistic features that mark John 21:1-14 as evidence of its original source. Pesch sees John 21:1-14 as a combination of sources signalled by the transition from miracle motif to appearance motif. The

⁹³ "Diachronic/Synchronic Reading John 21 and Luke 5" R.T. Fortna 387-402 "...the possibility of viewing the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics *intertextually* is a promising one, but it does not establish that such intertextuality in fact existed for the Fourth Evangelist or the intended readers, as it certainly – and explicitly – did as between the Fourth Gospel and the Old Testament." (388) Neiryneck in "John 21" states that: 1. the reader benefits from the switch of context from Luke 5 – as it opens up the Peter/Jesus relationship 2. Introduces the BD into the context. The tacit recognition of Jesus' Lordship in Luke 5 is transferred explicitly to the lips of the BD in John 21. Fortna contradicts this: "A redactional-critical reading of Jn 21 against Lk 5 ought to help the reader do more than imagine possibilities, many of them imaginable without it." (392) "Its close reading reveals points at which a diachronic (or, better, a stereoptic) perspective – the distinction between redaction and something redacted, something 'earlier' – will make the most sense of the text. When we find such a redactional moment, we will surely imagine what the text would have been like without it and therefore how its *presence* contributes to a new meaning." (399) Fortna argues that taking the text totally synchronically is "impoverished." If the "depth of the text itself reveals by its own contours ground for comparison" this leads to richer readings. And he thus disagrees with finding Synoptic links. (399)

⁹⁴ G. Klein, "Die Berufung des Petrus" *ZNW* 58 (1967): 1-44, esp. 35 n.135 and 25 n. 91. On the alternative, see Wiarda, "Narrative Unity and Its Implications," 70: "the explicitly expressed significance of the miracle in Luke 5 fits the situation depicted in the John 21 narrative almost perfectly...." but it is unlikely that this is either a coincidence or that this is Luke 5 transposed in context. "Given the overall theme of his narrative, the author almost certainly would have included such a reference if it had been a part of a tradition he was using." After the resurrection, in a situation in which Peter needed to be reminded of his calling, Jesus acted purposefully again, coming to Peter with an almost identical sign." (Wiarda, "Narrative Unity and Its Implications, 71). R. Brown "John 21 and the First Appearance of the Risen Jesus to Peter," *Resurrexit*, ed. É. Dhanis (Rome: Vaticana, 1974). 246-265, disagrees.

appearance of Jesus combines a recognition scene with the meal narrative, and these come from a source separate from the original miracle source. But according to Neiryck, the weakness of Pesch's redactional analysis is that we aren't able to identify enough of Pesch's "second source" that it provides "sufficient evidence for his case."⁹⁵ Likewise, attempts to secure grounding for the meal scene in either Luke 24:30-31 or John 6:11 also prove too inclusive to identify a specific "secondary level of composition."⁹⁶

Neiryck then turns to Pesch's first source, which the original miracle tradition behind John 21. Reading against Pesch and Fortna, Neiryck opts for positing Luke 5:1-11 as the source behind John 21 rather than a less tangible tradition. This wrests the quest for a source behind John 21 out of source-critical attempts to discover a common source or pre-Johannine and pre-Lukan and places it in direct contact with the Gospel of Luke, which Neiryck takes as the *Vorlage*.⁹⁷

A secondary concern in Neiryck's essay is to examine the role of the Beloved Disciple in relevant Johannine passages and their possible synoptic parallels. And though Neiryck is not interested in engaging with the debate concerning the literary status of John 21 as epilogue, appendix, or postscript, he does serve to put these two fundamental questions, regarding sources of John 21:1-14 and the identity of the Beloved Disciple, on new footing.⁹⁸ His answers to both of these questions demonstrate two new directions for the study of John 21. First, if it can be demonstrated that John 21 is reading with Luke 5, then it may be far less

⁹⁵ Neiryck, "John 21," 324.

⁹⁶ Neiryck, "John 21," 325. It is clear from the reference to Galilee that new information is being presented to the readers of John that is present in the Synoptics. It is not clear whether or not John 21 is making use of Luke 5, but this would have registered to readers of both gospels, and provided an invigorating transposition in context. The point in John 21 is that the disciples have returned to their previous occupations, which is not contrary to the point made in Luke 5, as Luke 5 does not have them being called from their original professions, but simply uses the fishing motif to ground this calling in what would later become a proficient metaphor of that very calling.

⁹⁷ Neiryck, "John 21," 336. Rather than seeing the meal scene in Luke 24:36-40 as the source behind John 21, Neiryck shifts it to John 20:19b-10. This accords with his connection between John 20:3-10 and Luke 24:12. John 20:19b-20 "has its *Vorlage* in Luke 24:36-40, these connections make it tempting to look at J 21 in light of Luke. 2..." as "The evangelist has introduced the Beloved Disciple in the story of the Gospel at the dark moments of discipleship..." (Neiryck, "John 21," 336)

⁹⁸ "It was not my intention to discuss whether John 21 is an 'appendix to the Gospel' or an 'epilogue of the Gospel'. The observations pro and contra have been made many times and the evidence evaluated as convincing or unconvincing." (Neiryck, "John 21," 336)

fragmentary and independent than previous redactional readings assume it to be. And secondly, by charting the role of the Beloved Disciple through the Gospel and its possible Synoptic parallels, Neiryck takes questions concerning the Beloved Disciple out of the hands of Johannine studies on John 21 and places them in broader conversation with John 1-20 and the characterization of the disciples in the Synoptic accounts.

Out of this emerges the previously address comment regarding the rapprochement between different redactional-critical perspectives on the chapter, namely that, “If I am not mistaken, we can observe that in recent studies the two positions, the evangelist’s addendum or the appendix of a post-Johannine redactor, come closer to one another: the redactor sometimes takes the shape of an evangelist, and ch. 21 is studied as part of the Fourth Gospel.”⁹⁹ If anything, the awkwardness of the relationship between Luke 5:1-11 and John 21 destabilizes facile redactional models of John’s final composition. In this debate concerning the presence of a synoptic tradition in John 21, the ambiguity of its composition history begins to resist the definitive reconstructions most often sought by redaction criticism.

From another direction, Fortna suggests that “...the possibility of viewing the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics *intertextually* is a promising one, but it does not establish that such intertextuality in fact existed for the Fourth Evangelist or the intended readers, as it certainly – and explicitly – did as between the Fourth Gospel and the Old Testament.”¹⁰⁰ Neiryck adduces that the reader of John 21 benefits from its transposition from a pre-resurrection context, as it revitalizes the tradition with the depiction of Peter and the Beloved Disciple as ideal disciples. Peter’s confession of Lordship in Luke 5 is made even more relevant for readers of John by his recognition of the risen Christ. But for Fortna, our inability to be precise about the redactional relationship between the two pericopes is the very source of John 21’s

⁹⁹ Neiryck, “John 21,” 336. “We might say that the apocryphal gospels have in common that they do not conform to or follow the Gospel of Mark, the Synoptics, or the canonical gospels generally, and John has in common with them that he too is not constrained by Mark or the Synoptics.” (D.M. Smith, “The Problem of John and the Synoptics in Light of the Relation between Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels” in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. A. Denaux [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007] 161.)

¹⁰⁰ R.T. Fortna, “Diachronic/Synchronic Reading of John 21 and Luke 5,” 392. Further: “A redactional-critical reading of Jn 21 against Lk 5 ought to help the reader do more than imagine possibilities, many of them imaginable without it.” (392)

intertextual strength. On the fishing narrative of John 21 he states, "Its close reading reveals points at which a diachronic (or, better, a stereoscopic) perspective – the distinction between redaction and something redacted, something 'earlier' – will make the most sense of the text. When we find such a redactional moment, we will surely imagine what the text would have been like without it and therefore how its *presence* contributes to a new meaning."¹⁰¹ It is not even necessary to identify the precise connection between the texts, as John 21 just implicitly asks the reader to see both texts at the same time, making the movement from the pre- to post-resurrection setting in the act of reading.¹⁰²

On the other hand, the possible narrative unity of John 21 at the point where others see redactional strata evinces a powerful reading of the placement of this miracle. In Luke 5, it clues the disciples in to the nature of their calling. Here in John 21, it takes the disciples immediately back to this memorable scene that they had already witnessed earlier in the life of Jesus, reminding them of their calling. As the story depicts a group of post-resurrection, pre-Pentecost disciples plying their trade in anticipation of another appearance of Jesus, the author of John 21 may have specifically selected this historical narrative because of its uncanny connection to this previous event in the lives of the disciples, and most specifically, Peter. As outlined by Neiryneck, the failure of redaction criticism to produce a definitive reconstruction of the relationship between these two texts may have the effect of generating in scholarship the same narrative ambiguity desired by John 21's writer. Or as Davies says, the similarities between John 21 and its supposed source in Luke 5 may "suggest that the narrative relates a story already familiar to its readers, who are in a position to fill in these gaps... Once we recognize that the Fourth Gospel *retells* a story already familiar to readers, we are no longer puzzled by the many gaps."¹⁰³

The consensus of scholarship is that the Gospel of John was written with knowledge of the Synoptic tradition, and this can be seen most clearly in the

¹⁰¹ Fortna, "Diachronic/Synchronic Reading of John 21 and Luke 5," 399.

¹⁰² Fortna argues that reading the text totally synchronically is "impoverished." If the "depth of the text itself reveals by its own contours ground for comparison" this leads to richer readings. And he thus disagrees with finding Synoptic links. (Fortna, "Diachronic/Synchronic," 399)

¹⁰³ Margaret Davies *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 30.

relationship between John 21 and the Synoptics, which lies in its original readers' ability to correlate the post-resurrection Johannine tradition to points of symbolic similarity with the disciple's growing perception of Jesus' divine identity in other canonical accounts.¹⁰⁴ The above discussion serves to demonstrate that even in highly detailed accounts of redactional transposition between John 21 and the Synoptics, readings emphasizing the continuity of John 21 with John 20 help us bridge the "gaps" that have marred the consistency of redactional criticism in the past.

5.4 In Summary: Specific Points for Further Literary-Historical Study

The following four sections will build on this survey of John 21's contextual relationships by assessing its four key literary characteristics in light of contemporary parallels. A close reading of the chapter demonstrates that it was written not as an addition to the text, but a conclusion consistent with the final edition of the gospel that bridges the gap between the witness of the Beloved Disciple and the community left in his absence. The clear presence of coherent narrative, literary, and historical patterns between John 21 and 1-20 should have priority in our assessment of its compositional history. As such coherency can be demonstrated, arguments depending on a description of the chapter as clumsy and fragmentary will invariably read against the original intention of its redactional intertextuality. This also applies to the ambiguity of its relationship to the Synoptic tradition, which though largely inscrutable, is an essential component of its literary effect.

What ultimately gives shape to the success of John 21 as a highly literate conclusion to the Johannine tradition are four dominant points of literary-historical reference. The first of these is the way in which the gospel is attributed to the anonymous Beloved Disciple, which engages a notion of authorship with creative

¹⁰⁴ C.K. Barrett "The Place of John and the Synoptics," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. A. Denaux (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 67 argues for taking Occam's razor to evidence and positing a Markan source for John. In addition, "A theologian writing a gospel towards the end of the second century would, if he used Mark at all, have to use it in something like the way John appears to have done." (C.K. Barrett "The Place of John and the Synoptics, 74)

parallels both in the Synoptic accounts and broader trends in Greco-Roman literature of the era. A second key feature is the increased frequency of authorial self-awareness in the chapter, which clues the reader into both its literary and ecclesial aims at the same time. There is a shift in narrative time between John 1-20 and John 21 that is a third indication of the chapter's subtle literary acumen. And finally, the reference to "books" in 21:25 overtly positions the chapter, and the Johannine tradition it completes, as an intentionally literate composition. Taken together, these four features of the chapter point us toward a reading of John 21 that draws strength from the most cogent descriptions of the chapter in historical and literary criticism, providing the raw data from which we can begin to enact Culpepper's rapprochement. The next four chapters will treat these four features independently as case studies arguing the merits of the application of a literary-historical perspective on the chapter.

Chapter 6

Beloved Disciple and Anonymity in John 21

The traditional question about the authorship of the Gospel of John raised by references to the Beloved Disciple in John 21 is: Who is the historical referent of the Beloved Disciple? Is it one of the Twelve? Is he the eyewitness that grants the Gospel of John its veracity?¹ Is he/she anonymous because he/she is not one of the Twelve?² Is he the idealized version of a literal historical figure?³ Was his identity known to readers of the gospel, but has now slipped through the cracks of second century apologetic rhetoric?⁴ If this is the case, then the tendency to refer to the Beloved Disciple as an anonymous figure is an historical-critical anachronism that has led to misguided estimations of his function in the gospel. In past interrogations of the few references to the Beloved Disciple, the goal has been either to determine

¹ e.g. A. Dewey, "The Eyewitness of History: Visionary Consciousness in the Fourth Gospel" in *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition*. ed. R. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Louisville Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 59-70. Dewey argues that the Beloved Disciple is set forth as an eyewitness in the gospel which: "For the first century, this was tantamount to declaring that consciousness could be visionary and that historical interest was found precisely in that creative chemistry of remembrance." (Dewey, "The Eyewitness of History," 70)

² S.M. Schneiders. "'Because of the Woman's Testimony . . .': Reexamining the Issue of Authorship in the Fourth Gospel." *NTS* 44 (1998), 513-535. Schneiders argues that the Beloved Disciple became anonymous because the historical referent was female.

³ R. Bauckham, "The Beloved Disciple as Ideal Author." *JSNT* 49 (1993): 21-44. Bauckham argues against Martin Hengel's idea that the Beloved Disciple is John of Zebedee/John the Elder. Rather, the Beloved Disciple is identified at the end of the gospel as John the Elder and shown to be an ideally qualified author. For K. Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis*. JSNTSup 32 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989). the Beloved Disciple is an eyewitness with a complimentary function to Peter. A. Lincoln. "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness." *JSNT* 85 (2002) 3-26; R.F. Collins. "From John to the Beloved Disciple: An Essay on Johannine Characters." *Interpretation* 49 (1995) 359-369; and J.A. Grassi. *The Secret Identity of the Beloved Disciple*. (Mahwah, NJ : Paulist Press, 1992) all argue that he is simply an ideal figure.

⁴ P.S. Minear. "The Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John: Some Clues and Conjectures." *Novum Testamentum* 19 (1977) 105-123.

the specificity of his identity within the range of highly contested internal and external witnesses or to correlate this lack of specificity with the historical record.⁵

This latter goal could be alternately described as an attempt to associate this obscured figure with specific layers of redaction in the Gospel.⁶ Post-Culpepper, the focus of the question has shifted considerably. In *Anatomy of the Gospel*, he claims, “The separation of the narrator from the implied author, which is without parallel in ancient literature, probably came about, therefore, as a result of the idealizing of the Beloved Disciple and the comment of an editor rather than as a sophisticated ploy by an individual author.”⁷ In Culpepper’s paradigmatic shift, the question has moved from one of specificity to one of function. And this is not necessarily referring to recovery of the original intention or an original authorial strategy, but the fallout of a long process by which the Gospel of John was composed through a Johannine School.⁸

As the Johannine tradition developed, these distances between its sources and the authors of the texts designed to codify them became characterized by this complexity of authorial reference in which the narrator becomes not just the arbiter of sets of narratives and discourses, but of an implied author that remains the historical basis of this testimony.⁹ The Johannine narrator, the one who has woven

⁵ “Discussion of these verses has generally been concerned with their place within the gospel’s compositional history.” (Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 43). cf. R. Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1975), 10-101; Klaus Scholtissek, “Johannine Studies: A Survey of Recent Research With Special Regard to German Contributions.” *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 6 (1998) 227-259; Köstenberger, *Studies in John and Gender*, 17-48; and the introduction to C. Keener, *The Gospel of John – Vol. 1* (Peabody, MA; Hendrickson, 2003).

⁶ C. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 105-108.

⁷ R. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Gospel*, 44.

⁸ cf. Culpepper, *Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on An Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 266-70. Alternatively, Schnackenburg argues that the Beloved Disciple is John the Apostle, used by the evangelist to write the gospel. He “did not share the experience of Jesus’ entire ministry, but was possibly a witness of the last events, perhaps a Jerusalem disciple of Jesus.” (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 381)

⁹ An Implied Author is evoked by narrative, the “sum of choices made by author.” (Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 16). A Real Author could be a product of several authors: “The voice that tells the story and speaks to the reader is a rhetorical device.” (Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 16). This Real Author corresponds to the narrator in John’s gospel responsible for the asides, and is self-aware. Cf. Martin Hengel, “Das Johannesevangelium als Quelle für die Geschichte des antiken Judentums,” in *Judaica, Hellenistica et Christiana: Kleine Schriften II* WUNT 109 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck,

the Beloved Disciple into the fabric of the gospel, has become a retroactive figure in the tradition. In the accumulation of asides in the gospel, of which references to the Beloved Disciple are asides in the highest degree, the narrator has become an interpretive voice of the Johannine community. As Culpepper explains, "...the Johannine narrator, who presumably expresses the perspective of the author, tells the story from a point of view which in its retrospection is informed by memory, interpretation of scripture, the church, consciousness of the presence of the Spirit, and an acute sensitivity to the history and struggles of the Johannine community."¹⁰

Though Keener claims that this kind of distinction between the narrator and implied author is not without precedent in John's contemporary literature, he offers no literary parallels that provide context for this plausible rupture in John's gospel between the two literary constructs.¹¹ As Culpepper's initial statement concerning the lack of literary parallels to this hermeneutic has withstood the test of scholarship, we have to look elsewhere for the literary-historical significance of the Beloved Disciple's anonymity that persists in chapter 21. A first place to investigate is the narrative, literary, and historical context of John 21, which provides much space for reflection on the matter. A second clear area of influence on the Beloved Disciple's anonymity derives from the author of John 21's acute consciousness of genre.

6.1 Beloved Disciple and His Gospel

Schnackenburg attempted to avoid the designation "Beloved Disciple" in his commentary on the gospel, preferring the more historically accurate designation "the disciple whom Jesus loved."¹² Consistent with Culpepper's assessment of Historical Criticism on John, the term we all know this historical figure by is a mere construct, shorthand for this layer of the tradition. But by any label, it is agreed upon that the Beloved Disciple is a character in the Gospel of John that has a knack for appearing

1999), 293–334, who describes the historiographical character of the Beloved Disciple's testimony as biography.

¹⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 20.

¹¹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 112 cites Charlesworth, who references only a 4th century Persian sage, and Didache 8:2. The Didache text ("as the Lord commanded in his gospel") has a similar sense of authorship, but doesn't employ this distinction between a narrator and implied author. (Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1984], 26 ff.)

¹² Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 1.97.

at moments in the storyline of John 1-20 where eyewitness testimony can lend the text theological depth, historical veracity, or the necessary narrative logic to provide explanatory information to the reader through a brief aside. He is in the Upper Room, at the foot of the cross, one of the first in the Garden, and here on the boat an undetermined amount of time after Jesus' first appearances to the disciples.

Contrary to a majority of scholarship, Witherington claims that the first time we see the Beloved Disciple in the gospel is actually in John 11:3 as ὁν φιλεῖς. In Witherington's reasoning, most commentary overlooks the fact that since John was written as an oral teaching aid in evangelism, this marked first reference to someone that Jesus "loves," would have immediately stood out to readers of the text.¹³ Subsequent references would have naturally brought this character Lazarus to mind as that one "disciple whom Jesus loved." In oral, or aural, contexts these sorts of ordered rhythms appeal to the memory in ways that comport with the economy of language demanded from their written counterparts. When we reach John 13:23, in a meal that could have just as easily taken place in Bethany rather than Jerusalem, we see another figure that is only identified as being "loved" by Jesus.¹⁴ The natural order of these events in John 11-13 would suggest to readers and listeners that the same character is being spoken about throughout.¹⁵ There are several objections that are often made to this idea that Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple, all of which are found in Charlesworth's discussion of this possibility.¹⁶ First, Lazarus has a very small role in the Gospel. If he is not the Beloved Disciple, then we only see him in one small pericope, which makes him questionable as an "ideal disciple." Second,

¹³ From "The Historical Figure of the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel," delivered to the John, Jesus, and History seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.

¹⁴ For Witherington's theory to be true, however, the meal described in John 13 must have taken place in Bethany rather than Jerusalem (where it is traditionally held to have occurred). Since John 13 is widely accepted as referring to the Last Supper, this can be problematic.

¹⁵ Witherington's identification of the Beloved Disciple as Lazarus is based on a cumulative argument that attempts to solve some persistent narrative incongruities established by the presences of this anonymous figure: 1. It explains how the Beloved Disciple has access to the High Priest's house, as John 11:36-47 suggests that Lazarus was associate with a few of the Jewish officials that worked for the High Priests. 2. If Lazarus of Bethany is the Beloved Disciple this explains the omission of the Garden of Gethsemane prayer story in this Gospel. 3) It also explains Jn. 19:27, if the Beloved Disciple is from somewhere nearby 4) This is why he makes it to the tomb so quickly, he knows his way around Jerusalem 5) If all twelve deserted Jesus, then the Beloved Disciple must not be one of the twelve.

¹⁶ Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple*, 288ff.

Lazarus is not even referred to as a disciple in the gospel, either among those named in 20:19-22 or 21:2. It would be a stretch to consider Lazarus as one of the two unnamed disciples in 21. Third, Lazarus is not mentioned again after chapter 12, which makes it problematic to envision him at all the key events we find the Beloved Disciple so centrally involved with. A fourth, and I think most important, objection involves lack of reference to Lazarus in any of the external witnesses. Though Lazarus is a common figure in third and fourth century art, he is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament.¹⁷ On account of the fact that Lazarus does not appear in any of the witnesses referring to the identity of the Beloved Disciple, it is hard to picture him as the central witness of a dominant form of early Christianity.¹⁸ Finally, we are also told in 11:5 that Jesus loved Mary and Martha, and in 13:1 that he loved all the disciples. In face of these objections, it does not seem that Lazarus fits very well as a candidate for the role of Beloved Disciple.

It is necessary to entertain this digression because it is important to determine specifically which texts refer to the Beloved Disciple and which texts do not. Apart from the strongest objection to Lazarus being the Beloved Disciple, which is his absence in attendant early traditions, Witherington's idea is out of touch with the function of the Beloved Disciple as an implied author.¹⁹ This balance achieved by the text between the narrator and the Beloved Disciple would be rendered aporatic if he has already appeared as Lazarus. What narrative problems Lazarus solves only open up more serious literary and historical problems in our ability to assess development of the Johannine tradition. As Bauckham says, "Whatever the function of anonymity in the Gospel's portrayal of the Beloved Disciple, it would be defeated if it were not consistently employed."²⁰

¹⁷ cf. R.M. Jensen, "The Raising of Lazarus," *Bible Review* 11 (1995), 20-28.

¹⁸ Some go so far as to posit that Lazarus is a fiction: D.M. Smith, *John* (Abingdon: Nashville, 1999), 42.

¹⁹ If by "implied author," we follow Booth: "it is evident that in *all* written works there is an implied narrator or author who 'intrudes' in making the necessary choices to his story or his argument or his composition written the way he desires. He decides to tell this story rather than any other story, he employs his proof rather than any other possible proof." (W. Booth, "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*," *PMLA* 67 [March, 1952], 163-185. cf. T. Kindt and H. Harald-Muller, *The Implied Author – Concept and Controversy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 151-167.

²⁰ R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Edinburgh: Alban, 2006), 415.

The Beloved Disciple appears at six points in the Gospel of John, beginning at the Last Supper and ending in the last few verses of chapter 21, and these will be briefly treated in turn.²¹

13:23-26: 23 ἦν ἀνακείμενος εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. 24 νεύει οὖν τούτῳ Σίμων Πέτρος πυθέσθαι τίς ἂν εἴη περὶ οὗ λέγει. 25 ἀναπεσὼν οὖν ἐκεῖνος οὕτως ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, τίς ἐστιν; 26 ἀποκρίνεται [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς, Ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ὃς ἐγὼ βάρπυρον καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ. βάρπυρος οὖν τὸ ψωμίον [λαμβάνει καὶ] δίδωσιν Ἰούδα Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου.

Bracketed by Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet, and the subsequent command "to love one another, even as I have loved you," the Beloved Disciple makes his first appearance at the high point of Jesus' discourse on discipleship. In immediate contrast, his first appearance also involves the revelation of Judas as the one who would betray Jesus. In this dense narration of the cusp of Jesus' ministry in the gospel, the Beloved Disciple emerges as one aware of the full spectrum of response to Jesus that extends from a confessional faith that expresses itself in Christological mimesis to the betrayal of unbelief that can only be expressed in Johannine terms as "night." The unassuming way in which the Beloved Disciple takes the stage here as confidant of Jesus causes us to question why the narrator has waited so long to introduce him.

But there are a number of key movements in the narrative in John 13, of which the Beloved Disciple is one part. Here the gospel pivots towards the farewell discourse of 14-16, which is the necessary discursive preamble to the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is also the point at which Judas, as a complimentary ideal to the Beloved Disciple, comes to embody the gospel's preoccupation with symbols of faith and unbelief. It is precisely at this nexus of major Johannine themes that the Beloved Disciple becomes a necessary presence, not just as a witness to

²¹ This is contrary to Charlesworth's decision to prioritize John 21:1-7 as a clear reference to the Beloved Disciple (cf. Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 1:97). It seems more prudent to proceed through the texts the same way they would have introduced the Beloved Disciple to early readers.

the tradition, but an example of a disciple that live faithfully through the darkest hour of Jesus' ministry. He becomes emblematic of the movement through the death of Christ to the eschatological significance of the resurrection that is obliquely referred to by the ecclesial overtones of chapter 21.

19:25-27, 35: 25 εἰστήκεισαν δὲ παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀδελφὴ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Κλωπᾶ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ. 26 Ἰησοῦς οὖν ἰδὼν τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν παρεστῶτα ὄν ἡγάπα, λέγει τῇ μητρὶ, Γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου. 27 εἶτα λέγει τῷ μαθητῇ, Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου. καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας ἔλαβεν ὁ μαθητὴς αὐτὴν εἰς τὰ ἴδια... 35 καὶ ὁ ἔωρακῶς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, καὶ ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύ[σ]ητε.

The next time we see the Beloved Disciple is at the cross of Jesus, with Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. It is striking that he is the only male present, named among several women that are otherwise completely obscure. The text is unclear as to how this scene is occurring, it doesn't locate the Beloved Disciple any place but within hearing range, and neither does it give any temporal clues that explain his presence there. At any rate, the witness of the Beloved Disciple in this appearance is marked by his attempt to share in Jesus' suffering. While the transition of Mary from Jesus to the care of the Beloved Disciple may be laden with symbolic significance, at a surface level it serves to highlight the familial connection between him and Jesus that is not paralleled anywhere else in the canonical gospel tradition.²² It also connects the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene, a relationship that is referred to again in his next appearance, and points to both as significant actants in the gospel's preoccupation with the way people close to Jesus respond to revelation. The editorial aside of 19:35 is significant in two ways. First, it is the first indication we

²² A. Grassi, "The Role of Jesus' Mother in John's Gospel: A Reappraisal," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986), 71ff. In this article Grassi develops a chiasmus between this appearance of the Beloved Disciple and the miracle at Cana in John 2. cf. Minear, "The Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John," 186-204.

have in the gospel that the validity of its witness may be suspect.²³ We learn in chapter 21 that there were rumors about the Beloved Disciple's death circulating that may have damaged his credibility, and here the narrator goes out of his way to not just position him at the foot of the cross, but to express that his function as a valid witness is to provide a reputable context for faith in readers of the gospel. Second, this very literal witness in 19:35 is of blood and water issuing from Jesus' side, of a spear piercing his vital organs, and of the physical brutality of his death. Not only is this implicitly anti-docetic, but it connects his testimony to the very purpose of the incarnation in the destruction of Jesus' body and lays the groundwork for Eucharistic representations of Jesus' death as a sacrifice.²⁴

As the narrative moves on from Jesus' death, through his resurrection, and into the recognition scene of John 21, it is no surprise that ecclesial subtexts begin to mark the Beloved Disciple's presence in the gospel. In being the primary witness to the ultimate horror and tragedy of Jesus' work, he becomes the historical locus of the gospel's interest in faith, resurrection, and the discipleship these two theological themes make possible.²⁵

20:2-5, 8-10: 2 τρέχει οὖν καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἔβρα τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. 3 Ἐξῆλθεν οὖν ὁ Πέτρος καὶ ὁ

²³ cf. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple*, 64-65. Here he demonstrates the editor's insistence on the veracity of John through the Beloved Disciple is directed both towards the community and an increasing antagonism of Judaism towards the Christian sect. (also, J.D.G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* [London: SCM Press, 1991], 222: "By the time the Fourth Gospel was written, there was a form of Judaism which no longer regarded it as acceptable for Jews to confess Jesus as Messiah, and which could enforce its ruling on the subject among the local synagogues.")

²⁴ On Eucharistic readings: R. Brown, *Gospel of John*, 2:946-51; P. Borgen, *Bread From Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John* NTSup 10 (Leiden, Brill, 1965). 184ff; R. Brown, "The Gospel of Thomas and St. John's Gospel," NTS 9 (1962-63):155-177; J.-D., Dubois, "Le quatrieme evangile a la lumiere des recherches gnostiques actuelles," *Foi et Vie* 86 (1987):75-87; J.M. Lieu, "Gnosticism and the Gospel of John," *Exp Tim* 90 (1978-79): 233-37; P. Perkins, "John's Gospel and Gnostic Christologies: The Nag Hammadi Evidence," *ATR Supplement* 11 (1990):68-76; and G.S. Sloyan, "The Gnostic Adoption of John's Gospel and Its Canonization by the Catholic Church," *BTB* 26 (1996):125-32.

²⁵ F. Neirynck. "John 21," *NTS* 36 (1990), 336: "The evangelist has introduced the Beloved Disciple in the story of the Gospel at the dark moments of discipleship..."

ἄλλος μαθητῆς καὶ ἦρχοντο εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον. 4 ἔτρεχον δὲ οἱ δύο ὁμοῦ· καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς προέδραμεν τάχιον τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ ἦλθεν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, 5 καὶ παρακύψας βλέπει κείμενα τὰ ὀθόνια, οὐ μέντοι εἰσῆλθεν... 8 τότε οὖν εἰσῆλθεν καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς ὁ ἐλθὼν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν 9 οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν τὴν γραφὴν ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι. 10 ἀπήλθον οὖν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτοὺς οἱ μαθηταί.

Here again we have the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene working in tandem, making it no surprise to see the development of a tradition about Mary that entails a similar proximity of relationship to Jesus along with the revelatory function this engenders. The two driving questions raised by this puzzling account are why (or even what) did the Beloved Disciple believe in verse 8, and what does it mean that they “returned to their homes”? In answer to the first question, even Bultmann suggests that the empty tomb “does clearly count as proof for the resurrection,” to which the Beloved Disciple responded in faith.²⁶ This is by far the consensus of scholarship despite the abrupt way in which this expression is posed, and the immediately followed by an aside referring to the intertextual process of realization that occurred in the first witnesses to the resurrection, and then the return of these disciples to their homes.²⁷

Verse 9 certainly is a difficult verse to understand in light of the consistent trajectory of the Beloved Disciple from faith to testimony. However, the words here of Ashton are choice: “He is able to record the response the beloved disciple makes, not to the voice of an intermediary, but to a vision of emptiness. The head-band and the grave-clothes are themselves signs of absence, mute witnesses to the truth of one half of the angelic witness: he is not here. The other half has to be supplied by the disciples themselves. Peter, it seems, failed to make the necessary leap of faith

²⁶ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Louisville: Westminster, 1971), 684.

²⁷ See Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John*, 73-76 for a digest of this consensus, against which he argues based on: 1. The insertion of *ouk* in a Codex Bezae variant (which is most certainly an insertion). 2. The gradation of meaning in John’s use of the “to believe” lexical domain. 3. 20:9’s assertion that they did not yet believe. 3. Since the Beloved Disciple is Thomas (Charlesworth’s solution), this comports with the remainder of the chapter.

(that is supplied in the Appendix, 21:7); the other disciple 'saw and believed.'"²⁸ The difficulty of this text lies in interpreting the way its author has balanced the faith of the Beloved Disciple with the editorial aside concerning the development of the disciples' faith through reflection on the intertext set up between Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures through the resurrection. The tension here can be dissolved in crediting the Beloved Disciple with a faith in Jesus' resurrection, a faith later emboldened by his increased awareness of its narrative and prophetic foundation in the Hebrew Scriptures. This would be consistent with the characterization of the Beloved Disciple not as an omniscient witness, but a witness whose credibility is based on coming to faith through watching the very events of the kerygma transpire. He is emblematic of the Johannine depiction of faith in this respect, but he also becomes emblematic as a testimony that deepens in significance as the church begins to come to grips with the full significance of the resurrection. This aspect of his characterization in the gospel comes to culmination in John 21 where he is even more explicitly connected with the writing of the gospel itself, a codification of that witness.

21:7 λέγει οὖν ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ Πέτρῳ, Ὁ κύριός ἐστιν. Σίμων οὖν Πέτρος ἀκούσας ὅτι ὁ κύριός ἐστιν τὸν ἐπενδύτην διεζώσατο, ἦν γὰρ γυμνός, καὶ ἔβαλεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν,

The following three appearances have been discussed in the previous chapter, but still need to be addressed in light of the previous three appearances. The first few verses of John 21 are the closest we get to an identification of the Beloved Disciple, who must either be one of the five named or two anonymous disciples.²⁹ While in the boat, staring at this stranger on the beach, it is the Beloved Disciple that recognizes him as Jesus. By this time, it is the reader's expectation that

²⁸ J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 506.

²⁹ Which does little to cloak the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple's identity. The only thing we can glean with any certainty from these texts is that the Beloved Disciple is not Peter, which we have already learned several times. F. Neiryck does propose the idea that the Beloved Disciple is not actually part of the seven listed disciples, but his role in this section of John 21 begins and ends in verse 7. (Neiryck, "John 21" 321ff.)

the Beloved Disciple should appear at any point in the narrative at which recognition occurs. The difference here in John 21 is this is the first time a recognition on his behalf results in response by other disciples, which certainly is an evolution in the function of his witness that is engendered by the transposition of his character from chapters 13-20 into the post-Easter context of chapter 21.³⁰

21:20-23 Ἐπιστραφεὶς ὁ Πέτρος βλέπει τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀκολουθοῦντα, ὃς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν, Κύριε, τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παραδιδούς σε; 21 τοῦτον οὖν ἰδὼν ὁ Πέτρος λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ, Κύριε, οὗτος δὲ τί; 22 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σέ; σύ μοι ἀκολούθει. 23 ἐξήλθεν οὖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὅτι ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει· οὐκ εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει ἀλλ', Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι[, τί πρὸς σέ]

In these final verses of John 21, the focus of appearances of the Beloved Disciple on the way he embodies key theological themes in the gospel shifts now towards the issues that stem from him being an actual historical figure.³¹ In the corrective offered by 21:23, the gospel makes its first explicit reference to the historical significance of its implied author, grounding the setting of John 21 in two different contemporary crises that were being met by those in the community formed by the Johannine tradition. The first of these involves the passing of the Beloved Disciple, which for those who have misinterpreted Jesus' comment to Peter contradicts the authenticity of his testimony. In response to this, the editorial aside clarifies Jesus wording such that his legendary significance as a witness is confined to his role in safeguarding the Johannine tradition. The second crisis involves the passing of the Beloved Disciple as a key early Christian witness to the death and

³⁰ The Beloved Disciple and Peter story is one of several in which BD and Peter appear together (13:23-25; 20:3-10; 21:20-22, possibly 18:15-16). The need to explain the relationship between these two character is often cited as a reason for the inclusion of John 21. (S. Agourides, "The Purpose of John 21" in *Studies in the History and Text of the New Testament – In Honor of K.W. Clark*, ed. B.L. Daniels and M.J. Suggs (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1967)).

³¹ cf. M. de Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger From Heaven and Son of God*, ed. and trans. J.E. Steely (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) 211ff.

resurrection of Christ. In this case, Thyen's interpretation of μένειν as referring not to his biological life, but to the fact that his witness would remain until the eschaton, whenever that might be, is effective.³²

21:24 Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν.

In this final reference to the Beloved Disciple, his characterization as an ideal witness by virtue of his exemplary discipleship becomes fully transposed into his historical significance as the fundamental witness to the Johannine tradition. As this thought dominates the conclusion of John 21, we realize that the steadily evolving depiction of the Beloved Disciple as a witness has been a primary thematic concern since chapter 13. The end of John is inextricably bound together with his death in both a literary and historical sense.

6.2 The Beloved Disciple and His Identifications

Having surveyed references to the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John and the way his presence evolves into his unveiling at the end of John, it is worth returning to the discussion about uncovering his true identity. Much discussion on the Beloved Disciple focuses on his possible identities, and it is beyond the scope of this study to wade into the particulars of this debate. The presence of the Beloved Disciple in John 21 is, however, an inescapably important feature of its literary-historical mechanics, as his role in the formation of the Johannine tradition is foregrounded by 21:20-25. Assuming the accuracy of the preceding survey of his appearances, the only thing we can say with certainty is that the gospel makes any assessment of his identity problematic.³³ This, however, does not mean that the

³² H. Thyen, "Entwicklungen innerhalb der johanneischen Theologie und Kirche im Spiegel vom Joh 21 und der Lieblingsjungertext des Evangeliums," in *L'Évangile de Jean*, ed. M. de Jonge (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), 273. cf. M. de Jonge. "The Beloved Disciple and the Date of the Gospel of John," in *Text and Interpretation*, ed. E. Best and R. McLaren Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 99-114.

³³ cf. T. Thatcher, "The Legend of the Beloved Disciple," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. R.T. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001)

Beloved Disciple is problematic, as John 21 brackets out this question of his identity by prioritizing his function as ideal witness by virtue of his exemplary discipleship.

Our various possibilities for his identification, however, are well documented in the literature. He may be an historical figure that has been cloaked in anonymity to distinguish him from other characters in the gospel.³⁴ And of course arguments have been made that the Beloved Disciple is everyone from Lazarus to Mary Magdalene. He may be what Bultmann called an “ideal” figure, a term that most subsequent commentary has adopted for the idea that the Beloved Disciple is actually just a function of the text, a composite of the third person plural in 21:24. It is also possible that the Beloved Disciple is a function of the text as a foil to other characters in the narrative, such as Peter and Judas. His presence as a witness creates contours in their responses to Jesus that would otherwise remain latent in the gospel. The Beloved Disciple may be an editorial invention that stands in for a figure that provided the first layer of the Johannine tradition, and functions as a placeholder for this key early Christian witness.³⁵

91-100. The biographical details about the Beloved Disciple are remarkably vague, especially for a gospel marked by its attention to character detail.

³⁴ As John of Zebedee: J.A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM Press, 93-122; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 68-81; Ridderbos, 672-83; C.L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 22-41; C. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 82-104; H.P.V Nunn, *The Son of Zebedee and the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1927); and E. Abbott, A.P. Peabody, and J.B. Lightfoot, *The Fourth Gospel: Evidences External and Internal of its Johannine Authorship* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1892). That he was not one of the twelve, but a Jerusalem resident, is also argued by: F.C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 247-50; A.E. Garvie, *The Beloved Disciple* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), 202-204; J.N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 43-45; P. Parker, “John the Son of Zebedee and the Fourth Gospel” *JBL* 81 (1962): 35-43; O. Cullman, *The Johannine Circle*, (tr. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1976), 63-85; R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London: Chapman, 1979), 31-34; D.E.H. Whitely, “Was John Written by a Sadducee?” in W. Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römische Welt* II.25.3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985) 2481-2505; Beasley Murray, lxx-lxxv; Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (tr. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1989) 76-80 and *Die johanneische Frage* (WUNT 67: Tübingen: Mohr, 1993) 210-219; J.W. Pryor, *John: Evangelist of the Covenant People* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1992) 3; J. Grassi, *The Secret Identity of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992); R. A. Culpepper, *John the Son of Zebedee: Life of a Legend* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994) 14-15.

³⁵ cf. Tom Thatcher’s notion of “retrojection.” (Thatcher, “The Legend of the Beloved Disciple,” 97) “Retrojection” is the process turning the name of an individual into the embodiment of an oral tradition. Retrojection occurs through a semiotic shift in the referents for the name of the source, or original individual.

Taken at face value, however, the author of John 21 provides a fairly comprehensive rationale for his inclusion and characterization of the Beloved Disciple without making any explicit reference to his actual identity. This does not necessarily mean that he is simply a function of the text or the necessary literary component of a tradition that has been updated in the absence of its initial witness. And it certainly doesn't mean that his historical identity was simply not known to early readers of the text.³⁶ It is on this last consideration that Bauckham's recent argument for the identification of the Beloved Disciple as John the Elder turns.

Bauckham depicts the Beloved Disciple as the primary witness and author of the gospel. But he is not merely a witness in an historical sense, anonymized as a talisman of veracity for a particular tradition. Rather, he is a witness in what A.T. Lincoln describes as the "cosmic trial" that serves as the metaphorical structure for the entire gospel.³⁷ Bauckham states, "In that framework witness is a legal metaphor and the Beloved Disciple's witness cannot be equated with 'literal' eyewitness." Rather, his testimony is "a literary device in the service of the theological agenda of witness, not a serious claim to historiographical status"³⁸ On the other hand, the Beloved Disciple can only have a valid role in participating with and adjudicating between the various witnesses in this trial if he "does in some sense report them." To conflate the Beloved Disciple and his testimony, which is what de-historicized identifications of the Beloved Disciple as an ideal disciple existing only in the text, is to deny his testimony any legitimate historical currency. Either he is an exemplary witness to the ministry of Jesus, or he is simply a witness to the text that has invented him. This metaphorical understanding of witness should not be placed in opposition to the traditional historiographic function of the Beloved Disciple ascribed to him by tradition readings. The Gospel of John actually hews much closer to the self-conscious historiography of Luke-Acts than is often assumed.³⁹ The emphasis

³⁶ Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to John* 3:379: "The fact is that the compiler of Jn 21 is close to the evangelist in style and thought, even if enough differences can be recognized....With that, a *mistake* concerning his identity is eliminated with considerable certainty; an intentional *deception* of the readers would have to be supposed."

³⁷ A.T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000).

³⁸ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 386.

³⁹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 389ff.

on eyewitness in the gospel most clearly seen in the presence of the Beloved Disciple is what permits these two concepts of witness to interface with the Johannine tradition.

The strength of this definition of witness in the gospel lends credibility to the idea that the Beloved Disciple really is its author. In response to the idea that he is an “ideal disciple” in a de-historicized sense, Bauckham shows how at no point in the gospel is the Beloved Disciple actually portrayed as superior to Peter, rather they represent two different types of discipleship. This is very clear in John 21:7, where while it is the Beloved Disciple that identifies Jesus, it is Peter that responds so quickly and decisively to his presence. The Beloved Disciple really is an ideal witness. He is present at key points in the narrative. There is a great deal of narrative detail that attends his appearances. And he has effective theological insight into the events of the gospel. These characteristics “qualify him to be the ideal witness to Jesus, his story, and its meaning.”⁴⁰ In John 21, the respective roles assigned to Peter and the Beloved Disciple that have been hinted at throughout the gospel now gain their intended significance in this post-resurrection setting. The end result of the Beloved Disciple’s metaphorical and theological witness is his participation in the production of the Gospel of John as its ideal author.

There is much to commend this reading of the Beloved Disciple, specifically in the way it revitalizes the possibility of his traditional identification with an historical figure. Though Bauckham’s argument begins to falter in his attempt to make a connection between the Beloved Disciple and John the Elder, his redefinition of the function of witness in the character arc of the Beloved Disciple sets the stage for more consistent readings of John 21.⁴¹ It takes into account the eyewitness observational nature of the editorial asides which are frequently related to his appearances, as each the first five of the appearances discussed above are attended by a detailed comment by the author or narrator on a specific part of the action in each scene. But it also takes into account the depiction of the disciple as a specific sort of witness, one that is ideal, or emblematic by virtue of his special qualifications. And as this depiction is enacted by the literary devices that have led

⁴⁰ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 399.

⁴¹ cf. M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, 19, and C.E. Hill, “What Papias Said about John (and Luke): A ‘New’ Papias Fragment,” *JTS* 19 (1998) 582-629.

other critics to assume this character is simply a function of the text, Bauckham's more robustly historical conception of witness allows us to assess the Beloved Disciple within the coherent narrative, literary, and historical patterns in the gospel that are completed by John 21. The Beloved Disciple becomes a central space to enact Culpepper's rapprochement between the literary and the historical in John.

6.3 The Beloved Disciple and His Genre

I programmatically agree with Culpepper's idea that the Beloved Disciple as implied author is distinct from the narrator. This reading becomes even more effective when paired with Bauckham's description of him as an "ideal author." Ultimately, his status as an ideal author underscores the historical importance and credibility of the Beloved Disciple's witness. In turn, this exchange between the Beloved Disciple as a literary figure and the Beloved Disciple's actual historical significance as a witness is what makes his implied authorship such a vital component of John's gospel.

John's gospel simply would not work as effectively as testimony without his frequent appearances. I do not, however, agree with Culpepper's supposition that this separation "probably came about, therefore, as a result of the idealizing of the Beloved Disciple and the comment of an editor rather than as a sophisticated ploy by an individual author."⁴² The consistency of his characterization from chapter 13 to 21, and the specific way in which each appearance builds on the last seems to indicate a rather sophisticated design. It is this same detection of an intentionality behind the literary figuration of the witness to the Gospel of John as the Beloved Disciple that leads Ashton to say "with hesitation" that the gospel is authored by a "device of pseudonymity"⁴³ While pseudonymity is not a helpful descriptor for the authorial strategy of John, as it does not capture the artful strategy to this strategy of identification, Ashton offers the helpful clarification that the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple is neither an historical oversight or simply a literary by-product of the growth of the Johannine tradition.

⁴² Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 44.

⁴³ J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 437. In Ashton's thinking, this depends in part on John's generic self-consciousness as an apocalyptic gospel, which is often characterized by pseudonymity.

Most attributions of the Beloved Disciple to an editorial third-party are based on the last few verses of John 21, in which it is clear that the Beloved Disciple is, at this point at the very least, no longer writing. This immediately clarifies continued reference in the third person to the Beloved Disciple throughout John 21, and his appearances earlier in the gospel. From another direction, both Tovey and Bauckham, however, argue that "It might be that a first-century writer had no other way to distinguish reporting self from the self who lived then, except by placing a nominal and pronominal distance between the two 'selves'."⁴⁴ But even if this is the case, the Beloved Disciple remains a means of self-attestation which creates a figure in the gospel who is an emblematic or ideal witness to the authenticity of the Johannine tradition. No matter what position one takes on the historical identity of the Beloved Disciple he still functions in John 21 as the culmination of his characterization from chapter 13-20. It is only in giving priority to describing the literary skill and intention behind the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple over the search for his historical identity, that we are able to assess his presence in the gospel effectively. To import the identity questions into the discussion of his ideal witness is to reverse the well-crafted process by which he has successfully become the implied author of the text.

With this equivocation in mind, there are a few points of conclusion that can be made about anonymity in chapter 21. First, in John 21 the continued anonymity of John 21 destabilizes the possibility of the Johannine tradition being marginalized as the outdated testimony of a witness no longer present with the church. The effect of this anonymity, specifically in the way 21:24 poses the Beloved Disciple as the one responsible for this selection of stories about Jesus, is to generalize the tradition sufficiently enough that it actually fulfils Jesus' prophecy that the testimony of the Beloved Disciple may "remain" indefinitely. Second, the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple is a convenient way to merge the literary-metaphorical and historiographical aspects of witness that are so key to the development of this gospel's conception of faith. On the one hand, the gospel is designed to lead its readers through the process of coming to faith. It bears witness to this process repeatedly, exemplified by the constancy of the Beloved Disciple as an embodiment of discipleship. But it asks its readers to believe because it is bearing witness to historical events. The

⁴⁴ Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 145.

Beloved Disciple depicted as present at key points in Jesus' ministry because we are implored to assume that he actually was. And third, the anonymity of chapter 21 merges the concept of gospel authorship that typifies the Synoptic accounts with the Johannine vision of discipleship that encompasses a range of "witnessing" activities represented by both Peter and the Beloved Disciple.

The Gospel of John, and chapter 21 specifically, has taken shape in the context of the transition of late first century Christianity from the vitality of living apostolic witness to dependence on the written documentation of these traditions. Rather than demeaning the effectiveness of the latter, John 21 actually conceives of gospel writing as a form of witness that is complimentary to the cruciform witness of Peter's martyrdom. This is the key effect of the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple, in that by introducing its author first as an ideal disciple and only over time revealing the full scope of his involvement with the writing of the gospel, John 21 envisions the artful production of early Christian literature as fulfilling the role of the faithful disciple.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that prioritizing recovery of the identity of the Beloved Disciple, without deference to the literary-historical function of anonymity in John's gospel, creates tensions that are not inherent to the text. These tensions are more reflective of the limitations and boundaries of this identity question than they are a failure in the history of the composition of John. As will also be seen in the next chapter, the evolving presentation of the Beloved Disciple in the gospel is a helpful case study in employing observational strategies connected to the literary and historical data attending this consistent characterization of its author.

Chapter 7

Self-Awareness in John 21

In Counet's study of the Gospel of John from the perspective of "deconstructive exegesis," all the idiosyncrasies of its final chapter are in place because "The epilogue of chapter 21 resurrects the narration on the level of story world, the narrator descending from the previous metanarrative level."⁴⁵ In the conclusion of 20:30-31, the narrator has finally become "self-conscious," only to disappear yet again as the gospel has come to a close.⁴⁶ As an addition, chapter 21 is shaped by the resurrection of the narrator in the life of the early church being addressed by the appearance story and discourses that comprise the chapter. This emergence of the narrator as a self-aware entity in the text is distinct from what he refers to as "a movement of *écriture* or a post-modern movement, the text adopts the position of the author at the end of the Gospel by placing the author mentioned there, the beloved disciple, in the position of an actor."⁴⁷ In the following chapter, I would like to demonstrate that this description of the bold movement of the gospel in its final moments of self-consciousness is another way of stating Culpepper's distinction between the narrator and the Beloved Disciple as an implied author. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, this distinction is most effectively grounded in the historical and literary features of the gospel. The "self-awareness" of John 21 is linked to the function of the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple, but is an integral feature of the text, such that it can be discussed as an isolated case study in the literary art of this chapter.

⁴⁵ Patrick Chatelion Counet *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel* (BIS 44 Leiden: Brill, 2000), 106.

⁴⁶ Wayne Booth describes a "self conscious narrator" simply as someone who is "aware of themselves as a writer." (Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983] 155.)

⁴⁷ Counet, *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel*, 175.

In Counet's research, the self-awareness of this authorial strategy becomes foregrounded by reference to its effect within the text. Rather than searching for an historical rationale for the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple, Counet traces the way in which the gospel uses the Beloved Disciple as an ideal figure to mirror the reader's experience in making their way through its storyline.⁴⁸ He is an anonymous figure, an emblematic representation of the way the text moves its readers towards faith.⁴⁹ In the language of post-modernity, he is an "apophatic" figure that like Martha, the man born blind, Peter in chapter 21, and even Jesus, are paradigmatic of the "self-annihilating" and "self-sacrificing" tone of discipleship as described in the farewell discourse.⁵⁰ This is why the narrator of the gospel makes no historical connections between the Beloved Disciple and his identity. Rather, his identity has become subsumed in his proximity to Jesus. His historical identity is completely subordinate to his function as an abiding witness to this tradition.

Where Counet departs from Culpepper is that this seems to make the Beloved Disciple the implied *reader* of the gospel rather than its implied *author*. As his anonymity is crafted in such a way that he mirrors the reader's apophatic movement toward faith, he actually embodies a much different function than that of authorship. For Counet, it is telling that the Beloved Disciple never actually makes a confession of faith, and ultimately he becomes the touchstone for a post-modern conception of faith free from the logocentric concerns of the Gospel of John's

⁴⁸ Counet, *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel*, 184. Contra Stibbe, *John as Storyteller – Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 91-92, and A. Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 45-46: "The real author imagines the ideal disciple, and this ideal disciple is assumed to be the implied author. Therefore, the beloved disciple is indeed the author of the Gospel, but he is the *implied author*, not the real one." Cf. Judith Leiu "How John Writes," in *The Written Gospel*, ed. M Bockmuehl and D. Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174: "However, this self-conscious awareness of the gap between event and witness or proclamation, coupled with the conviction that the latter is not one possible reading of those events to be laid alongside other readings but carries the absolute authority of their subject, challenges the reader, and so the modern interpreter, to assent or protest."

⁴⁹ cf. Rene Kieffer, "The Implied Reader in John's Gospel," in *New Readings in John*, ed. M.W.G. Stibbe (New York: Routledge, 1995), 54 "we see how the readers are invited to accept the implied author's ideology which is constituted above all by a high Christology."

⁵⁰ Counet, *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel*, 183.

narrator.⁵¹ The narrator poses the experience of the Beloved Disciple as the one he would like readers to share as they make their journey through the text.

It is at this juncture in his argument is where we can see both the benefits and drawbacks of Counet's interpretation of the Beloved Disciple in one glimpse. On the one hand, his over-reliance on post-modern descriptors of Johannine themes of faith and discipleship overtake the carefully balanced nuance of the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple as outlined in the previous chapter. It fails to take into account that the Beloved Disciple is posed as an emblematic figure or disciple because he is posed as an ideal historical witness. But Counet is helpful in linking the self-awareness that is so central to the structure of John 21 to the way anonymity and narration in the gospel relate.

It is not the case that the Beloved Disciple never makes a confession of faith in the text, as many of his appearances are attended by confessional asides. To use Counet's terminology, the narrator and implied reader are actually working together within the text to lead real readers to Beloved Disciple-like confessions of faith.⁵² This is accomplished by the asides that are related to the appearances of the Beloved Disciple in 13-20, but it is even more closely linked to the heightened self-awareness of the author in chapter 21. It is in 21 that Culpepper's distinction between the implied author and narrator comes to a head, and it is also where Counet's distinction of the implied reader and narrator comes to a head. By working through the development of self-consciousness in John's gospel, which is such an important literary development that it becomes the dominating literary-historical feature of chapter 21, we can see how Culpepper and Counet are actually referring to the same thing. It is in chapter 21 that the conceptions of authorship and readership shaped by the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple begin to converge, Culpepper and Counet both responding to the bold self-consciousness of the final

⁵¹ Counet, *John, A Postmodern Gospel – Introduction to Deconstructive Exegesis Applied to the Fourth Gospel*, 185: "His statement, 'It is the Lord' in 21:7 is close, but in my opinion it is an identification or an answer to the question with which they are dealing... This is not a confession or a credo." The last chapter offers a way "out of the controversy between the differential value of the implied author and the logocentric interest of the narrator." (317)

⁵² This is undoubtedly the case in the aside of 19:35 ("And the person who saw it has testified [and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth], so that you also may believe.") which links the witness of the Beloved Disciple as a mirror of the reader at the foot of the cross with the narrator's express intent to inspire belief on account of this testimony. This may also be the case in 20:7, though there is no aside to mark it is a self-conscious application of the Beloved Disciple as implied reader.

verses of the gospel from different directions. It is entirely possible that, in contradiction of Counet's thesis, the Beloved Disciple as an implied reader is every bit a confessional witness in the gospel as an implied author.

The next two sections will catalogue and describe the presence of asides in John's gospel as a mode of authorial self-awareness, and then treat the asides in John 21 in more detail. After this survey, we will be able to return to the intriguing tension set up by the possibility that both Counet and Culpepper are responding correctly to this self-consciousness.

7.1 Defining the Asides in the Gospel of John

There are several ways to think about the asides in the Gospel of John. The first is as "protective interventions."⁵³ In this case, the narrator actually "insulates us from the perplexing experiences of the actors."⁵⁴ He explains unclear references made by Jesus (6:71), expands on links made to the Gospel tradition (3:24), translates Hebrew and Aramaic vocabulary (such as *rabbi* and *Golgotha*), acts as a tour guide through key Jerusalem sites, interprets Jewish customs, keys us into the inner thinking of certain characters (Mary in 20:14), directs us through the ways in which scripture is fulfilled throughout the gospel, and even numbers signs and events for ease of reference.⁵⁵ In this way the narrator uses asides as cues to navigate us through unclear or difficult aspects of the narrative. Another way to think of them is as one of the means by which casual readers of the gospel become, with the narrator, and insider of the Johannine tradition. If "what one knows serves as an index of status within the Johannine group," then the self-consciousness of these asides is a direct ploy to bring outsiders into the fold of a community formed by the Beloved Disciples' witness.⁵⁶ We can also, like Counet, think of the asides as the development of a self-consciousness in the gospel that directs the reader towards the Beloved Disciple as an example of the gospel's themes of faith and discipleship.

⁵³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 155.

⁵⁴ Gary Burge, "Revelation and Discipleship in John's Gospel" in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. J. Lierman (Tübingen: Mohr Seibek, 2006), 242.

⁵⁵ cf. T. Thatcher, "A New Look at the Asides in the Fourth Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (1994): 428-39.

⁵⁶ J. H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 148.

But the first broad description of an aside in scholarship on John is that: “Their omission would not affect greatly the flow of the narrative, but it should be noted that some asides may be important for the achievement of an important goal of the evangelist.”⁵⁷

There is a consensus that the editorial asides in the gospel connect to at least one of these three ways of describing their function.⁵⁸ There is, however, a great deal of argument concerning how many asides there are in the text. And even others attempt to demonstrate that not all of these asides belong to the narrator that reveals himself in John 21, but to an older layer of the tradition being used.⁵⁹ The most comprehensive analysis of these asides as they exist in the extant edition of John’s gospel is in M.C. Tenney’s essay on “The Footnotes in John’s Gospel.”⁶⁰ His tenfold classification of these asides has remained useful. The ten types of asides are: 1. translations, 2. indications of time and place, 3. indications of customs, 4. indications of the identity of the author, 5. indication of the disciples’ later recollections, 6. explanations of unclear situations, 7. indications of the numerical order of events, 8. indications of the identities of other characters, 9. explanations of Jesus’ knowledge, 10. theological interpretations.

Under this system of classification, Tenney catalogues the following texts as asides:

1. Translations: 1:38, 41, 42; 4:25; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13, 17; and 20:16
2. Time and Place: 1:28; 6:4, 59; 7:2; 8:20; 9:14; 10:22-23; 11:18-30; 19:14, 31, 42.⁶¹

⁵⁷ J. O’Rourke, “Asides in the Gospel of John,” in *The Composition of John’s Gospel: Selected Studies from “Novum Testamentum,”* ed. D. E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 206. cf M.C. Tenney, “The Footnotes in John’s Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 117 (1960), 351: “not all of these are indisputably clear.”

⁵⁸ Cf. T. Thatcher, “A New Look at the Asides in John’s Gospel,” in *Vital New Testament Issues*, ed. R. B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 27-28.

⁵⁹ cf. H. M. Teeple, *The Literary Origin of the Gospel of John* (Evanston: Religion and Ethics Institute, 1974), R.T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), D. Moody Smith, *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann’s Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

⁶⁰ M.C. Tenney, “The Footnotes in John’s Gospel,” 350-364.

⁶¹ O’Rourke disagrees that 8:20 and 11:30 fit very well under this subheading. (O’Rourke, “The Asides in John’s Gospel,” 206).

3. Customs: 4:9 and 19:40.
4. Identity of the Author: 1:14, 16; 8:23; 19:35; 21:23, 24-25.
5. Disciple's Recollections: 2:22; 8:27; 10:6; 12:16; 13:28; 20:9.⁶²
6. Explanations: 2:9, 24-25; 4:2; 6:23, 71; 7:5, 39; 11:51; 12:6; 19:36; 20:30-31; 21:7-8, 19.
7. Numerical Summaries: 2:2; 4:54; 21:14⁶³
8. Identifications: 7:50; 11:2; 18:10, 14, 40.⁶⁴
9. Explanations of Jesus' Knowledge: 6:6, 64; 12:37-43; 13:11
10. Theological Reflections: 3:16-21⁶⁵; 3:31-36; 8:37-43⁶⁶

The poses minor difficulties, in terms of the lack of flexibility among some of the categories. There are also open questions regarding whether or not several of Tenney's list asides are actually consistent with his vague definition of an editorial insertion or aside as a sort of parentheses that do not advance the plot. In O'Rourke's later survey of Tenney's classifications, he does not so much quibble with the details of Tenney's initial list of asides as he does with the ambiguity of his classification system.⁶⁷ And though this moderates the effectiveness of Tenney's results, O'Rourke briefly demonstrates how influential Tenney's description of this self-consciousness in the gospel was on later commentaries. O'Rourke then does little to adjust the problematic overlaps of Tenney's categories other than shift some of his asides around, and add a few of his own. The innovation of O'Rourke's work is to produce a graphical representation of the spread of these asides throughout

⁶² O'Rourke also includes 2:17 under this heading (O'Rourke, "The Asides in John's Gospel," 207).

⁶³ O'Rourke also includes 3:28-29 and 20:30-31 under this heading. (O'Rourke, "The Asides in John's Gospel," 208)

⁶⁴ To these, O'Rourke adds: 1:24, 44; 11:6; 13:23; 14:22; 18:13, 15, 16, 26; 19:39; 20:2, 24; 21:2, 20. (O'Rourke, "The Asides in John's Gospel," 209)

⁶⁵ contra R. Brown, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966), 1:149.

⁶⁶ To these O'Rourke adds: 1:2, 6-8, 9, 12-18 (only 14b); 2:21-22; 2:24-25; 7:30; 7:39; 8:20; 11:52 8:35; 12:14; 13:1; 19:36. (O'Rourke, "The Asides in John's Gospel," 210)

⁶⁷ O'Rourke, "The Asides in John's Gospel," 212: "Unfortunately, the different classifications are not all together mutually exclusive."

John's gospel, and a subsequent measurement of their frequency by virtue of percentage of asides per chapter. Here are his results:⁶⁸

1: .553	10. .174
2: .666	11. .500
3. .202	12. .437
4. .415	13. .368
5. .201	14. .052
6. .380	18. .548
7. .343	19. .655
8. .245	20. .611
9. .385	21. .564

Seeing the results of the broad spread of Tenney's asides in this format is very helpful. Key periods of theological intensity and historical witness, such as chapters 1-20 and 19-20, are recognizable by an increase in the self-consciousness of the author by means of asides. And though I have not included the "aside per verse" count in this chart, one point of data immediately leaps out to O'Rourke, that being the fact that there are a whopping .32-.4 asides per verse in chapter 21. This is far greater than the nearest measurements, being chapter 18 with .25 and chapter 19 with .28. The density of asides in chapter 21 leads O'Rourke to conclude that "this criterion could be indicative of another author at work. This is another argument

⁶⁸ This is from the second chart in O'Rourke, 214. He also includes a list of asides per verse, but simply seeing this percentage spread is advantageous. On the mechanics of the chart: "The percentages are derived for the finite verbs in narrative against the number of verbs in each chapter" as described in J.J. O'Rourke, "The Historic Present in the Gospel of John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974), 586f. (O'Rourke, "The Asides in John's Gospel," 213). This math gets somewhat subjective as some asides are longer than others, and some must be weighted differently than others. A locational aside in chapter 2, for example, bears less literary freight than the great theological aside of 19:35. In Thatcher's chart (see below) there are a greater number of asides in chapter 18 and chapter 19, which while taken in light of its length compared to chapter 21 seems to point towards an equivalent amount of asides in each of these three chapters. Even in Thatcher's chart, however, 18, 19, and 21 are characteristically dense with asides.

to be added to those holding the last chapter was not written by the one who gave the most form to the preceding chapters.”⁶⁹ But such a conclusion could only be the case if it is valid to assume that an increase in self-consciousness is an indication of the presence of an author with a more redactional goal in mind. It may be the case that the increase in asides in John 21 is linked to its narrative and thematic placement in the gospel rather than merely being a function of its compositional history. John 21 is aware of itself as the end of John’s gospel and the witness of the Beloved Disciple. The narrator draws attention to this stark literary reality in the process of attesting to its abiding authenticity.

The next attempt to expand on Tenney’s original work comes from Tom Thatcher’s reworking of Tenney’s original categories.⁷⁰ In their place, Thatcher proposes four broader categories and cross-referencing subcategories. 1. Some asides *stage* events by describing the context in which they occur. 2. Some asides *define* or specify something of particular importance to a story or discourse. 3. Some asides *explain discourse* to readers. 4. Some asides *explain actions*, which would be the narrative equivalent of the previous category. Along with these four categories, Thatcher outlines a set of subcategories for each main type of aside that further helps to identify their individual purpose in differing contexts. The result of Thatcher’s work is a handy chart that avoids the ambiguities of Tenney’s original outline, and lends depth to O’Rourke’s simplistic mathematical rendering of the spread of these asides across the gospel. Ultimately, Thatcher’s work updates Tenney’s by recasting their range of functions in a more definitively critical way. Asides in John’s gospel are not simply points of explanation that could be deleted from the narrative with little after effects. Neither are they simply indications of a self-consciousness that may point with more clarity to the presence of a redactor within the various strata of John’s composition history. Rather, they take part in “Wayne Booth’s acclaimed distinction between telling and showing. Readers may receive information by observing what the author shows them, or by listening to what the author tells them. Asides are always what the author tells.”⁷¹ They guide the reader through what the narrator signals as important things to notice in the Johannine

⁶⁹ O’Rourke, “Asides in the Gospel of John,” 213-214.

⁷⁰ Thatcher, “A New Look At Asides in the Fourth Gospel,” 28.

⁷¹ Thatcher, “A New Look At Asides in the Fourth Gospel,” 27. Referring to W. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 3-6.

tradition. As this is the case, it is not true that, “Their omission would not affect greatly the flow of the narrative.” If the asides were absent, then an entire rhetorical subtext to the gospel would vanish. And in the case of John 21, the omission of these asides would entail the negation of its creative depiction of the Beloved Disciple as both implied author and implied reader.

7.2 Interpreting the Asides in John 21

The following list of asides are enumerated on Thatcher’s chart.⁷² These are, by category: 21:2 (RL), 4 (Ti, Si - Discourse), 7 (R - Actions), 8 (Sp), 12 (R - Discourse), 14 (Si - Actions), 17 (R - Discourse), 19 (Si - Discourse), 20 (RL), 23 (Si - Discourse), 24 (Si - Actions), and 25 (Si - Actions).

The staging asides of 21:4 and 21:8 are debatable at first glimpse, but taking these as parenthetical modifiers of the action in each case helps to explain the odd grammar at these points. It is actually difficult to translate the clauses οὐ μέντοι ἦδεισαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν and ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀπὸ πηχῶν διακοσίω, respectively, because their conjunction with the preceding clause in each case is obscure. If we treat these a “footnotes” or asides, then their odd syntactical relationship to the text becomes much clearer. The function of these asides as “staging” references brings to bear the same relational and eyewitness detail on this fishing narrative that we have become used to in the rest of the gospel. The two definitional asides involve the reintroduction of characters from chapters 1-20.

The second of these, in 21:20, is of particular interest in that it defines the Beloved Disciple by means of reference to his first appearance in the gospel. This is a provocative aside for a few reasons. First, it contradicts the identification of Lazarus as the Beloved Disciple, as the use of 13:25 as a descriptor at such a key moment in his characterization strengthens the idea that this was his first appearance in the gospel. The author of 21 uses this aside to put a concluding

⁷² Thatcher, “A New Look at Asides in the Fourth Gospel,” 35. The Legend for this chart is as follows: 1. *Staging Asides*: Sp = Space, Ti = Time, O = Object, C = Climate. 2. *Defining Asides*: Tr = Translation, PL = Preliminary Character Label (introducing new characters), RL = Reminiscent Character Label (reintroducing a previous character). 3. *Explain Discourse*: R = Reasons, Si = Significance. 4. *Explain Actions* = R = Reasons, Si = Significance.

bracket around the Beloved Disciple's appearances in the gospel before finishing with the correction of this rumour and the attribution of the gospel to his witness.

The five discourse explanation asides (4, 12, 17, 19, 23) are noteworthy in that other than chapter 12, 21 has the most asides concerning the clarification of discourse in the gospel. This high frequency is even more relevant to the discussion of self-consciousness in John's gospel because excepting the aside of verse 17 that describes Peter's emotions during his exchange with Jesus, each of these asides clarify a peculiarity of the text that is directly related to the post-resurrection, ecclesial, setting of the text. The odd inability of the disciples to recognize Jesus, whom they have been with almost daily for several years, is a function of his transition between chapters 20 and 21. The editorial comments on Peter's death and the Beloved Disciple's witness are directly inspired by the need of the author to connect contemporary ecclesial concerns to these events that have transpired within the Johannine tradition. In chapter 21 we get a clear sense that the asides in John's gospel are not just guides for those uninitiated to the Johannine community and its tradition, but also exist as a running narration of the gospel's abiding significance despite the Beloved Disciple's death.

The asides which explain action in 21:7, 14, 24, and 25 have the same effect. This appearance of Jesus is in direct continuity with chapters 20, being the third time that he has revealed himself to the disciples. Taking 21:24 and 25 as asides that explain a specific action in the text helps to place this conclusion within the context of the Beloved Disciple's role in the tradition as the one ὁ γράψας ταῦτα. He has written these things, or caused them to be written, because of the fact that they are true. In verse 25, it seems that the aside that begins with οἶμαι is a means of apology for the specific narratives and discourses that have been selected as particularly relevant to the Beloved Disciple's witness. There were so many other traditions to pick from, that these must have some special significance.

All of these asides, excepting 21:7 and 17 are distinctly related to the ecclesial setting of chapter 21. This leaves the reader with the sense that the persistent presence of the narrator through chapters 1-20 by means of asides has intended to lead them straight to 21, wherein the narrative time of the asides and the narrative time of the discourses and events within the chapter begin to conflate. The reader has become used to the frequent interjection of the narrator by the time they make it to the final chapter. But then, at the end of John, the reader sees that the

very narrator disclosing himself in chapter 21 has been their source of guidance through the text since the beginning.

7.3 Asides and Self-Consciousness in John

In his survey of literary parallels to the alternation between the third and first person at the end of John 21, Jackson decides that to achieve the goal of having his testimony accepted as a legitimate record of events to which he was an eyewitness, the author of John 21 “has adopted the tried-and-true practice, however it was mediated to him, of distancing himself as narrator from himself as direct participant in the events he recounts.”⁷³ Jackson traces a convention through Greco-Roman literature in which writers participating in historiography would avoid the connotations associated with the first person.⁷⁴ For Jackson, this enables us to explain away objections to thinking of the Beloved Disciple as the author of the gospel. As a figure, he simply becomes a literary mechanism, consistent with historiographic practice, that enables him to bear witness to these events in the more reputable third-person.⁷⁵ This is complimentary to the argument made by Byrskog that “Autopsy was the essential means to reach into the past.”⁷⁶ Working

⁷³ H. M. Jackson, “Ancient Self-Referential Conventions and Their Implications for the Authorship and Integrity of the Gospel of John.” *JTS* 50 (1999), 25.

⁷⁴ Jackson, “Ancient Self-Referential Conventions and Their Implications for the Authorship and Integrity of the Gospel of John,” 25: “It was for this reason that, as the first person became increasingly typical of fiction or, at least, of narratives of questionable impartiality or reliability as fact, it became correspondingly *de rigueur* for writers of formal histories, or of personal reports or memoirs meant to be used by historians, to adopt the detached persona of a third (i.e. different) person in referring to themselves in autobiographical contexts.” (cf. A. Momigliano, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* [Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1977]; A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971]; and M.J. Wheeldon, “True Stories: The Reception of Historiography in Antiquity,” in *History as Text. The Writing of Ancient History*, ed A. Cameron [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989].) In his argument, Jackson tracks this convention through Homer, Lucien of Samosata, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, and others.

⁷⁵ And in relating the use of the third person in the gospel of John to these contemporary historiographers, Jackson is very helpful. It is his assertion that John 21 functions like a subscriptio or an epistolary postscript that ultimately undercuts his argument, as these literary-historical parallels are very different in function and context from the Gospel of John. (Jackson, *Ancient Self-Referential Conventions and Their Implications for the Authorship and Integrity of the Gospel of John*,” 5-7).

⁷⁶ S. Byrskog, *Story as History – History as Story* WUNT123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 64.

through the same sources used by Jackson to articulate the function of the third person as a way of disassociating history writing from the satirical and comic conventions of the third person, Byrskog discovers an appreciation for eyewitness testimony that granted Greek and Roman history and biography its immediate sense of facticity.

Eyewitnesses, either writing in the third person or being written about in the third person, were especially prized in their testimony to and interpretation of historical events.⁷⁷ Bauckham applies this specifically to the context of the gospels: “In Byrskog’s account the eyewitnesses do not disappear behind a long process of anonymous transmission and formation of traditions by communities, but remain an influential presence in the communities, people who could be consulted, who told their stories and whose oral accounts lay at no great distance from the textualized form the Gospels gave them.”⁷⁸ One can disagree with the effort of both arguments by Jackson and Byrskog in leading us to accept the Beloved Disciple as the author of the final version of John’s gospel, while recognizing they provide a rich context for defining the function of the asides in John 21.

On the one hand, the asides are in accord with the typical third person of Greco-Roman historiography. They have the double function of disassociating the author of John from the text in a way that conventionally preserves his literary integrity. At the same time, these asides present a continual sense of eyewitness testimony to the events of the text, specifically in relation to their high frequency of appearance during the six Beloved Disciple passages. In “telling” us about the events of the texts as they occur, the narrator positions himself as one in a unique first-hand position to guarantee its veracity.

But the narrator is only capable of doing this by virtue of his relationship to the Beloved Disciple, which is directly confirmed in 21:24. There is a sense in which the aside that Thatcher sees in 21:24, which clarifies the way in which the Beloved Disciple has been involved with the production of John, is the key aside of the gospel. It is the one in which the narrator, responsible for all of these asides, makes a case for why he should be trusted. He is trustworthy as a narrator because he

⁷⁷ Byrskog, *Story as History – History as Story*, 165-166.

⁷⁸ R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 10.

both knows and believes the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, an eyewitness to all these events in the gospel.

This proposition returns us directly to the tension between the Beloved Disciple as an implied reader in Counet and the Beloved Disciple as the implied author in Culpepper. The heightened self-consciousness in chapter 21, evidenced in the depth and frequency of its asides, does define the Beloved Disciple as the implied author of the gospel. He has testified to these events, and has been involved with the process of their codification. In the asides, he is posed as the reason the gospel has had eyewitness access to places the other gospels don't, such as Jesus' breast, the foot of the cross, and the empty tomb. But the self-consciousness of the narrator in the asides scattered throughout the gospel also distances him as an historian from the experience of the Beloved Disciple in his journey towards faith. In placing the Beloved Disciple at all these key moments throughout the death and resurrection of Christ, the narrator poses him as the figure with which the interested reader of John can identify.⁷⁹ As Counet says, he really is the implied reader as well. This complex literary effect of the anonymous Beloved Disciple is the result of an authorial self-awareness in the gospel that culminates in chapter 21.

7.4 In Summary

The high frequency of self-awareness in John 21 through asides serves as another convenient case study for potential correlations between historical and literary-critical scholarship on the chapter. The Beloved Disciple's anonymity gains clarity through a literary estimation of its historical grounding in John 21. So does a study of self-awareness as a literary strategy, with distinct historical analogues, as it relates to the context of early readers. The asides are not mere narrative devices

⁷⁹ cf. G. Hallbäck, "The Gospel of John as Literature: Literary Readings of the Fourth Gospel," in *New Readings in John*, ed. J. Nissen and S. Pederson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 37: "All this leads to Culpepper's portrait of the implied reader, who proves, however, to be an intended reader: that is, the reader whom the evangelist had in mind. This distinction between implied and intended reader is far from innocent, for the shift from one to the other marks the transition from and internal and external reflection on the text."

that familiarize the story for readers, but they accomplish several things for early readers at the same time. First, they conclude the gospel with a convention typically used by writers of history in antiquity to distance themselves from the events they are recording. In this way, John 21 attempts to preserve the integrity of its own account. Second, the asides in John 21 specifically addresses the concerns of its earliest readers about the authenticity of the Beloved Disciple and various traditions surrounding his death. And third, these asides in John 21 enable the narrator to bring the literary tensions described by both Culpepper and Counet into the foreground. The Beloved Disciple has been posed as the implied author; he has also been used by the narrator as a template for the process of coming to faith. It is only in the authorial self-awareness of John 21 that these two literary strategies in the gospel coalesce in the plea to receive the Beloved Disciple as an authentic witness.

Chapter 8

Narrative Time in John 21

The self-consciousness of John 21 is related to features other than the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple and the function of the asides in the gospel. It is also involved with the shift in narrative time that occurs between 20:30-31 and 21:1. This shift in narrative time provides another independent point of literary craft in John 21 with distinct connections to its literary-historical context.

Μετὰ ταῦτα is an innocuous designation for an undetermined amount of time that occurs between the appearances in chapter 20 and the appearances in chapter 21. But as it is the conjunction that segues the gospel towards its conclusion, it bears much freight in determining the temporal designation of John 21. Culpepper addresses the presence of analepses and prolepses in the Gospel of John, which are ways in which the text refers within the narrative to events that have already happened in the past, or have yet to happen.¹ Examples of an analepse would be passages that refer to the pre-incarnation relationship between Jesus and the Father, or the reference in 8:56 to Abraham: “Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.”² These are all references to past events that are evoked within a present narrative. In contrast, a prolepse references “events which have not yet occurred at the point in the narrative at which they are foretold.”³ These are statements such as 2:22: “his disciples remembered that he had said this...”, or 3:24: “For John had not yet been put in prison”; and 20:9: “for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” This complex relationship between time and narrative is common throughout the text of John.

¹ A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997), 56. Here is draws on the work of G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

² e.g. 3:35 or 8:28.

³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 61.

And it continues through to John 21, in which we have references within the narrative time of Jesus' conversation with Peter to external, future events. In the aside of 21:19 concerning Peter's martyrdom, the narrator states: "Jesus said this to indicate clearly by what kind of death Peter was going to glorify God." By his clarification of what Jesus is talking about, the narrator turns his prediction regarding Peter's death into an external prolepsis. It refers to a future event that has happened outside of the text. This is the same narrative time that occurs in the aside of 21:23: "So the saying circulated among the brethren that this disciple was not going to die. But Jesus did not say to him that he was not going to die, but rather, "If I want him to live until I come back, what concern is that of yours?" There is a difference, though, between the prolepses of John 1-20 and these two prolepses in John 21. This difference lies in the shift in context from the life and ministry of Jesus in 1-20, to the continued life and witness of the Church in chapter 21. The prolepses in John 21 refer to events that are contemporary to the life of its earliest readers; their narrative time directly matches the time in which they were initially being read.

Wesley Kort summarizes the work of theorists working on narrative time in the following way: "All these theorists see the time of a narrative as at least potentially reflective or imitative of the time of human experience generally, and the effect of their work is to relate the time of plots to recurring psychic, social, or natural processes."⁴ This is to say that narrative time is a natural by-product of the way we tell stories. Our narrations mimic the way we experience time in everyday circumstances, and shifts in narrative time in our storytelling are usually the result of something having had psychic or social impact on the way we are able to re-narrate these events. In another context, Paul Ricoeur discusses the capacity of historical and fictional narrative to affect the "*life-world of the reader*."⁵ He argues that the configuration of time in historical narratives actually obtains its effect, and has an impact on our present experience of an historical fact, in the process of reading.

These descriptions of narrative time are provocative in the context of this chapter in John that is primarily caught up in two things: the abiding presence of the risen Christ in the Christ-believing community, and the differing ways in which the

⁴ W. Kort, *Narrative Elements and Religious Meaning*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 67.

⁵ P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*. Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 160. (Italics his.)

apostles would bear witness to his death and resurrection. What effect did this shift in narrative time signalled by the prolepses of 21:19 and 21:23 have on the “life-world” of its earliest readers? As a conclusion, John 21 bridges the gap between the story of the Beloved Disciple’s testimony and the story of its earliest readers in two ways. First, it brings the gospel to a close by calling its readers to affirm and respond to the story that has just finished. Second, it implores its readers to return to their “life-world” with this story in mind.

8.1 The Narrative Time of John’s Ending

The idea that the shift in narrative time of John 21 is an indication that the readers are called to affirm and respond to the gospel as presented is well described by Jo-Ann Brant’s investigation of theatrical epilogues as a conventional parallel to what occurs in John 21.⁶ There are no known direct parallels in the history of Greco-Roman theatre to the odd relationship of John 20:30-31 and John 21:24-25 as competing endings within the same span of epilogue. But Bryant does find that “the two sets of closing lines taken together with John 21 fulfil the functions of a theatrical epilogue and contain elements by which the audience is invited to express approval of the performance just witnessed and is returned to its own time and place.”⁷ Euripides, for example, used the same epilogue in five different plays: “There are many shapes of divinity, and many things the gods accomplish against our expectation. What men look for is not brought to pass, but a god finds a way to achieve the unexpected. Such was the outcome of this story.”⁸ Such an ending has many similarities to the end of John 21 in terms of the way it draws attention to the purpose and outcome of its own story. It has the effect of enabling the narrator to step out of the story itself and look back on the completed text. As Bryant explains, “when the gospel becomes an object to be considered rather than a script to be read, the recital clearly is over.”⁹

⁶ J.A. Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Hendrickson: Peabody, MA, 2004).

⁷ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 64

⁸ Euripides, *Alcestis* (Cambridge: Loeb Classics Library, 1978)

⁹ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 65

The reason Greek theatre often ended in such a self-conscious way is that it provided a cue and communal space for the audience to respond by calling attention to the accomplishment of its writer in applause. Likewise, the aside in John 21:24 that “we know his testimony is true,” is an appeal to readers to nod in affirmation that they now also agree with the witness of the Beloved Disciple.¹⁰

Such conclusions found in Euripides and Sophocles invite us to “judge the composition worthy of praise and marshal opinion in favour of its claims.”¹¹ Likewise, the conclusion of John 20 directs the reader’s attention to the purpose and process of the writing of John’s Gospel, while John 21 then goes a step further by attempting to shape the audience reaction to it.¹² The use of οἴμαι turns the hypothetical point into a rhetorical point. “By implication, the evangelist’s task of sorting through the material and weighing it would have been a Herculean labour deserving of applause.”¹³ And this second conclusion parallels the use of similar endings in Greek theatre to bridge the gap between a play and reality, concluding the former by making it relevant to the latter.¹⁴ The Euripedean conclusion is also similar to the Johannine conclusion in that it creates a sense of the emblematic purpose of its characters that now live on in the lives of their audience through their emotional and ethical significance.

Bryant suggests that the typical theatrical epilogue as characterized by Euripides has the effect of ending “the eternal present action of the plot by sending the characters on stage off to a life in the mythic or historic past and by returning the audience to its own present.”¹⁵ While the finality of such a conclusion may have parallels in the abrupt assertion of the gospel’s purpose in John 20:30-31, this is certainly not the case in John 21:24-25. Here, the shift in narrative time creates an

¹⁰ cf. Craig Koester, “The Spectrum of Johannine Readers,” in *What is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1996), where he argues that the use of second and third person pronouns in the conclusions of 20:30-31 and 21:24-25 serves to “shape the stance of its readers.” (10)

¹¹ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 65.

¹² Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 65-66.

¹³ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 66.

¹⁴ “Besides encouraging the audience to affirm that what it has just witnessed has merit, the final words of the tragedy end the eternal present action of the plot by sending the characters on stage off to a life in the mythic or historic past and by returning the past to its own present.” (Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 66)

¹⁵ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 67.

unexpected open-endedness.¹⁶ Such a finality occurs in the theatre because when the “theatrical axis” of the experience of a play vanishes, i.e., the curtain is dropped, the “dramatic axis” simply ceases to exist. This cannot be the case in John 21, as the “theatrical axis” is actually the life-world of its first readers. John 21 serves as a bridge between the past story of the Beloved Disciple’s dramatic witness and the present experience of its readers in the church. “In the gospel, the belief that the resurrection appearances engender in their witnesses is sustained in the belief of the gospel’s audience.”¹⁷ Jesus’ assertion that the testimony of the Beloved Disciple would remain until his second coming is directly fulfilled in the lack of any conventional conclusion to the gospel. Even its last statement, textured by οἴμαι, has no definitive predicate status.

However, Bryant claims that the “seemingly awkward jump from Jesus’ predictions to the narrator’s reflections may be more the result of clumsy mimesis than inelegant editing.”¹⁸ In the last chapter, the intentionality of this transition was described as a function of the author’s creative self-awareness. This is to say the shift here is not “clumsy mimesis” as much as it is an articulate solution to the problem of bringing the gospel to a conclusion in a way that yet provides enough space for the ongoing vitality of the Johannine tradition.

Chatman famously described literary epilogues as “nachgeschichte,” portals of “after-history” that grant the reader access to characters beyond the temporal confines of the preceding narrative (kind of like the end credits of the film *Animal House*, during which we get to see how the film’s characters turn out years after the narrative time of its events).¹⁹ This seems an apt description of John 21, and a convenient explanation for the high-frequency of self-reference, of the author’s consistent interruption the text. For Chatman, such epilogues are expressly self-aware, as they are compositions intentionally designed to bridge the gap between the preceding story and the actual world of the intended readers. Brodie even uses

¹⁶ cf. J. Hillis Miller, “The Problematic of Ending in Narrative,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33 (1978): 3-7.

¹⁷ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 68.

¹⁸ Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama – Elements of Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 69

¹⁹ S. Chatman. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 153-158. cf. E. Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 89: [Such conclusions,] “put into place an ordered sequence of perspectives within which to interpret the ‘truth’ of the story.”

a cinematic metaphor in his description of John 21, which employs “the technique of a movie camera, which, at the end, withdraws and allows the viewer to see a much larger scene.”²⁰ In the same way that the “theatre is an inversion of reality,” John 21 narrates the reader’s present experience of the Church through this past, but timeless, appearance story, only to return them back to what Ricoeur referred to as our “life-world” emboldened by the promises of the Beloved Disciple’s testimony.

8.2 The Narrative Time of John’s Readers

In the midst of his support for Martyn’s division of the gospel into a two-level drama, Dunn asserts that “The *post-Easter retrospective* is for John equally a theological program and a narrative perspective; it makes it possible for the fourth evangelist to transform theological insights into narrated history.”²¹ Though the post-Easter retrospective in Dunn’s line of thought involves the development of Johannine Christology in dialogue with strands of “apocalyptic and mystical Judaism,” nowhere is his depiction of the way this retrospective theology asserts itself in the development of the Gospel of John clearer than its last chapter. The high Christology of this appearance story, in which the disciples are not capable of recognizing Jesus and are even afraid to question openly his identity, may be an indication of this post-Easter perspective coming to bear on the conclusion of John. The Jesus of this appearance story, unrecognizable in his post-resurrection state yet cooking breakfast on the beach, miraculously directing his disciples from afar yet walking and talking with them face to face, embodies a range of Christological motifs at the same time. But these motifs are rendered as narrated history rather than a set of high Christological claims.

This resistance of John 21 to turn its narrative and historical depth into a series of theological claims is an example of what Malina and Rohrbaugh call “anti-language” in John’s gospel.²² In resistance to the Jewish thought with which the

²⁰ Thomas Brodie, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 595.

²¹ J.D.G. Dunn “Let John be John: A Gospel for Its Time.” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 304.

²² B. J. Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 7. “‘Antilanguage’ is the language of an ‘antisociety,’ that is a society that is set up within another ‘society as a conscious alternative to it. It is a mode of resistance, resistance which may take the form either of passive

Johannine tradition is developing in dialogue and conflict, the gospel “creates and expresses an interpretation of reality that is inherently an alternative reality, one that emerges precisely in order to function as an alternative to society at large.”²³ Rather than turning the Johannine tradition into a series of reactionary theological claims, John’s gospel narrates an alternative social reality to that of “this world” and “the Judeans.” The way the text moves its readers towards faith and discipleship through the direction of the Beloved Disciple is a way of resocializing newcomers to the gospel, educating them in the new language and stories of the church.

Time and time again we see this process repeating itself in chapters 1-20. Jesus is misunderstood because he refuses to speak directly, instead choosing language that forces people to accommodate themselves to its symbolic subtexts. The symbolic language of the gospel is very simple to understand, but only after one has been schooled in the way it works. Darkness, light, water, fish, pulling nets out of the water. These are all simple concepts and common, everyday elements, but they are revealed in John 21 as significant symbols or metaphors for key early Christian concepts. Such language in the gospel of John is called “high context.”²⁴ Even though the gospel provides clues through its many asides and the explanatory presence of the Beloved Disciple, it still requires an effort on behalf of the reader to adapt to its unique grammar and logic.

All this is to say that in comparison to other Johannine examples of “high context” anti-language, John 21 is very high context. Aside from the oddity of the disciple’s inability to recognize Jesus either from the boat or while on shore, which renders him as a visual version of “anti-language,” John 21 is fraught with language that would be virtually meaningless to outsiders.²⁵ Within the fishing narrative itself is

symbiosis or of active hostility and even destruction.” cf M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as a Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park, 1978), 171.

²³ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 11.

²⁴ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 16-17.

²⁵ Culpepper explains the odd nature of the recognition scene here as an example of *anagnorisis*, Aristotle’s concept of recognition which depends on the fact that the audience is aware of information about a character of which actors within the scene are ignorant. Part of the pleasure of being the audience in this situation is participating in the moment in which a character we have watched struggling in ignorance become privy to the same background data we have been afforded access to through a dramatic aside or omniscient narrator. “Recognition is, as its name indicates, a change from ignorance to knowledge, tending either to affection or enmity; it determines in the direction of good or ill fortune the fate of the

a set of symbols about fish and a net that are even obscure to students of the text. The meal scene has a quasi-ecclesial undertone that would only appeal to readers in tune with this layer of symbolism in the gospel. And then the discourse of Jesus and Peter is footnoted several times with explanations that would only apply to someone both familiar with the history of the Johannine tradition and the rumours that had been circulating about the Beloved Disciple.

All of these features encompass language that would make little sense to outsiders, to someone who has not been socialized into the Johannine community by means of all these symbols and references at the centre of the chapter. How can we explain such a high frequency of this insider language at the end of John 21, the end of a gospel manifestly directed to inspire faith in readers unacquainted with Jesus' teaching? Here we are at the end of a gospel with significant appeal for people new to Christianity, as its compelling tendency to narrate theological claims quickly draws the reader into its storyline. And then after making our way through a text with the express aim of convincing people that they should believe the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, we are deposited in a chapter that seems to be written for people already inside the community of faith.

This is the primary effect of this shift in narrative time, the turn of the gospel from the testimony of the Beloved Disciple to the community of the Beloved Disciple. Chapter 21 is directed towards those readers who already, by virtue of faith in the witness of this text, belong to the narrative time it is evoking. For those who are not already there, this poetic appearance scene, with its idyllic representation of Jesus reunited with his disciples on a beach, then walking with them a final time in through a network of gospel allusions, is an extension of the appeal in 20:30-31. The goal of chapters 1-20 is to move its readers to faith so that they may as well participate in the post-Easter narrative time of its conclusion.

8.3 In Summary

The shift in narrative time between John 1-20 and John 21 has a dramatic literary effect on our reading of the gospel as a whole. John 21 functions much in the

people involved.” (Culpepper quoting Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452a in R. Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998], 72).

same as familiar Greco-Roman theatrical endings, elegantly re-opening the thematic and symbolic world of the gospel to the everyday life of its earliest readers. It is also marked by the way the gospel turns from the process of believing to the actual life of faith in the Johannine community. Historical criticism has tended to describe this narrative shift as an artefact of the shifting needs of the Johannine community, observable in different strata of the composition of the gospel. But a description of this narrative shift as a literary strategy belonging to the writing of John 21 provides a more coherent frame in which these “high context” features of the gospel can be explored.

Chapter 9

John 21 and Early Christian Book Production

9.1 John 21:25 and the Study of Literacy in Antiquity

Ever since landmark studies such as *Scribes and Correctors of Codex Sinaiticus* and Kenyon's *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome*, a subset of New Testament studies has kept an eye on possible connections between interesting features of early Christian manuscript fragments and the literary history of the early church. In more recent scholarship, the proportional influence of these sets of data on more general areas of New Testament studies has increased dramatically. This is partly due to a large increase in the actual amount of manuscripts and manuscript fragments available to historians of the period, including but not limited to the Nag Hammadi corpus, Qumran discovery, and numerous New Testament fragments that have yielded their riches to this age of digitization and advanced imaging technologies. Parallel to this body of data are the relatively recent appearance of studies on scribal tendencies by Tov and Haines-Eitzen, the surveys of early Christian literacy from Gamble and Millard, and more theoretical social-reconstructions of early Christian reading culture such as can be found in a recent issue of *Semeia*.

Such studies not only pose new questions to these fresh fields of manuscript and literacy data, but they articulate new ways of understanding the material culture of early Christianity. Early Christians were poised on a period of remarkable transition in the Roman era. Literacy blossomed with the geographical success of the empire, parchment was beginning to take over the centuries old dominance of papyrus as a writing source, the scroll was slowly being overshadowed by the codex. Many of these transitions involve actual shifts in technology, and such subjects, usually relegated to more specialist disciplines, are not generally touched on by mainstream Biblical studies. In an article on the Qumran scrolls, Jeffrey Rogers lists eight different activities that describe the role of what he terms

“scripturalists,” or the people directly responsible for the production of these particular scrolls and possibly religious literature in general. The first of these is that “*the scripturalist is a conservator preserving an artifact.*”²⁶ For Rogers this simply means that the text itself is an entity that through scribal transmission is preserved in its original form. But I would suggest that limiting our conception of “scripturalists” to this purely textual, immaterial role neglects the fact that the production and transmission of scripture involves physical objects. Whether scrolls or codices, we are talking about texts that can sit on the shelf, or in a jar in a cave. There is a material dimension, a technological dimension, to the scripturalist activity that is all but absent from the study of Christian texts.

Setting the scene for the application of these fields of data to New Testament Studies, Pieter Botha concludes at the end of a recent essay titled “Cognition, Orality-Literacy, and Approaches to First-Century Writings,”: “It is remarkable that an awareness of the complexities of ancient literacy, orality, tradition, and communication came so belatedly to scholars.”²⁷ In the essay Botha is primarily concerned with exposing the tendency of scholars of biblical and related first-century texts to assume that the process of writing in antiquity is more or less analogous to the contemporary process of writing, citing the following excerpt from Bruce Malina’s programmatic essay on rhetorical and social-science criticism as an acute example of this oversight: “Much that has been written on orality and literacy in the first-century Mediterranean world is rather beside the point.”²⁸

²⁶ J.S. Rogers, “Scripture is as Scripturalists Do: Scripture as Human Activity in the Qumran Scrolls,” in *Early Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* JSNTsup 148 eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 31.

²⁷ P. J.J. Botha, “Cognition, Orality-Literacy, and Approaches to First-Century Writings,” in *Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Antiquity*, Semeia Studies, 47, ed. J. Draper (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 37-64.

²⁸ B. J. Malina, “Rhetorical Criticism and Social-Scientific Criticism: Why Won’t Romanticism Leave Us Alone?” in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 72-101. Malina argues that the key question about texts in this period is simply whether they were products of careful preparation or records of extemporaneous oral performance. In contradiction of most work on literacy in antiquity (see n.4 below), and citing Scribner and Cole’s influential theory of literacy (S. Scribner and M. Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981]), Malina posits that literacy itself has limited cognitive effect on societies and the texts produced by them. Since this is the case, it is the initial form of a text (oral performance, written for publication, graffiti, etc...) and its rhetorical implications rather than the literary-cognitive milieu that produced it that is at issue in the historical exegesis of a given manuscript.

In the course of his argument, Botha refers positively to one of biblical studies' most footnoted scholars in questions of literacy and orality in antiquity, Walter Ong, who has been frequently criticized in technical research on literacy for an over-emphasis on the semiotic differences between oral and written material in present and past cultures. Ong's famous critique of the way written literacy has altered our perception of texts and reading so much that we are unable to historically or materially recover the oral processes of past ages revitalized the study of the oral stages of early Christian traditions.²⁹ No longer pigeonholed as "primitive," this era began to be treated with a renewed sense of intelligence. In response to this, critics of Ong such as those who have influenced Malina suggest that literacy and orality in reality have little effect on the shaping of cultural or social cognition, thereby discrediting the impact of the study of literacy in antiquity on our historical understanding of New Testament texts in particular.³⁰

So then, which is it? Do reading and writing affect cognition, do they change the way both people groups and individuals think and operate?³¹ Or do reading and writing have no relationship to the development of cultural processes as can be ascertained by historians of a particular period? Either way will have significant impact on the way that we "read" texts of antiquity, whether they are products of a predominately oral or written milieu.³² In response to this question Botha asserts that

²⁹ One of the most notable works in this regard is W. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

³⁰ cf. M. Tuman, "Words, Tools and Technology," *College English* 45 (1983): 769-79. This sentiment persists in such influential textbooks as T. McArthur, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. pg. 886. (cf. M. Agar, *Language Shock - Understanding the Culture of Conversation* [New York, 1994], 61-72 for a convenient discussion of this debate.) The faulty logic of this line of critique is that in claiming Ong says too much about literacy, one is left without the ability to say anything about readers, writers, texts, and their social connections. Thus, either way - with or without Ong - students of biblical studies are barred from literacy as a field of historical inquiry.

³¹ Interestingly enough, some would define Greco-Roman literacy precisely in this way: "These were profoundly literate societies, despite the relatively small number of functional literates and probably much smaller number of deeply literate people of whom we have evidence. Literacy, in public or private, was a way of living, a way of working and a way of thinking." T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2-3. cf. R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10.

³² To be fair, one of the most questionable aspects of Ong's work is his overemphasis on the oral nature of ancient communication. It is hard to explain the vast

not only is the study of literacy and its embedded cultural effects a valid historical enterprise, but it must be acutely and accurately historical lest we begin to treat readers and writers in the first century the same way we would treat readers and writers today.³³ In fact, the study of orality and literacy can deepen and enrich our understanding of the first-century mindset in ways that other fields of inquiry cannot. As McLuhan famously said, “The medium is the message,” and this remains true for scrolls, small parchment notebooks, or the oral performances so common in the early Christian period.³⁴ They certainly are different media from what we are used to today, but they are no less communicative from a rhetorical standpoint.

number of references to reading and writing in Pliny, Quintilian, Martial, and others if writing was as secondary as Ong presents it.

³³ In this regard, Malina’s approach is in direct contradiction to classic studies of literacy in antiquity. The sort of historical data to which Botha is referring is plentiful: M. Bar-Ilan, “Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.” in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, II (ed. S. Fishbane, S. Schoenfeld, and A. Goldschlaeger; New York: Ktav, 1992) pp. 46-61; P. Bienkowski, C.B. Mee, and E.A. Slater, ed., *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society. Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard*. (JSOTSupp. 426; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005); R. Criboire, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (American Studies in Papyrology 36; Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1996); A. Demsky and M. Bar-Ilan, “Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism,” in *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* (II, vol. I, MIKRA; ed. M. J. Mulder; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1988) pp. 1-38; J. Goody and I. Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy” in *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (ed. J. Goody; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 27-68; W. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989) (and two anthologies of responses to Harris’ seminal work: A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf ed., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994] and J. H. Humphrey, ed., *Literacy in the Roman World*. [JRASupp. 3; Ann Arbor, MI: Journal of Roman Archaeology 1991]); M. Haran, “On the Diffusion of Literacy and Schools in Ancient Israel” *Vetus Testamentum* 40 (1988): 81-95; E. Havelock *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); idem, *The Muse Learns to Write - Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Theresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982); J. Penny Small, *Wax tablets of the mind: cognitive studies of memory and literacy in classical antiquity* (London, 1997); S. Stoddart and J. Whitley, “The social context of literacy in Archaic Greece and Etruria”, *Antiquity* 62 (1988) 761-72; R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); I. M. Young, “Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence: Part I” *Vetus Testamentum*, 48 (1998): 239-253.

³⁴ McLuhan was much more in line with the theory of literacy known as the “Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis” (J.B. Carroll, ed. *Language, Thought and Reality – The Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956]; D. G. Mandelbaum, ed. *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality* [Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1986]; and more recently, John Arthur Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought- A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* [Cambridge: Cambridge University

This brief summary of theoretical interaction between Botha, Malina, and Ong is simply intended to set the stage for defining ways in which New Testament studies can be enhanced by such a specialist discipline. In his standard text on *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, Gamble extends this sentiment to the study of texts, readers, and scribes in early Christian communities, which he justifies by pointing out that, “The failure to consider the extent to which the physical medium of the written word contributes to its meaning...perpetuates a largely abstract, often unhistorical, and even anachronistic conception of early Christian literature and its transmission.”³⁵ After the publication of this volume, as if in response to Gamble’s implicit challenge, there appeared a number of studies on literacy and book culture in the ancient world, including research on Greco-Roman and Palestinian literacy, scribal behaviour in Judea and the early Christian community, and related fields.³⁶

The question simply remains: How then can we transpose such research dealing generally with Greco-Roman and Judean culture to a historical scrutiny of the readers and writers of the New Testament specifically? And how do we do this in such a way that avoids both the overemphases of Ong and the oversights of

Press, 1992].) The theory has found more recent expression in several studies. Christina Haas writes: “Technology and writing are not distinct phenomena; that is, writing has never been and cannot be separate from technology... To go further, writing *is* technology, for without the crayon or the stylus or the Powerbook, writing simply is not writing. Technology has always been implicated in writing: In a very real way, verbal behaviour without technological tools is not, and cannot be, writing.” “A technology is not an object but rather a vital system that is bound to the world of time and space; that is, a technology is always inextricably tied both to a particular moment in human history and to the practical action of the human life world in which it is embedded.” (C. Haas, *Writing Technology: Studies in the Materiality of Literacy* [Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996], x-xii.) Also, according to Colette Sirat (C. Sirat, “Handwriting and the Writing Hand,” in *Writing Systems and Cognition* ed. W.C. Watt [Dordrecht: Springer, 1993], 387): “one cannot detach a writing-system from a whole set of intellectual social and technical conceptions.” Specifically in terms of literacy in antiquity, J. Goody is on the extreme end of this branch of literacy theory as he connected rationality with literacy (J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

³⁵ H. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 42.

³⁶ K. Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters – Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); C. Heszer, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); L. W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts – Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); W. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes at Oxyrhynchus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); A. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); G. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 165-206. E. Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in Texts Found in the Judean Desert* STDJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

Malina? The best way to proceed will involve carefully handling texts in the New Testament that make explicit reference to the material dimension of the development of its traditions. There are very few references to actual “books” in the New Testament. Clearly technical examples include the reference to “scrolls” and “parchments” in 2 Timothy 4:13, reference to “books” in John 20:30-31 and John 21:25, and a few appearances of scrolls in the Apocalypse. It is the argument of this paper that one of the clearest points of contact we have between New Testament studies and the study of literacy and book-culture is John 21:25 reference to “books” (βιβλία). “This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” It is our clearest point of contact simply because in relation to other New Testament references, it carries the most rhetorical baggage and features a remarkable variety of contemporary parallels.

Such an approach to John 21:25 may have precedent in Johannine studies through Staley’s published dissertation, *The Print’s First Kiss*.³⁷ Though he is more interested in how written transmission differs hermeneutically from oral transmission as it relates to the implied reader of John, he concludes his work by asking questions about how the material transmission of John can affect our readings of it.³⁸ From his conclusion: “Given the fact that there are various word technologies and that they each affect their implied audiences in different ways...we have raised the question of how the narrative critical tools developed out of the internalization of print might help us to understand the New Testament better in that medium.”³⁹ While this observation regarding the narrative criticism of John is valuable, Staley’s focus is instructive to this paper in that it sets the stage for conversely questioning how the technological medium in which a text like John 21 would have been presented to its earliest readers would affect their reception of it. There isn’t any other New Testament document that contains such an explicit, pointed reference to its medium

³⁷ J. L. Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* SBLDS 82 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988).

³⁸ Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss*, 1-5, 119-146, *passim*.

³⁹ Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss*, 120.

of transmission, thus by its very intentionality open to the sort of socio-rhetorical analysis provided by the study of literacy in antiquity.

9.2 βιβλία in Commentary on John 21

A great deal of past commentary on John 21:25 and its odd references simply pass it off as an overdone rhetorical flourish. Most commentators either venture a few passing remarks on the odd verse, or just side with Lindars when he claims it is little else than “exaggerated literary conceit,” as if “The editor was bound to try to make it a more grand conclusion, to avoid anticlimax.”⁴⁰ Or with Barrett who surmises that in light of the reference to “books” in 20:30, “The repetition is somewhat crude and strongly confirms the view that ch. 21 is an addendum to the gospel.”⁴¹

Perhaps the most positive commentary on the text in the history of interpretation is that of Brodie, when he visualizes John 21:24-25 as a “variation on the technique of the movie camera which, at the end, withdraws and allows the viewer to see a much larger scene (cf. 20:18), the person who wrote the gospel now provides a view of how the gospel originated, how it was received, and how it was recorded.”⁴² In this statement, Brodie unwittingly verges on identifying how closely John 21:25 relates to current studies of literacy and book-culture in antiquity.

This is not to say that past commentary has always been formally antagonistic to the ending of John 21, which is certainly true in most cases, but that Johannine studies has not been offered a model by which to integrate the text into the broader landscape of the gospel and its composition history. I suggested above that John 21:25 is the closest point of contact we have between the New Testament and its contemporary book-culture. This is so not only because, as well shall see, a number of parallels to its rhetorical implications exist, but also because there is an intentionality to the rhetoric of John 21:25 that grants us access to the final layer of John’s composition. The following treatment of John 21:25 from this perspective will

⁴⁰ B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 642.

⁴¹ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 588.

⁴² T. L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 595.

proceed in two stages. First, I will address key literary analogues to the reference to “books” and then analogues to the hyperbolic rhetoric in which it is embedded. Secondly, I will address the impact that reading John 21:25 with and against these analogues can have on our understanding of its placement within the Johannine tradition.

9.3 The Literary Background

9.3.1. Books

The word typically translated as “books” in John 21:25 is the common word “βιβλίον.” This word is actually the Greek name for the papyrus plant⁴³ used to make the long sheets that became book-rolls, which were the predominant book form until the codex gained ascendancy in the 3rd century CE.⁴⁴ Eventually, the word became standard vocabulary in the Greco-Roman world for the scroll format, and eventually (in the 2nd to 3rd centuries CE) for a wider variety of publishing formats. The LXX uses this and βιβλίον to translate the Hebrew דָּבָר, מַגִּלָּה, and סֵפֶר word groups, which encompass a similar semantic domain but often have a metaphorical import,

⁴³ Pliny, *Natural History*, xiii 74-82 in Naphtali Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 34-69.

⁴⁴ Including sources noted above, secondary sources on scrolls, notebooks, and codices in antiquity consulted in the course of the following research include: L. Alexander, “Ancient Book Production and the Circulation of the Gospels,” in *The Gospels for All Christians*, ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); T. Birt, *Das Antike Buchwesen in seinem Verhältnis zur Litteratur* (Berlin: Hertz, 1882); Alain Blanchard, ed. *Les Debuts du Codex* *Bibliologia* 9 (Turnhou: Brepols, 1989); H. Blanck, *Das Buch in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 1992); G. Cavallo, ed. *Libri, editori, e pubblico nel mondo antico* (Bari: Laterza, 1975); P.E. Easterling and B.M.W. Knox, “Books and Readers in the Greek World,” in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1 ed. Easterling and Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 1-41; Elliott, J. K., ed. *The Collected Biblical Writings of T. C. Skeat*. SNT, 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); W. V. Harris, “Why Did the Codex Supplant the Book-Roll?” in *Renaissance Society and Culture*, ed. J. Monfasani and R. G. Musto (New York: Italica Press, 1991); F.G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932); M. McCormick, “Typology, Codicology, and Papyrology,” *Scriptorium* 35 (1981): 331-334; H. L. Pinner *The World of Books in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1948); R. Reed, *Ancient Skins, Parchments, and Leathers* (London: Seminar Press, 1972); F. Reichmann “The Book Trade at the Time of the Roman Empire” *Library Quarterly* 8 (1938): 40-76; C.H. Roberts, “Books in the Greco-Roman World and in the New Testament,” in *Cambridge History of the Bible* Vol. 1, ed. P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 48-67; C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979); C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983); E.G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977).

such as the “book of life” (Ex. 32:32), or “book of judgment” (Dan 7:10), or stands in as a reference to Torah, as in “book of the law” (Deut. 28:58). χαρτης is an infrequent alternative in the LXX to translate מגילה (which specifically refers to the roll format in whole or in part). Like βιβλος, it became a general term for written or unwritten rolls.⁴⁵

New Testament usage is quite similar, though John 20:30 and 21:25 provide particularly interesting grounds for discussion. The added dimension in these texts to New Testament usage of the word, especially John 21:25, is that there is a larger variety of words available in Greek and Latin for books and book forms available at the end of the first century than there was at the beginning. By the end of the first century, we begin to have more frequent reference, such as in 2 Timothy, to τὰς μεμβράνας, small codex notebooks made of parchment.⁴⁶ In a contemporary parallel, when Martial claims “were it not for books, human culture would pass into oblivion as quickly as man himself,” the word here for books is *chartas*, a Latinized form of χαρτης. Quite often in distinction to this in the *Epigrams*, Martial refers to *libelli*, small books in a different format, the codex, that in Greek were usually referred to as βιβλίον or βιβλιδιον alongside of *membrana*, a more technical term for small codices made of parchment.⁴⁷ In a matter of a few centuries, these would

⁴⁵ Compare βιβλίον in Ex. 17:14, Deut. 17:18, Mal. 3:16; or Gen. 2:4 with χαρτης in Isaiah 8:1 and χαρτίον in Jer. 36:2. I must admit that the use of the latter terms in Isaiah 8 and Jeremiah 36 is puzzling, as they don't occur elsewhere in the LXX.

⁴⁶ T.C. Skeat “‘Especially the Parchments’: A Note on 2 Timothy IV.13” *JTS* 30 (1979): 172-177, and K. P. Donfried, “Paul as σκηνοπιος and the Use of the Codex in Early Christianity” in *Christ Bezeugun*, ed. K. Kertlege, T. Holtz, and C. P. März (Frieberg: Herder, 1990), 249-256. Pliny, citing Varro, briefly narrates the invention of a similar material made during a shortage of papyrus shipments to Pergamum as the result of an embargo. In the absence of their usual writing material, the Pergamenes developed what became known as περγαμῆνη, which we now call “parchment” or “vellum” and the Romans referred to as *membrana*. Parchment is made by the careful preparation and scraping of young animal skins until a thin, uniform surface is created, thus producing a clean, malleable, and durable material. It was known to Roman culture before the middle of the second century B.C., and by the middle of the first century A.D. is a commonly used writing material (Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 87; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 266 n. 15; and Pinner, *The World of Books in Classical Antiquity*, 19). For a more detailed description see M.L. Ryder, “The Biology and History of Parchment,” in *Pergament: Geschichte, Structur, Restaurierung, Herstellung* ed. P. Ruck (Simarigen: Thorbecke, 1991), 25-33; R.Reed, *The Nature and Making of Parchment* (Leeds: Elmet, 1975); and Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 46.

⁴⁷ Martial, *Epigrams* XIV, 186. For a remarkably still current summary of such terminology, see: J. B. Poynton, “Books and Authors,” *Greece & Rome* 3/8. (1934): 94-104. It seems to be clear that Martial is referring to an actual parchment codex (of multiple quires) as a novelty, which should be distinguished from a simpler parchment notebook. A parchment notebook would have consisted of a few sheets of parchment folded in half and

be simply referred to as βιβλία, signaling the shift in acceptance between the scroll and codex. All this is to show that at the end of the first century CE there were a variety of book formats in use, along with an expanding vocabulary for these differing book forms.⁴⁸ Just as Martial is careful to select either *libellus* or *charta* in the epigrams, so would the writer of John 21:25 been aware that the selection of βιβλία would affect the reading of this conclusion. It is true that βιβλος and its cognates would have been a default option for referring to books in the Greco-

sewn through the middle. Though we have no extant examples of this sort of primitive book, the amount of reference we have to the practice of note-taking and record keeping in the first centuries AD suggests fairly widespread familiarity with parchment notebooks (cf. Roberts and Skeat, 15-23 for examples). This sort of book could have served as the missing link between the scroll and the codex, and as one of the key factors in the eventual supersession of papyrus by parchment. (Some consider the “Vindolanda Tablets” that were relatively recently discovered in England (and can be seen in the British Museum) to represent another transitional stage of the book (A.K. Bowman and J.D. Thomas, *Vindolanda: The Latin Writing Tablets* [London: SPRS, 1983]). These tablets though are in a concertina format, which seems to be more an aberration than a widespread writing format. cf. Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 174-176.) It may be the case that this sort of notebook was invented around the same time as parchment, when it was discovered that the material did not make very good scrolls (cf. Pinner, *The World of Books in Classical Antiquity*, 19). Gamble refers to it as “certainly a Roman innovation” (Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 50), and there are a few later references in Greco-Roman literature to the use of such a convenient tool. One popular use seemed to be that of record keeping in business transactions. It would not have been out of the ordinary to use small *tabellae* or *pugillares* to take notes during speeches or to jot down ideas. This use would have certainly extended to the parchment notebook. (*Tabellae* and *pugillares* were different sizes of wax tablets joined together at the hinge, the parchment notebook would have been considerably more convenient.) Kenyon also postulates that the parchment notebook “would no doubt be extensively used in the preparation of literary works, before they were consigned to publication.” (Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 90.) There is also much recorded use of the same sort of notebook in Jewish communities of the first few centuries AD. These פְּנִינָאִים (πίνακες) were not only for record keeping or note taking, but even in the copying of Oral Law for personal use. (Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* [New York: Stroock Publication Fund, 1962], 203-208.) Lieberman goes so far as to claim, “Now the Jewish disciples of Jesus, in accordance with the general rabbinic practice, wrote the sayings which their master pronounced *not* in form of a book to be published, but as notes in their *pinaces*, codices, in their note-books (or in private small rolls)...in line with the foregoing we would naturally expect the *logia* of Jesus to be originally copied in codices” (Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 205). Alan Millard uses such socio-literary evidence to suggest it is this sort of practice that eventually led to the production of the Gospels, as Galilean Jews would certainly have been familiar with such rabbinical practice (Millard, *Reading and Writing at the Time of Jesus*, 223-229). If this is true, then the parchment notebook played a key role in the development of the Jesus traditions (cf. Irven M. Resnick, “The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities.” *Journal of Religious History* 17 no. 1 [1992]: 1-17).

⁴⁸ For example: Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 10.3.31. “It is best to write on wax for erasure...though weak sight may make it desirable to employ parchment by preference.” Also “It is, however, a common practice with those who have many cases to plead to write out the most necessary portions...a practice regularly adopted by Cicero, as is clear from his note-books (*commentariis*). But the notes of other orators are also in circulation; some have been discovered by chance, while others have been edited in book form (*libros digesti*).”

Roman world, but conversely, it would only be the default option for the sorts of things that were written in “books” in the first-century. The scroll format to which the word refers at this point in the history of book technology was used for literature, philosophy, history, and key religious works rather than the sorts of data that were scribbled on bits of parchment or scraps of papyrus (business transactions, accounting tabulations, technical manuals, etc...).⁴⁹ The consensus on John 21:25 has been along the lines of Stibbe’s sentiment that “It is difficult to argue that John’s use of the word *Biblion* as a description of his work in 20.30 [or 21:25] is referring to a genre of writing.”⁵⁰ But, while it may not refer to a specific genre, it is referring to a specific book format, and this book format was overwhelmingly used for a discernible set of literatures or genres.

The particularity of this word in John 21:25, presumably at the end of the first century or early second at the latest, can be further emphasized by the papyrological record. Papyrological data plainly indicates that early Christians were the first social network to publish a majority of their literature in the codex format.⁵¹ More than 98 percent of surviving fragments of Greek literature before the second century are in the roll format, and this is still as high as 80 percent in the third

⁴⁹ Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 15-26.

⁵⁰ Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller* SNTS 73 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 32.

⁵¹ Theories for the origin of the codex abound, making it difficult to pinpoint exactly when the transition from scroll to codex occurred. Here is a list of common suggestions: 1. An early collection of Paul’s letters necessitated a codex format (Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 59-63; A. Deismann, *Light From the Ancient East* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004], 71; E.E. Richards, “The Codex and the Early Collection of Paul’s Letters.” *BBR* 8 [1998]: 151-166). 2. Mark’s exposure to the codex in Rome set a standard for Christian literature in the publication of his gospel (Roberts, “Books in the Greco-Roman World and in the New Testament,” 54). 3. The use of the codex by an “imposing figure” in early Christianity set the standard for publishing, perhaps John (T.C. Skeat, “Early Christian Book Production: Papyri and Manuscripts” in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat* [ed. J.K. Elliot; Leiden: Brill, 2004], 72; T.C. Skeat, “The Origin of the Christian Codex,” *ZPE* 102 [1994]: 263-268). 4. Use of the codex by Antiochene Christians, linked to the phenomenon of *nomina sacra* (Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 57-61). 5. The general use of notebooks was linked to a demographic which characterized early Christianity, in either the Jewish or working class context (H. Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World* [New York: Routledge, 2000], 213; Graham Stanton, “Early Christian Preference for the Codex,” in *The Earliest Gospels* [ed. Charles Horton; JSNTSS 258; London: T&T Clark, 2004], 47). 6. The codex is linked to the use of *testimonia*, such as 4QTestimonia (McCormick, “The Birth of the Codex and Apostolic Lifestyle,” *Scriptorium* 39 [1985]: 156). As of yet, there is no consensus on theories of origin other than that the early Christians had something to do with it.

century.⁵² In contrast to this, Hurtado's recent statistics demonstrate that 71 percent of second century Christian manuscripts are codices, 22 percent are scrolls. A similar statistic applies to the third century.⁵³ According to these statistics, it is probable that codex usage in Christianity (such as that referenced in 2 Timothy) was in place around the time of the writing of John's gospel.⁵⁴ As readers of John's gospel would have been aware of the semiotic differences between roll and codex, and the different vocabulary for each, this use of βιβλία at the end of John 21 becomes all the more striking. Lexical and papyrological data suggests the following line of thought behind the placement of βιβλία in John 21: 1. The use of the word is occurring at the end of the first century, a point in time at which it still refers specifically to literatures published in the roll format. 2. The Christian author of 21:25 would have been aware of the increasing use of the codex, an alternative format to the roll with its own set of vocabulary, which had been taking place in Christian circles by this time. 3. The use of βιβλία rather than its formal alternatives by an early Christian author in this context is a distinct reference to the roll, and by rhetorical inference, the types of literatures related to this publishing format.

It is worth briefly mentioning the different sets of implications this data has in the way we parse references to it in New Testament literature. Properly stated, this issue is technological in scope, but shifts in technology often have formative impact on the social, theological, and hermeneutical arrangements of religious groups. The pointed reference to βιβλία in John may indicate that some of these shifts were already beginning to take root.

⁵² Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 31. Gamble claims that the 98 percent statistic is true until the third century (Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 49, cf. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 1-70).

⁵³ Larry W. Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). These statistics are arguably more complete, as Hurtado's method of tabulation takes into account a large body of data than that used by Roberts and Skeat.

⁵⁴ Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 35 (cf. A. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 65). Harris disagrees; for him the provenance issue does limit our ability to claim that there was a universal Christian usage of the codex as early as Roberts and Skeat (Harris, "Why Did the Codex Supplant the Book-Roll?" 73).

9.3.1.1 Social Implications

Apart from the fragmentary papyrological evidence available to us, we can also refer to early Christian art and iconography as it relates to Roman art of the same period. Generally, the appearance of the codex in Roman art is associated with lower literate classes rather than the social elite that characteristically appear with scrolls. Loveday Alexander's study of this iconography suggests that "Urban Christians tended to belong to precisely the socially ambiguous groups associated with the codex in iconography."⁵⁵ This accords well with Turner's estimation that the early papyri is marked by a handwriting that reflects their working class origin.⁵⁶ It is possible, however, that this sort of handwriting could have occurred in the upper classes if a text was being copied for personal use, so it may be difficult to assess the social semiotics of a particular handwriting until the actual use of the text has been established.

Though the apparent working class origin of the codex in a Roman context is suggestive of the social milieu of its early Christian users, we need to balance this against the Jewish use of the same sort of notebooks that occurred in educated classes well versed in the use of the scroll. We also need to balance it against the existence of very fine copies of Christian texts as early as the second century. Often these clearer hands are assumed to be used in texts that were designed for public reading, which may imply that a lower class Christian community had just gone the extra mile to produce a nicer text. But this line of thinking as well assumes that we can assign specific uses to specific texts based on apparent social markings. Until we have a closer scrutiny of the social makeup of the communities that produced the fragments we have at hand, these sorts of tautologies will persist in the field. What is immediately apparent about the use of the codex apart from handwriting and scribal issues is that the codex did bring with it a certain amount of social and cultural baggage. Robin Lane Fox frames this negatively in the sense that Christian "texts were not sumptuous nor supreme symbols of Christian identity."⁵⁷ But Stanton

⁵⁵ Alexander, "Ancient Book Production and the Circulation of the Gospels," 80-82. cf Horsely's argument that the codex was used simply because the class of people producing them weren't really aware of the scroll (W. Horsely, "Classical Manuscripts in Australia and New Zealand." *Antichthon* 27 (1993): 60-83).

⁵⁶ Turner, *Typology of the Codex*, 6-7.

⁵⁷ R. L. Fox, "Literacy and Power in Early Christianity," in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. A. K. Bowman and G. Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

thinks of it in terms of the early Christian predilection for delegitimizing the power structures sustained by the Empire, and thus these early gospel codices contain the “richest text” in the “humblest form.”⁵⁸

9.3.1.2 Religious/Theological Implications

The religious and theological implications of the use of the codex are evident. New Testament scholars and historians of literature in antiquity have explored many of these implications with a reasonable amount of rigour, generally directed toward two observations. The first is a recognition that Christian use of the codex instead of the scrolls involves nothing less than a complete cultural demarcation from Judaism. Snyder even senses this transition in text format as early as the ministry of Jesus himself. “The important fact for understanding the refracted view of the scribal office rendered in the New Testament is that the New Testament writers and their sources attributed to scribes an exaggerated and rather nefarious role because of anxiety of the issue of textual control.”⁵⁹ This issue of textual control became even more acute when Christianity began producing such a large number of texts that communities found it necessary to adopt an entirely different literary format to maintain the distinction.

Resnick is helpful in moderating the discussion by pointing out, “Even if one cannot demonstrate the presence of theological causes, it seems at least possible to isolate and illustrate the theological *consequences* for the Christian introduction of the codex.”⁶⁰ His work draws on that of Saul Lieberman, and suggests a few salient points: 1. The use of the codex signalled which texts were appropriate Christian versions of Jewish texts.⁶¹ 2. Similarly, continued Rabbinical insistence of the

1997), 131. cf. Gamble: “Christian texts came to be inscribed in codices not because they enjoyed a special status as aesthetic or cult objects, but because they were practical books for everyday use: the handbooks, as it were, of the Christian community. (Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 66)

⁵⁸ Stanton, “Early Christian Preference for the Codex,” 41.

⁵⁹ Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World*, 188.

⁶⁰ Resnick, “The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities,” 1.

⁶¹ Hengel agrees with this as it relates to the manuscript evidence we have concerning the origin of Christian use of the LXX. When the LXX appears in the codex form, this signals a Christian appropriation of it. And furthermore, the *nomina sacra* simply replace the tetra. “It also points externally to a new beginning intended to distinguish between the use of Scriptures in “ekklesia” and “synagogue.” (Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian*

scroll's use in public readings may reflect a similar agreement, and what we have in the second and third centuries is a "dialectical development" between Christianity and Judaism present in this material history.⁶² 3. Even though Christians may have adopted the use of the codex from Rabbinical use of notebooks for private study, the later insistence on using the codex as an official format "may have been especially in order to demonstrate that the community is no longer bound by the law" represented by Torah.⁶³

A second area in which the implications of the codex are often discussed is the religious function of early Christian texts. Both the format of the codex and frequent textual markers indicate that many Christian texts were used for public reading. As the Christian format and intent of public reading may have been so closely linked with parallel synagogue practice, the actual form of the codex versus the scroll may not be at issue here. What does become an issue specifically regarding the format is that these codices often read in the context of worship were official records of what was previously oral tradition. Richard Bauckham argues that this process of actually writing down of the gospels implies the intention of early Christianity to reach out to a broader audience.⁶⁴ The convenience of the codex in this missiological setting is readily apparent. In the same volume, Alexander refers to the example of Galen's exhortation to copy down lecture notes in order to preserve their correct form for future repetition.⁶⁵ She argues that although Bauckham's point is well taken, we can also see the written copies of oral events functioning as a means of properly re-enacting the oral event in a very localized setting. The text, and even the codex in Galen's case, can function as the record of an authorized speech or performance.

Scripture [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] 41.) cf. Peter Katz, "The Early Christian's Use of Codices Instead of Rolls." *JTS* 46 (1945).

⁶² Resnick, "The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities," 7.

⁶³ Resnick, "The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities," 12.

⁶⁴ R. Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 9-49.

⁶⁵ Alexander, "Ancient Book Production and the Gospels," 103.

9.3.1.3 Hermeneutical Implications

Any change in the format of written material will invariably alter the reception and use of that text in some way. In the case of the codex, such a radical departure in format from previous scroll material, it has a great deal of significance. Walter Ong's pioneering work is, more often than not, invoked at this point.⁶⁶ Skeat dabbles in the differences between the format of scroll and codex. He muses, "I myself have long thought it possible that the roll might have possessed some psychological advantage in that reading a roll is a continuous process, unbroken by the necessity of page turning, which cuts the reader off from all that has gone before and gives only limited access, in the form of the facing page, to what is to come."⁶⁷ It is not clear whether this is the case or not, but such reflections merit consideration.

One of the more interesting lines of thought concerning the codex is its relation to the canon in the second century. Of the many theories of origin cited in section IV, a few of them related the use of the codex to its ability to bring a number of larger texts together into one physical unit. Not only does this efficiently foster a sense of intratextuality, but it also makes it much easier to create bodies of texts that serve as the identity markers of particular communities. In a very interesting study, David Trobisch reconstructs what he considers to be the first edition of the complete New Testament.⁶⁸ One of his preliminary suggestions is that "For the publishers of the Canonical Edition the codex form probably offered several distinct advantages."⁶⁹ It can hold more than scrolls, it standardizes copies more effectively, it is easier to include shorter texts in a codex, and it is a socially distinctive format. If Trobisch is correct, then the codex may have quite a bit to do with early notions of canonicity. Heckel even argues that John 21 was written precisely to make it fit more seamlessly into a four-fold gospel codex.⁷⁰ While in the past such argumentation

⁶⁶ W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Routledge, 1982). The following may be even more relevant, given their recency: G. Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning: The Canon as Semiotic Mechanism* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001) and J. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss* (Scholar's Press: Atlanta, 1988), 111-118.

⁶⁷ Skeat, "Roll Versus Codex – A New Approach," 71.

⁶⁸ D. Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁹ Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, 76.

⁷⁰ T. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1999). cf. J. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of*

has by and large been ignored, recent advances in codicology are causing a hermeneutical re-estimation of the study of Christian origins.

9.3.2 Hyperbolic βιβλία

The sort of rhetorical hyperbole signalled by “I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that could be written,” is so prevalent in the literature that Schnackenburg rightly points out, “It is neither Greek nor Jewish, but a common human exaggeration.”⁷¹ Such biographical embroidery is found concerning Judas in 1 Maccabees, Diodorus Siculus says the same thing of Alexander, Lysias of fallen Athenian heroes, and others could be listed.⁷² From this perspective, John 21:25 is simply a mimicry of an illustrious literary convention. On the other hand, the specific structure of this hyperbole, which draws on the image of libraries and endless rolls of scrolls, is not as common as Schnackenburg assumes.

The hyperbolizing of Jesus’ narrative in terms of all the books it could fill has a few highly specified parallels. In *Tractate Soferim*, the following statement is attributed to Johanan ben Zakkai: “If all the heavens were a scroll, all the trees quills, and all the seas ink, they would not suffice for recording my wisdom which I acquired from my masters.”⁷³ As a tradition of the Babylonian Talmud, it appears quite late, even later showing up in the Akdamut prayer of the 10th century, and a similar Synagogue liturgy.⁷⁴ However, Rabbinical scholars, based on rather clear

Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark. (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁷¹ R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John – Vol. 3*. trans. K. Smyth, C. Hastings, et al. (London: Burns and Oates, 1982), 588.

⁷² See C. Keener, *The Gospel of John – A Commentary Vol. 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2003), 1241-1242 for more examples. cf. A. Köstenberger, “‘I Suppose’ (Οἶμαι): The Conclusion of John’s Gospel in Its Literary and Historical Context.” in *The New Testament in its First Century Context*, ed. P.J. Williams, A.D. Clarke, P.M. Head, and D. Instone Brewer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 72-88.

⁷³ Tractate Sopherim, 16.8: “It was related of R. Johanan b. Zakkai that he did not neglect the study of a single passage of the Torah. He also studied all Scripture, Targum, Mishnah, halakoth and ‘aggadoth. He learned everything. It was also related of him that he declared, ‘If all the heavens...’.”

⁷⁴ In an uncannily thorough article on this particular literary hyperbole (including the ben Zakkai and Akdamut references), Irving Linn traces it through the literatures of several dozen cultures in as many centuries, yet fails to refer to the John 21:25 reference. (I. Linn, “If All the Sky Were Parchment” *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 53/4. [Dec.,

evidence from *Pirke Aboth* and *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, date Johanan ben Zakkai to the period of the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Following Hillel and Shammai, he gained prominence as a Rabbi in this difficult time of transition.⁷⁵ There are a few more similar Talmudic traditions, many of which posit that it would be simply impossible to write all the teachings of the scribes, and even one attributed to the teachers of Rabbi Akiva that is remarkably similar to the ben Zakkai quotation.⁷⁶ Regardless, it is apparent that an almost direct parallel to John 21:25 exists in Judaism contemporary to the writing of the Gospel, at least according to Talmudic tradition.

Attempting to argue that the author of John 21:25 was familiar with this tradition is tempting, but it is impossible to establish the necessary links as the material in which it is embedded is notoriously difficult to date with any accuracy.⁷⁷ Yet, it remains interesting that a popular point most probably made in Jewish thought contemporary to John, namely that the best means of information transmission available to society was incapable of handling the significance of Torah, could also be said of Jesus himself. What the John text and Talmud traditions have in common is an ironically self-aware expression of the inadequacy of their literary format. The fact that one is applied to Torah, and the other is applied to Jesus sets up a provocative intertext that is worthy of further consideration.

9.4 The Literary Significance of βιβλία in John 21

The last two points have attempted to demonstrate that the initially obscure, hyperbolic reference made to “books” in John 21:25 has a clear set of parallels that would have triggered a network of rhetorical echoes in early readings of the text.

1938]: 951-970). He provides many other interesting examples, a few of which come from the Koran.

⁷⁵ cf. J. Neusner, *Torah From our Sage - Pirke Avot* (New York: Berhman House, 1984), 74-76; R. Travers Hereford, *The Ethics of the Talmud - Sayings of the Fathers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978). *Perke Avot* 11.9 claims that R. Johanan b. Zakkai died in 80 C.E., recording only one of his sayings. *Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, 14 duplicates the *Pirke Avot* quotation and explains the dirth of material on ben Zakkai based on his location in Emmaus rather than Jamnia, which was a far more visible platform for a Rabbi.

⁷⁶ Which can be found in *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2 (citing Eccles. 12:12), and *Song Rab.* 1:3.

⁷⁷ cf. D. Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis From the Era of the New Testament: Vol. 1 – Prayer and Agriculture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 28-40.

The use of βιβλία would have conjured up an image of vast libraries of scrolls, such as the one referenced in a story contemporary to John in which Ptolemy asked Demetrius of Phalerum to collect all of the books of the world (at the time estimated around 500,000 volumes).⁷⁸ At the end of John, the narrative and discourses of Jesus are imagined as overwhelming the sum total of all official and culturally relevant literature of his day, that is, anything worthy of being written on a scroll. The Jesus traditions are brimming over the end of John's gospel, which has only captured for us key elements, a framework, fragments of a vast literary well of revelatory experience. This hyperbole also fits well into the biographical conventions present in John 21's description of the lasting significance of Jesus' biography, which though captured loosely here in a short book, still cannot be compared to libraries of Torah scrolls and commentaries.

This sets the stage for reflecting on how this rich seam of rhetoric in John 21 relates to the Gospel as a whole. It is no coincidence that we find such a self-consciously literary rhetoric here specifically at the end of John 21. Whether it was written with the Gospel, soon after, or sometime later, John 21 functions as an additional chapter to the Gospel appended by the author or final editor of John 1-20.⁷⁹ As a text completing chapters 1-20 by rounding out its central characters, expanding our understanding of the role of the Risen Christ in the experience of the apostles and life of the early church, establishing the gospel's complex balance between testimony and authority, and rooting the narrative in the present life of its

⁷⁸ Letter of Aristeas, 9-11: [9]: "Demetrius of Phalerum, the president of the king's library, received vast sums of money, for the purpose of collecting together, as far as he possibly could, all the books in the world. By means of purchase and transcription, he carried out, to the best of his ability, the purpose of the king. On one occasion when I was present he was asked, How many thousand books are there in the library? [10] and he replied, 'More than two hundred thousand, O king, and I shall make endeavour in the immediate future to gather together the remainder also, so that the total of five hundred thousand may be reached. I am told that the laws of the Jews are worth transcribing and deserve a place in [11] your library.'" (Translation from R.H. Charles, *The Septuagint: The Letter of Aristeas* [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913].)

⁷⁹ For critics that read John 21 as an addition by another author, see: R. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); C.K. Barrett *The Gospel According to St. John* 2nd ed. (London: SPCK 1978); R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. C. Hastings et al. (New York: Crossroad, 1990). For a few that take the chapter as a composition integral to the gospel see: P. Minear "The Original Functions of John 21" *JBL* 102/1 (1983) 85-98; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); W. Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21" in *The Four Gospels – Festschrift Frans Neiryneck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. van Belle, J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2207-2221.

first readers, John 21 effectively alters the way John is read.⁸⁰ As an intentional, and helpful, addition, the writer of John 21 concludes the chapter in a nod towards John 20:30-31, but with an added emphasis on the literary production of the Gospel as a whole. While mimicking the initial conclusion of 20, it even more articulately positions the Gospel as a text, a written biography of Jesus based on the accurate testimony of its source.⁸¹ This literary preoccupation blends well with the placement of John 21 in the composition history of the Gospel, concluding its final edition with notes of literary pretension.

The rhetoric of John 21:25 attempts to class the Gospel of John with the set of literatures related to the word βιβλία. This certainly comports well with Burridge's estimation of the genre of John as *bios* literature, as relevant literatures would have also been published in the format related to the term.⁸² This is *contra* Hengel's take on the hyperbole: "As all earlier Christian biblical texts were circulated as codexes, i.e. in book form and using *nomina sacra*, in my view we may presuppose that this would already be the case with the first edition. This is one of the fixed Christian writing practices which goes back to the first century."⁸³ Though he arrives at this conclusion based on the papyrological record, there is no lexicographical merit to Hengel's argument.⁸⁴ In fact, as I have argued, it is the Christian use of the codex in this period that would have pointed the rhetoric, having been specifically crafted by means of βιβλία at this pre-transitional stage in the lexicography of book technology. Hengel is correct to characterize the use of the codex as a "fixed Christian practice,"

⁸⁰ There are several ways of interpreting how John 21 "alters" our reading of 1-20, both positively (P. E. Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," *JSNT* 75 [1999]: 49-68) and negatively (Willi Braun, "Resisting John: Ambivalent Redactor and Defensive Reader of the Fourth Gospel," *Studies in Religion* 19 [1990]: 59-71).

⁸¹ cf. R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 365-369.

⁸² Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), and Richard A. Burridge, "About People, by People, and for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences," in *The Gospels for All Christians*, ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁸³ M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 106.

⁸⁴ Hengel, however, is not alone in this historical supposition, cf. D. Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 69-76.

but there is no evidence to suggest that βιβλία would have referred to one this early, and in this context.

Due to its position in the composition history of the Gospel, this raises an interesting question regarding the relevance of the rhetoric itself. A multitude of authors have been suggested for John 21, ranging from the self-same author of 1-20 to a final redactor of the text responsible for a number of other insertions in 1-20. To complicate matters, many who ascribe John 21:1-23 to the author of John 21 consider the idea that John 21:24-25 comes from a different hand, as indicated by its shift to the first person plural in its identification of the Beloved Disciple. If this rhetoric comes from the hand of the author, then it is simple to read the verse as a self-conscious attestation of genre. However, if it comes from the hand of a later author, whether of the entire chapter or simply vv. 24-25, it is possible to understand the hyperbole as a misreading of 20:30-31 resulting in a series of literary and generic effects not programmed by the initial author of the Gospel. This would mean that 21:24-25 sets up a retrospective generic expectation for the Gospel not explicitly intended by its author. Either way, John 21:25 leads one to read the gospel somewhat differently than the first conclusion of John 20:30-31. And either way, reading this text in light of its rhetorical connections to book culture in antiquity grants us a clear point of access into the self-perception of Gospel writers at the end of the first century.

This technological rhetoric has a secondary effect in its implicit reference to other literatures of the period. Casting the hyperbole specifically in terms of “books” highlights the selectivity of John’s gospel. The author of John 21 seems intent on offering a veiled apology for the set of traditions that comprise 1-20, which, judging from the wide range of written and unwritten Jesus traditions available at the end of the first century, would have been a pragmatic apology. On the one hand it implies the following logic: if there are so many Jesus traditions out there, then the ones that have been specifically recorded in John must be uniquely relevant. There are a lot of other possible gospels out there, but this is the testimony of the Beloved Disciple and therefore possesses a more established validity. But on the other hand, phrasing the hyperbole in this way also provides space for other gospels, such as Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I am sure the writer of John 21 was pleased with stumbling across such an efficient, double-edged rhetoric.

9.5 In Summary

For quite some time, John 21:25 has received only commentary in passing at the end of much longer discussions of other areas of the Gospel. For many, it lies at the end of John 21 as a bit of trivial whimsy, and after the long, hard road of writing a commentary on John, most scholars are happy just to let the text speak for itself. In the context of recent work on literacy and book-culture, however, it appears this text covers a lot of rhetorical territory in one efficient remark.

This chapter has argued an author would have been aware that βιβλία largely refers to a specific book format, namely the scroll. Both the author and his readers would have been aware of the cultural difference between the scrolls to which the word refers and the more humble book formats gathered under a still fluctuating body of terms. Thus, the use of this word here at the end of John triggers a rich network of provocative thoughts about Jesus and his relationship to figures found in similar literatures described in these specific media. To earliest readers, it would have resounded with a number of highly literate echoes, obliquely referring to the shifting semiotic network of book formats and reading habits at the end of the first century. And, as the conclusion not just to John, but to a final stage in its composition, the word βιβλία casts a long rhetorical shadow over the rest of the Gospel.

It is tempting to draw broader conclusions about how this convenient word picture ascribes the literary validity related to scroll-based writing and literature to the biography of Christ. Even more specifically, it is a clear mark of the predisposition of the author and his community to the authenticity of these Jesus traditions. Taking the data on book formats and the words used to describe these formats toward the end of the first century into account, the end of John seems acutely aware of itself as a text in the midst of a transition from the dominance of the scroll format for literary texts to the codex for the same purposes. It is within historical reason to propose that its readers understood this as well, and would have responded βιβλία in 21:25 as an invitation to recognize in the summation of John's gospel a literary achievement in the finest sense of the term.

Chapter 10

Directions for New Conversation at the End of John

10.1 Four Case Studies at the End of John

There are many conclusions to be drawn from the previous four chapters, which have served as case studies for the possibility that a literary-historical reading of John 21 could offer directions of study beyond the impasses of isolated historical and literary critical readings of the text. Out of the four key literary-historical features addressed in each successive case study, which exemplify the unique shape and flourish of John 21 at the end of John's gospel, three of these features are virtually absent in the history of scholarship on the chapter.

Studies of the Beloved Disciple are legion, even including studies that like this thesis argue we should preserve the function of the intentional anonymity of the Beloved Disciple rather than getting caught up in discovering his historical identity. As was demonstrated in that chapter on the Beloved Disciple, it is completely possible to hold his function as an eyewitness and an ideal or emblematic witness in tension. Prioritizing attempts to uncover his identity in the text actually have the effect of undoing the creative efforts of the narrator to present him as the ideal author. The issue of self-awareness in the Gospel of John remains an understudied feature of the gospel's compositional heritage. Though there have been a few essays written on the asides in John, scholarship has by and large been content to keep referencing these same few articles when the issue arises. Linking the asides in chapters 1-20 to the high degree of self-consciousness in chapter 21 provides the foundation by which their function can be further realized as key narrative and theological elements of the text. The question of narrative time in the gospel, typically limited to the discussion of prolepses and analepses in chapters 1-20 is seldom broached. But framing the question as one that involves the careful emplotment of John's gospel, and the shift in narrative time dissociating the audience of chapter 21 from the audience of chapter 20, leads to considerable

advancement in our understanding of this final chapter's historical significance. And finally, a thicker description of the reference to "books" in the concluding verse of the chapter opens up a seam of literary-historical rhetoric that has been passed over as a clumsy attempt grant a literary gravitas to the gospel. When read in light of its contemporary codicological record, we discover this reference actually does lend John 21 a measure of literary gravitas.

But, if this discussion of these features of the chapter has any merit, then they will bear out in thicker, more consistent descriptions of its historical and literary character. Based on the preceding discussion, I think it is plausible to offer the following descriptions of John 21.

10.1.1 It Is a Coherent Text

John 21 is typically treated as two different sections, the appearance of the Lord on the shore in 1-14, and then the dialogue between Peter and Jesus in 15-23. Readings leaning heavily on redaction criticism have tended to distinguish between these two different stages of tradition that are then described in John 21 as being cobbled together in a semblance of a narrative whole. From this perspective, the chapter's only coherency exists in the ecclesial themes that lie behind the redactor's reasoning. The 153 fish then represent the unity of the church and its missional identity in the face of conflict from both within and without. The meal scene taken over from Luke 5 becomes an allusion to the sacrament and merged with a tradition akin to the recognition scene in Luke 24:13. The references to Peter and the Beloved Disciple indicate an early power struggle within the communities they represent. And there are varying degrees of historical merit to each of these interpretations. But we do not need necessarily to ascribe the odd tendencies of John 21 to the ecclesiastical concerns of a redactor when the narrative, literary, and historical coherency of John 21 with John 1-20 can be just as easily described.

In the reading alternative to the typical redactional model, John 21 becomes the culmination of a narrative and theological pattern in 1-20, the realization of a creative literary pattern, and the clarification of the historical pattern that has given the entire gospel shape. The 153 fish become part of the large symbolic network of the gospel, a possible reference to the unity of the church in fulfillment of commands to love in the Farewell Discourse. The quasi-Eucharistic meal scene cues us into the

ecclesial tone of the chapter. The tension between Peter and the Beloved Disciple in chapter 21 is not based in conflict, but in the different modes of testimony that would characterize their future roles as witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In Peter's discourse with Jesus, both of their character arcs come to fruition, rooting their characterization in the pattern of faith the gospel seeks to evoke in its readers. This narrative, literary, and theological connectivity of John 21 with 1-20 even helps explain the presence of an initial conclusion in John 20:30-31. In essence, the entire chapter of John 21 becomes a hyperlink from the call to faith in verse 31.

10.1.2 It Is a Distinctly Johannine Text

John 21 is decisively Johannine in that it is the culmination of all the great themes that occupy the narrative and theological art of the gospel. There are many themes and symbols initiated in chapters 1-20 that would otherwise be left as loose ends were it not for the presence of John 21. It is only in the conversation between Peter and Jesus that the creatively arranged characterization of both Peter and the Beloved Disciple as emblematic followers of Jesus is clarified as not simply a convenient strategy for the gospel, but a key function of the historical witness of the Johannine tradition. The pattern of discipleship embodied in each figure is one which the gospel implores us, as its readers moved to faith by its testimony to Jesus, to imitate. The Beloved Disciple is granted a particularly unique sense of fulfillment in John 21, as it is his presence throughout as a faithful witness that has given the given the gospel its shape. Any attempt to separate John 21 from 1-20 is to misunderstand fundamentally its depiction of discipleship.

Neither can the distinct nature of Jesus' appearance on the beach be underestimated. For a gospel with such a high Christology, this sure is a pedestrian setting for the risen Jesus. He is unrecognizable to the disciples in his post-resurrection state, yet he is there cooking breakfast on the beach. He miraculously directs his disciples from afar, yet walks and talks with them face to face. It is telling that after enabling the disciples to catch a massive haul of fish, then come ashore to find that he already has some cooking on the fire. Amidst the missiological symbolism of this scene, John 21 pictures the risen Christ as one that can provide for himself, yet he still wants his followers to be effective "fishers of men." Furthermore, it is misguided to think that the conclusion of John 20:30-31 is a legitimately Johannine conclusion. It does make explicit overtures towards the

concepts of faith and testimony that have slowly dawned upon the reader as the purpose of the gospel. But it is only in John 21 that the gospel finds a bridge between the ministry of Jesus and the life of the Johannine community. It is a distinctly Johannine text because it speaks with such clarity to the Johannine context and community.

10.1.3. It Is an Ecclesial Text

The shift in narrative time in John 21 is an important consideration for our understanding of the original role or provenance of the text. In this narrative shift, the gospel turns from the testimony of the Beloved Disciple to the community of the Beloved Disciple. As a result of this change in emphasis, John 21 becomes laden with ecclesial images and references. We do not necessarily need to refer to redaction criticism to explain what appear to be aporetic features of these accounts, as the oblique nature of many of the images in the fishing and meal narratives do indeed speak clearly and coherently to the reader already steeped in Johannine language. But the text is also ecclesial in the sense that it desires for readers of 1-20 to become part of this community developing around the testimony of the Beloved Disciple. The insistence concerning the veracity of his witness at the end of 21 recapitulates this evangelistic priority of the gospel. Its ecclesial context becomes overt in references to the respective destinies of Peter and the Beloved Disciple, which serve as one of the primary causes for the chapter. Put conversely, if it were not for the necessity of clarifying these questions about Peter and the Beloved Disciple, then John 21 would lose a great deal of its narrative and theological effectiveness. The early reader is standing at the end of the text of the gospel, looking over the exacting precipice of 20:30-31 for ways in which the narrative of the risen Lord relates to their contemporary circumstances. John 21 responds to such a query with a resurrection appearance tradition rife with inter-textually Johannine and tradition-historical references to their current reading location.

10.1.4 It Is a Highly Literate text

As seen in the survey of historical-critical scholarship on John 21, it is very common to ascribe a clumsiness to the way it seems tacked onto the end of the gospel. What appear to be vivid seams in the fishing narrative's overt reference to

Luke 5 point some to the ineptness of its redactor's hand. And then the possibly ridiculous flourish of its conclusion, which just recycles 20:30-31 with the addition of grandiose claims concerning the gospel's literary pedigree, points most commentators towards the idea that the text is the product of a subliterate, but well-meaning participant in the Johannine tradition.

In the four case studies of specific features of John 21 have critiqued this very popular assumption at length. One of the significant aims of chapter 21 is to elucidate the function of the Beloved Disciple as a witness in distinction to the witness of Peter in martyrdom. As John 21 explains, the Beloved Disciple's pastoral destiny would involve the production of an abiding witness, the very fulfillment of which we see in the existence of this gospel. The conclusion's preoccupation with books is in part due to the literate nature of the Johannine tradition. John 21 is also a highly literate text in its high degree of self-awareness. Not only does this self-awareness grant definition to asides all throughout the gospel, but it serves as the means by which the narrator develops a very complex tension between the Beloved Disciple as an implied author *and* an implied reader. The success of this maneuver completely contradicts any notion of clumsiness in the chapter.

In fact, the range of literary mechanics fully realized in John 21 are so creative, they demand a rigorous literary-critical vocabulary to exploit fully. The same could be said of the text's awareness of the effect of narrative time. The reference to "books" in the conclusion countermands the notion that the author of John 21 was disconnected from his contemporary literary environment. He not only seems to be implicitly referring to the rhetoric of current book-technological vocabulary, but is also probably aware of the fluid nature of such terminology at the end of the first century. If intentional, as has been argued, the provocative rhetoric evoked by this very simple reference points to a high degree of literary awareness on the part of its author. The concentrated accumulation of these literary features at the end of John makes for a stunning artifact of early Christian gospel production; John 21 a vivarium of lively and ornate literary habits taking life in the production of John at the end of the first century.

10.2 Literary-Historical Emphases of John 21

I agree with the consensus of scholarship that the Gospel of John was written toward the end of the first century.⁸⁵ On the basis of the location and dating of p52, the literary relationship between John and the Synoptics, and the most probable *Sitz im Leben* of its major themes, it is apparent that this dating best fits all the evidences we have available to us.⁸⁶ The title of this study, “The End of John,” draws upon the ambiguity posed upon John 21 by its setting within the composition of the gospel. I have argued that it was written by an author steeped in the Johannine tradition, and probably known for having a working relationship with the Beloved Disciple, that wrote this chapter along with a final revision of the entire gospel. This revision would have been stylistic in nature, and with the aim of making the inclusion of John 21 more natural. The death of the Beloved Disciple was a primary cause, and the ensuing confusion in the community of the gospel’s first readers entailed by his absence. Not only was his death a possible contradiction of a now legendary statement made by Jesus during his conversation with Peter, but the death of the Beloved Disciple toward the end of the first century would have had generational significance. Here was the death of one of the last great eyewitnesses to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. John 21 marks the end of “John” in that it completes the text that was linked very early to John of Zebedee. But, it is also the end of John in that many of its literary-historical features mark the death of its central witness. It begins to answer some of the questions early Christianity must have had at this stage concerning how they would now handle the historical deposit of tradition, which until now bore with it the credibility of Jesus’ first followers. There are four ways in which John 21 is shaped by this dual description of the “end of John.”

10.2.1 Literacy

The literary skill of the author of John 21 points to a high degree of literacy involved with the codification of the Johannine tradition. In this chapter, the Beloved Disciple’s significance is cast in terms of having “written,” and being directly involved

⁸⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1997), 90.

⁸⁶ Bruce Metzger, “Recently Published Greek Papyri of the NT,” *BibArch* 10 (1947): 25-44.

with the literary production of his witness. The repetition of the idea that the selectivity of the traditions in the Gospel of John is connected to the broader view of invoking faith in readers beyond the Johannine community implies that John 21 is appreciates the necessity of recording and publishing the earliest witnesses to Jesus.

10.2.2 Witness

Related to this is a shift in concept of witness and authority away from people connected to Jesus to texts that serve as the historical locus of their testimony. The anonymity of the Beloved Disciple serves to draw attention away from his specific historical identity towards his specific historical function as an ideal witness to the life of Jesus. This transition in concepts of witness and authority within the Johannine record is the background for much of the authorial self-awareness in John 21. The author is fully cognizant of his role in producing a literary replacement for the Beloved Disciple himself.

10.2.3 Discipleship

One of the most significant effects the “end of John” has on the gospel is its evolving depiction of discipleship. John 21 presents the Beloved Disciple’s role in the production of the gospel as an act of discipleship, as a fulfillment of his commission to witness much in the same way Peter fulfilled his commission in martyrdom. As John 1-20 is structured in such a way that it moves the reader towards faith by linking their experience of John’s story with that of emblematic characters within the narrative, the gospel conceives of the reading and writing of gospel literature as a means of reduplicated and generating this discipleship. Readers are mentored through the text by the way the narrator uses the Beloved Disciple as both implied author and implied reader.

10.2.4 Eschatology

In reaction to Dodd’s emphasis on realized eschatology in John as its dominant mode, Moule posits that we have in John both realized and futurist

eschatologies.⁸⁷ John frequently engages readers in the language of realized eschatology through discourses about Spirit and discipleship. But there are also few rare nods towards a futurist eschatology in John 5:28-29 and 6:39. This aspect of John's eschatology is muted enough in 1-20 that the overt reference to the Lord's return in 21:22 is a striking change in tone toward a more distant future return of Jesus, the Johannine community now caught in the prolepsis created by 21:23.

Many historical critics take their cue from the unexpectedness of this digression by the author of 21, which clearly evidences the ecclesiological relevance of the text for its earliest readers, as an indication that the purpose of the chapter as a later addition is bound up in a transition occurring within the Johannine community itself. Decades away from the resurrection recorded in chapter 20, they now find themselves at the end of chapter 21 having to re-think several of their most cherished traditions. The high frequency of literary self-awareness, the shift in narrative time between 1-20 and 21, and the references to Greco-Roman and early Jewish book culture concluding chapter 21 are also grounded in this eschatological transition. 21:22 effectively shifts the function of the Beloved Disciple as an ideal witness who would remain until the re-appearance of the Lord to an accurate source whose historical integrity stands behind the narrative of John. From this perspective, perhaps the best analogy we can draw between John 1-20 and 21 as it relates to its intended audience is that between the gospel of Luke and the gospel of Acts, which bears with it a similar shift in eschatological expectation.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ C.H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity*. (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 115ff. C.F.D. Moule "A Neglected Factor in the Interpretation of Johannine Eschatology" in *Studies in John* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 155-160; C.F.D. Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel" *Nov. Test.* V 2/3 (1962): 171 ff. cf E. Käsemann, *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967) 127.

⁸⁸ As per Moule, "A Neglected Factor in the Interpretation of Johannine Eschatology," 160: "And the fact that (as is often noted, for no-one can escape it) John shares with Luke an extremely materialistic interpretation of the resurrection body is in keeping with my contention that John is not repudiating or transcending time sequences."

10.3 Directions for Future Study

10.3.1 Canon

Trobisch has argued that one of the reasons the codex gained ascendancy so quickly is that it was able to bring a number of larger texts together into one physical unit.⁸⁹ He reconstructs what he considers to be the first edition of the complete New Testament, which takes its cues from the notion that “For the publishers of the Canonical Edition the codex form probably offered several distinct advantages.”⁹⁰ It can hold much more text than scrolls, it generates standardized copies more efficiently, it is easier to include shorter texts in a codex, and it is a socio-religiously distinctive format. If Trobisch is correct, then the codex may have quite a bit to do with early notions of canonicity.

Building on some of this same data, Theo Heckel has posited that John 21 was written precisely to make the Gospel of John fit more seamlessly into a four-fold gospel codex.⁹¹ Many of its literary features were developed in conscious response to its relationship with the other canonical gospels, which have now begun to be collected together in various codices. 20:30-31 effectively concludes the gospel, but is then followed by John 21 that is both packed with Synoptic allusions (Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 16:17-19, and Mark 9:1) and a final rhetorical reference to the selectivity of its own traditions. While the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel of John is the dialog and conflict between Judaism and Christianity at the end of the first century, the setting of John 21 is an attempt to unify the fourfold gospel tradition that has now been made possible through the use of the codex. While I am not willing to envision a fourfold gospel codex as early as “the end of John,” the work of Heckel and Trobisch does point us towards the necessity of assessing the gospel in light of book-technological developments at the end of the first century. At the very least, John 21:25 is the clearest point of contact we have between the New Testament and these important historical transitions from scroll to codex, from parchment to papyrus, and from Roman-era literacy habits to those modes of literacy emerging in

⁸⁹ D. Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹⁰ Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, 76.

⁹¹ T. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1999).

Christian faith and practice in the second century. John 21 is genetically connected to these cultural trends.

10.3.2 Identification of the Beloved Disciple

If the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple can be successfully defended as an intentional strategy of its narrator that resists the tendency of historical criticism to prioritize the search for his identity, then this may enable us to understand the origins and functions of pseudonymity in non-canonical 2nd century gospel literature more effectively. It is entirely plausible to explain the shift from name of “John,” or the core historical witness to the Johannine tradition to the title of Beloved Disciple as a means of “branding” the tradition in a way that will preserve its authority in the absence of its historical referent. This would be a move similar to texts that, like the Gospel of Mary, link themselves with an iconic figure in the same way that the Gospel of John links itself to the Beloved Disciple. It may be the case that in John 21 we have the seed of an early Christian reconception of authorship that results in the peculiar pseudonymity of some of these later non-canonical texts. The difference between the de-historicizing of the implied author of the Gospel of John and the similarly de-historicized concept of authorship behind texts like Gospel of Mary, is that this movement in the former is made possible only by virtue of its earliest readers’ knowledge of its actual historical referent. The Gospel of Mary cannot lay claim this uniquely Johannine effect. Comparative readings in this respect, inspired by the many similarities between characters like the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John and Mary in Gospel of Mary may provide a convenient point of access to some of these key literary conventions in early Christianity.

10.4 Criticisms and Conclusions in John 21

This thesis began with a lengthy survey of scholarship on John 21, with an aim of identifying areas of consensus or stalemate in historical-critical study of the chapter. In this survey, we explored a set of impasses leading more recent academics toward literary-critical tools and methods for lines of inquiry less bound to these classic questions. This project of advancing discussion on John’s gospel in a literary sense has been constructive, though it tends to lead readers of John back to

the same historical questions unanswered by prior centuries of scholarship. In turn, a third brand of research on John, isolating and probing specific points of contact between the literary features of John and its historical context has proven fruitful. These studies were identified as precedent for undertaking similar, extended work on John 21. After describing the context of the chapter and its relationship to John 1-20 and the Synoptics through a number of patterns of theological, literary, and historical coherence, the thesis turned to four case studies demonstrating the possibility of refocusing discussion on John 21 through a convergence of literary and historical data.

This line of research actually began as a study of the odd reference to “books” in John 21:25. In exploring the reason it has been so consistently written off in commentary as the grandiose flourish of a redactor, I stumbled across the possibility that other features of John 21 could have the same unexplored connection to John’s immediate literary environment as this provocative use of book terminology. An image of a creative early Christian writer began to emerge in the growing piles of secondary literature, who had been orchestrating together Johannine and Synoptic material, along with recognizable flourishes of popular literature of his era, as the very traditions of John were moving into the realm of history. The chapter is, in part, a direct and canonical reflection on what gospel texts mean in the context of the “end of John.” As a product of this moment, the “end of John,” the author brings the gospel to a close in an eloquent, articulate bookend to the Johannine tradition that continues to lull readers into the beautiful puzzle of resurrection, tradition, and closure.

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