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Between Script and Scripture: Performance Criticism and Mark's Character(ization) of the Disciples

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BETWEEN SCRIPT AND SCRIPTURE:

PERFORMANCE CRITICISM AND MARK'S CHARACTER(IZATION) OF THE
DISCIPLES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN THEOLOGY

BY

ZECHARIAH P. EBERHART

CHICAGO, IL

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For Chloe, Millie, Leo, and Eve.

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this project, *Between Script and Scripture*, implies that this work reimagines a transitional space, one in the midst of a development or a conversion between two states. In this work I consider the “in-betweenness” of two modes of reception for the Gospel of Mark among its earliest audiences:¹ as performance and as text.² Illiteracy rates in antiquity, coupled with the relatively high cost of materials and reproducing texts, as well as a representative number of sources which attest to the high valuation of orality in antiquity,³ have each contributed to a shift in the presumed modality in which biblical scholars imagine and refer to Mark’s earliest audience: as hearers, rather than as readers. Despite this shift, both in terminology and in our thinking, two issues arise: first, modern methods of interpretation are primarily equipped to attend to literary components as opposed to oral/aural dynamics of texts (an issue that will be raised throughout this project); second, the earliest evidence we have for Mark’s reception tells

¹ For this project I use the terms “earliest audience(s),” and “early audience(s)” to refer to experiences of the Gospel of Mark in the time period between its composition (ca. 70 CE) and its first documented “readers” (ca. 80 CE). I will also use the term “first-century” audiences as a way of situating this group in its historical context. I use both singular and plural forms throughout. The singular is generally reserved for discussing the specific event (see more on the Performance Event below), while the plural generally refers to any number of groups who might have experienced Mark within this time frame under consideration. For more on Mark’s “first known readers” see fn. 4 below.

² Performance is a complex term and elusive concept, as will be demonstrated throughout this project. In general, I use the term “performance” to refer to any oral and/or visual communication event taking place between a performer and an audience. More specifically in reference to Mark, I will use “performance” to refer to the oral delivery of a written script. Additional nuance will be provided throughout, and when a distinction is necessary context will further determine the use. The importance of this distinction here, more simply, is that “performance” emphasizes an audience’s “hearing” the narrative as opposed to their “reading” it in silence.

³ For more on these see Chapter 1.

another story; that it was received as text and (even if eventually) came to belong to a collection with other texts.⁴ While the second is demonstratable, and undeniably an eventual result, evidence for this type of reception postdates a “middle” (and consensus) dating of Mark’s composition by at least a decade.⁵ Thus we are left with both epistemological and historical gaps, “in-betweens” that allow space for additional examination. Absent explicit evidence in this time period, the question remains: in what mode(s) was Mark experienced by the majority of its earliest audiences? This work seeks to reimagine these in-between spaces and to consider the various ways in which Mark may have been experienced by audiences in this silent period between its composition and its first known readers.

A consideration of both temporal and epistemological spaces is a necessary component to this study. In this project, I propose a transition or development in the modes of reception of Mark’s Gospel among its earliest audiences. Such a transition is certainly plausible historically, given the recent shift in our thinking about the oral milieu of the first-century; yet it is also one

⁴ By earliest “evidence” for the reception of Mark, I refer to Matthew and Luke as Mark’s “first readers.” Performance criticism may complicate the “reading” relationship between the Synoptics further, but a full discussion of this as a potential reconstruction of the Synoptic Problem lies outside the scope of this work. For this particular investigation, it is less important that Matthew and Luke may be reading Mark as a text (or what I will define as a “scripture” below), as such a construction still maintains a gap between the time when Mark was written (ca. 70 CE) and our first evidence of it being “read” as scripture (ca. 80 CE) for more on the dating used in this project see fn. 5 below, as well as the discussion in Chapter 3. (Cf. Matthew D.C. Larsen, where he refers to Matthew and Luke not as the earliest “readers” but rather as the earliest “users” of Mark (*Gospels Before the Book* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2018], 99-120).

⁵ Of course, this depends on how one is dating Matthew and Luke. For the purposes of this project, I will assume a “middle” chronology for the dating of these texts, which seems to be the scholarly consensus—at least at present. This category for dating these texts is borrowed from Bernier’s more recent treatment of this question of dating New Testament texts. Bernier himself argues for an earlier dating of these texts, which would complicate this project in various ways, but it is not in itself detrimental to my overall categorization of two types of reception of Mark by its earliest audiences. Even if Mark was written earlier as Bernier suggests, this proposal still includes a potential gap of no less than three years between Mark’s composition and its use by Matthew. See Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

for which we have little explicit or definitive historical evidence. Like many silent periods in history, and other historical developments or transitions, to a certain extent our reconstruction is a guessing game, one built out of curiosity—arising from discrepancies within the historical evidence—and coupled with an historically informed imagination. Fragments of the transition envisioned here can be observed within various sources and may be pieced together from texts in and around the first century, and yet this particular transition resists being pinpointed to a specific event, place, or point in time. We simply cannot account for Mark's mode(s) of reception in this period of time between its composition and its reception as text in Matthew and Luke to any degree with certainty. And yet, our presuppositions about this period are essential to numerous key ideas within biblical studies. More specific to this project, our reconstructions of this "in-between" have a direct bearing on how we perceive of and reconstruct Mark's earliest audiences.⁶

Despite a lack of explicit historical evidence for configuring Mark's reception as either performance or text (what I will distinguish below as "script" and "scripture"), a proposal for a multimodal reception is not without precedent. Similar transitions or competing modes of reception may be found at various moments within history, both prior to and well after the era in question here. By way of analogy and comparison, we might learn a great deal about how such

⁶ Mark's earliest audience is not something we can actually recover. Similar to one's inability to speak with certainty concerning authorial intent, I do not think we can speak definitively about Mark's historical audiences—though, this reality need not prevent us from speculation. Within the field, Mark's earliest or first audiences are used as a framework for interpretation; yet what each interpreter means by this differs. Some refer to Mark's earliest audiences as "hearers" and others will speak of Mark's "readers." Much more could be said about these various reconstructions of Mark's original audiences, but here I simply mean to point out that at least two modes of reception are in academic circulation when we think about Mark's audiences—hearers (as part of a group) and readers (individuals). Thus, how one perceives of and reconstructs this silent and "in-between" period of time has a direct result in how one conceives of Mark's earliest audiences.

transitions occur. For instance, variations in the primary mode of reception of a text may result from the passing of time or a change of location. The status of a text within a particular group can be renegotiated within multiple contexts, at times simultaneously, and in varying locations. Similar transitions are often contested, rarely amicable, and are almost never universal.⁷

Identifying and reimagining this “in-betweeness,” a space between two modes of reception, helps us to attend to the multimodal nature of “texts” in the ancient textual landscape, allowing us to consider a variety of potential ways in which texts function, both in the ancient and modern world. To better reimagine this relationship, it is helpful to consider similar transitions within and throughout history (see Chapters 2-3).

Performance Criticism in the subtitle suggests that this work also fits within a second transitional or contested space, equally hypothetical and just as resistant to association with a particular moment or event. More accurately this space might be categorized as a dialogue, one which has both taken place (historically) but also continues to take place within multiple fields of study. This dialogue centers upon an emerging perspective, though not necessarily a new one. The particular flavor utilized in this project, “biblical” performance criticism, attempts to disrupt and problematize the prioritization of chirographic and philological treatments of biblical and other ancient texts. Traditionally, these latter approaches have dominated the field of biblical studies, and at least in some sense rightfully so. Given the material remains and reconstructed objects with which biblical scholars primarily work, such a prioritization makes sense. Chirographic and philological approaches somewhat naturally retain their place of priority within biblical studies because of the necessity of the field to wrestle with texts, their reconstruction,

⁷ For more on these dynamics see the discussion of Scripts in Chapter 3.

transmission, variations, etc. The object of study, as it has traditionally been configured, demands attention to these features. In many ways these approaches are still considered a “buy-in” and represent the baseline training (and for better or worse an assumed prioritization) for most in our field.

However, as recent studies have (re)considered the roles of texts within history and have subsequently reconsidered the object of study, cracks begin to surface within what was once considered a relatively solid foundation.⁸ More recent (re)configurations and (re)examinations of the ancient textual landscape have complicated the prioritization of chirographic and philological approaches, challenging their role as the most viable option for understanding and interpreting ancient texts. Coupled with growing interests in the complexity of interpretation—in particular the role of embodiment, experience, and other non-textual features—recent investigations have hewn out space for consideration of and experimentation with non-traditional methods and approaches. In short, things are not quite as simple as they once seemed.

This “performative turn” within the humanities is neither unique to biblical studies nor new, though its place within biblical studies may, at least relatively, be considered as such.⁹

While the origins of this discourse are recoverable and more readily identifiable than the hypothetical transition between script and scripture—not only historically but also

⁸ For a more detailed discussion on how this occurs in biblical studies and the role that performance plays in this discussion, see Chapter 1.

⁹ The language of “performative turn” is by no means unique to this work. This terminology has been used in various ways to describe the incorporation of performance studies into the humanities. Performance studies itself begins to emerge in the 1960’s and 1970’s, though the turn within the humanities is at least arguably not tied to these initial investigations. The language of “turn” itself perhaps best represents the proliferation of texts and projects which have emerged over the past 50 years. For example, within biblical studies, this “turn” ostensibly begins well before the work of David Rhoads. However, if we were to attempt to locate the “turn,” it would not be before Rhoads work itself in 2006. For a fuller discussion of this progression in biblical studies, see Chapter 1.

theoretically—this does not suggest that we find firmer footing in this arena. This space is equally contested and fraught, resistant to simple solutions, often raising more questions than it answers. Whether or not biblical performance criticism may serve as a permanent alternative to more traditional approaches in biblical studies remains to be seen, yet this work hopefully contributes to its legitimacy.

Enter a third contested space, that of *character(ization)*. Both characters and characterization pervade numerous academic landscapes. These terms may be found in almost every category of Dewey’s system, yet they reject simplistic definitions and attempts at universalization. What are characters? What do characters do? Where is characterization located? How do we make sense of characters? If persons exist in the “real world” can we still refer to them as characters? Characters and characterization resist rigid definitions and frameworks, but as such they are also primed for continued reevaluation. The study of characters and how audiences make sense of them is truly an area of study without end.¹⁰

The Why: Mark’s Disciple Problem

At the intersection of these seemingly disparate and contested spaces lies a relatively simple question which prompted this investigation: how do we make sense of Mark’s characterization of the disciples? On the one hand, from a literary perspective, this question may seem rather pedantic or easily dismissed. Narratively, it is not their story. Mark’s story is the *euangelion* of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God. It is a story that centers around the life, activity, and teaching of Jesus. His identity, ministry, and death are what constitutes this good news which Mark proclaims throughout and by means of his text. As such, the disciples seem to be little more than

¹⁰ For more on the complexities of character and characterization, see Chapter 2.

plot functionaries, Aristotelian characters, written for a specific function to serve as a foil for some of Jesus' teachings and miracles. In light of this, what need is there for us to give further consideration to their characterization? On the other hand, if such an easy solution is readily available, why has this question been so widely disputed within Markan scholarship for the past century? Why does it strain plausibility when we attempt to imagine modern interpretations within Mark's historical context? Why is there a continued interest in what at first appears to be a relatively benign question? There is perhaps more to this than merely our aversion to simple solutions.

Questions concerning the disciples' characterization long predate the more recent media shift in Markan studies. Rather than begin with the historical ramifications of the disciples in Mark, a point that is key but one we will return to below, it may be helpful to briefly reflect on a particular phenomenon—the diverse literary interpretations of these characters. It is not unique to biblical studies nor to Mark's disciples to have characters become fertile ground for debate. Characters are key to narratives, and our interpretation of narratives are often subject to how we construct characters. At this juncture, I will resist planting a flag in the ground as to what characters are and what they do, as this will be discussed throughout this project, but rather more simply I wish to highlight here the theoretical and practical importance of characters to interpreting stories. Regardless of one's approach to interpreting and reading Mark, whether through the lens of history, as literature, through social scientific methods, etc., the disciples' characterization figures prominently into each and every interpretation of this Gospel, whether implicitly or explicitly. However, as will be demonstrated briefly within this section, the results of these interpretations are diverse and contested, even among those employing similar

methodologies. Using the same methods, criteria, data, and text, interpretations of and responses to Mark's disciples span the entirety of the interpretive spectrum. Why is this so?

Academic treatments of Mark's disciples are ubiquitous and are represented by a wide variety of approaches.¹¹ Despite such variety, one commonality is evident: there is no shortage of negative adjectives that have been attributed to Mark's disciples.¹² Redaction and narrative-critical approaches to Mark tend to emphasize the negative portrayal of the disciples, at least toward their own understanding of characterization. These portrayals and their accompanying adjectives get tied to Mark's disciples: blind,¹³ blundering,¹⁴ dense,¹⁵ failures,¹⁶ fallible,¹⁷ inept,¹⁸ to name but a few. These and their accompanying nouns have dominated this discussion, with

¹¹ For more on why such a variety of approaches might be utilized for Mark's disciple problem see: C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples According to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

¹² While the terms "negative" and "positive" are necessarily subjective and fraught, they are the terms used often in discussions of the disciples and are perhaps the best terms available to us. Tannehill describes negative and positive evaluations thusly: "In our study of Mark we must pay special attention to the way that narrative composition indicates emphasis and suggests negative or positive evaluation of the actions of the disciples." ("The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *Journal of Religion* 57.4 [1977]: 389). While this definition is not entirely accurate within a performance critical model, as the evaluations are not those of the implied author/reading audience but rather the performer/listening audience, nor is it fool proof, as each reader may carry different criteria for evaluation, the terms are ultimately necessary here to distinguish between different assessments of the disciples among interpreters.

¹³ Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," *JBL* 80 (1961): 261-68.

¹⁴ Kara Lyons Pardue, *Gospel Women and the Long Ending of Mark*, LNTS 614 (London: Bloomsbury/ T & T Clark, 2020), 89.

¹⁵ David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 93.

¹⁶ Mary R. Thompson, *The Role of Disbelief in Mark: A New Approach to the Second Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 29.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark," *Semeia* 28 (1983): 29-48.

¹⁸ Ira Brent Driggers, *Following God through Mark: Theological Tension in the Second Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 37 n 2.

few positive alternatives. Despite the ubiquity of this unflattering nomenclature attached to the disciples—mostly consisting of terms which does not appear explicitly within the text—the question remains as to whether or not modern literary assessments aid us in understanding how the earliest audiences might have thought about the disciples. Given what we find in contemporary first-century and emerging traditions, would a first-century audience accept such a characterization of the disciples? Is there an incompatibility between modern literary interpretations and how ancient audiences understood Mark?¹⁹

Whether or not this incongruity occurs at the level of modern interpretations or not, there is an assumed incongruity between Mark's characterization and the tradition (oral or written) which preceded him.²⁰ For some, this incongruity suggests a differentiation between the two media, that the written tradition of Mark must necessarily be standing in opposition to the oral tradition.²¹ For others, it may more simply be explained by Mark's clumsiness as compiler and editor of a handed down tradition.²² For still others, Mark intentionally crafts the disciples in this

¹⁹ The answer to this question is both yes and no. More specific to modern discussions, this presumed incompatibility is less problematic to some, particularly in arguments which suggest that Matthew and Luke "fix" Mark's tradition of the disciples. By pointing to the "corrections" of Matthew and Luke, this attempts to demonstrate an early "discomfort" with Mark's characterization of the disciples. However, as will be suggested below, Matthew's and Luke's "corrections" of Mark are not always as substantive as is often assumed. While a full development of this idea stands (at least for now) outside the scope of this project, I suggest that this is an area for extended consideration. See further the discussion in Chapter 4 below. For helpful nuance of the "partial" fix of Matthew and Luke see Lyons Pardue, *Gospel Women*, 89-90, n. 9-10.

²⁰ From where does this assumption derive? This is a fascinating question that deserves greater space than I am able to give to it here, though it will (implicitly) be important to our conversation in Chapter 4, concerning the disciples traditional-characterization.

²¹ For example, see Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983 [Reprinted with New Introduction in 1997]). For a more detailed discussion of Kelber's work see Chapter 1.

²² This view is perhaps best represented by the form critics. See for example Rudolf K. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 1972; Original German 1921). Here, we find Bultmann's infamous statement "Mark is not sufficiently master of his material to be able to venture on a systematic construction himself" (350).

way for a literary purpose.²³ Each of these attempts to interpret the disciples results in a reading that imposes a negative evaluation of them. And yet, if we attempt to reimagine how a negative evaluation of the disciples may fit within the historical context of Mark's earliest audiences, such readings become more problematic. Often, it leads to the conclusion that Mark is the one who is agonistic, clumsy, or unfaithful to his sources. Literary approaches tell us one thing, but such readings seem less plausible when suggested that ancient audiences would have thought the same of Mark's Gospel. We are faced with a dilemma: How are we to make sense of a modern literary hermeneutic that provides one result (seemingly universally) and our frustrated attempts to reimagine such a reading fitting within a historical context—one where the early Jesus followers presumably prioritized these texts, their characters, and the traditions behind them?

Before going further, it may be helpful briefly to introduce in more detail some of the ways in which previous scholarship has sought to explain Mark's characterization of the disciples, both in terms of explaining its composition but also its importance to first-century readers. The following is by no means an exhaustive description of the long and complex history of the scholarship on Mark's disciples. By introducing the reader to some of these features here, a larger conversation in which this work engages will hopefully become clearer.²⁴

²³ See the discussion on Tannehill, Dewey, and Malbon on pages 12-15 below.

²⁴ There are numerous excellent summaries of the history of this debate already in circulation, and thus need not be replicated here. Limited as this selection here might necessarily be, it is intended to introduce some of the key ideas which have framed the debate. For more on the history of this problem see: Black, *The Disciples According to Mark*; Christopher W. Skinner, "The Study of Character(s) in the Gospel of Mark: A Survey of Research from Wrede to the Performance Critics (1901–2014)," in *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge, LNTS 483 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 3–34; Mateus F. de Campos, *Resisting Jesus: A Narrative and Intertextual Analysis of Mark's Portrayal of the Disciples of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 2-21.

Polemical Function of Disciples--Completely Negative:

Arguably the most (in)famous and influential work on the negative characterization of the disciples is that of Theodore Weeden.²⁵ In his essay “The Heresy that Necessitated Mark’s Gospel,” Weeden charts three progressive stages within Mark that represent the continued failure of the disciples:

- 1) Imperceptivity (1:16-8:26): Weeden argues that the disciples’ “unbelievable imperceptiveness” becomes even more prominent as the narrative unfolds. This is heightened by their “privileged” position with Jesus. Citing multiple examples, Weeden attempts to demonstrate how pervasive this imperceptibility is within the first eight chapters of Mark (cf. 4:10-13; 38-41; 6:52; 7:17; 8:4, 14-21).
- 2) Misconception (8:27-14:9): In 8:27-14:9, Weeden notes that there is a sudden change that takes place in 8:27, a “great revelation” in the words of Peter. But this sudden revelation is not consistent with Jesus’ understanding of messiahship (cf. the passion predictions), nor are disciples able to fully understand the Messiah that Jesus presents. For Weeden, the disciples represent a group that is focused on a *theios anēr* Christology. This stands in stark contrast to the Christology of Mark which Weeden identifies as one of *theologica crucis*. Because the disciples are unable to reconcile this type of messiahship in their minds, they continuously fail to understand Jesus in Mark. The inability of the disciples to reconcile their notions of messiahship with the suffering of Jesus leads to a continued failure to recognize who Jesus is. This misconception only worsens as the text continues, leading to the third stage.

²⁵ Theodore J. Weeden, “The Heresy that Necessitated Mark’s Gospel,” *ZNW* 59 (1968): 145-58. This article became the basis of his later monograph: *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

3) Rejection (14:10-ff.): starting in 14:10 and continuing at least through v. 72, we find the rejection of Jesus by the disciples. This rejection begins with Judas agreeing to betray Jesus (14:10), the disciples falling asleep and abandoning Jesus at Gethsemane (14:32-42), and finally the “coup de grace” is Peter’s renunciation of Jesus (14:66-72).

For Weeden, the disciples’ characterization is problematic and must be accounted for. His solution is to suggest that Mark does not have the historical disciples in mind.²⁶ Mark does not think his audience will see the disciples as historical persons within his narrative, but rather they are caricatures, representative of a group within Mark’s own community. This socio-historical reading of the Markan community emphasizes the author’s redactional aims and the composition of his text for an insider group. Through Mark’s characterization of the disciples, the rhetorical affect is to demonstrate how a Christology built upon *theios anēr* is ultimately incomplete. Those within the Markan community who hold on to this “heresy,” like the disciples do in this narrative, are unable to recognize Jesus. Thus, the author of Mark has crafted the disciples as a narrative representation of his own historical opponents—examples of what not to become. Jesus’s voice against the disciples becomes the corrective to their faulty Christology.

Pedagogical Function of Mark’s Disciples—Not Completely Negative, but Mostly:

Another approach that is at least arguably more favorable to the disciples but not entirely complementary is that of early narrative-critical treatments of Mark. Illustrated in the works of Tannehill, Dewey, and Malbon, early narrative-critics see within the disciples an intentional or

²⁶ For a similar view see Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 350 “[the disciples] thus represent the reader, i.e. the Church. The author is not interested in the disciples as historical persons or their relationship to Jesus.”

functional failing.²⁷ As a literary feature, this failing does not so much discredit the historical disciples, but rather it demonstrates how their characterization serves a rhetorical function—and for the author a different rhetorical purpose from that proposed by Weeden. The disciples function not as representatives of specific persons, but rather as signifiers of discipleship; relatable examples, but not exemplars, that demonstrate how even the “best” at times fail.²⁸ In light of this reading, the disciples’ failure does not constitute a historical representation, one where the audience stands in judgment of the disciples as persons, but rather this literary feature serves a rhetorical purpose, playing a didactic and/or pedagogical function for the author. By emphasizing the *how* of such characterization, by means of the relationship between the implied author and implied audience, early narrative-critical approaches to Mark’s disciples tend to underscore and contemplate an ancient audience’s reaction to this characterization. They suggest ways in which the disciples’ characterization may on the surface appear one way, but in fact it serves a very different purpose.

Of equal importance, a narrative approach to the disciples’ characterization in Mark complicates the idea that a “completely” negative portrayal of the disciples is present within Mark. The disciples begin as positive and imitable characters (cf. 1:16-20), so that the audience

²⁷ Robert C. Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark,” 386-405; idem. “The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology,” *Semeia* 16 (1979): 57-95. Joanna Dewey, “Point of View and the Disciples in Mark,” *SBLSP* 118 (1982): 97-106; idem. “Oral Methods of Structuring Mark’s Narrative,” *Int.* (1989): 32-44; idem. “Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience,” *CBQ* 53.2 (1991): 221-36; Malbon, “Fallible Followers,” 29-48; idem. “Disciples/Crowds/ Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 104-30; idem. “Text and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark,” *Semeia* 62 (1993): 81-102; idem. “The Major Importance of the Minor Characters in Mark,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight (Sheffield and Harrisburg, PA: Sheffield University Press/Trinity Press, 1994), 58-86.

²⁸ Malbon, “Fallible Followers” suggests that this is not limited to the disciples, but also extends to other characters within the narrative as well.

initially aligns with them (cf. also 3:13-19). Following this initial alignment, however, the audience is challenged throughout the narrative to determine whether they will continue to remain aligned with the disciples or not. An audience's evaluation of the disciples stems from their relation to Jesus, as Jesus is the main character. Thus, an audience's assessment ought to be determined by whether or not the actions or ideology of the disciples run in accordance with or counter to those of Jesus. Such a description is pedagogically motivated, a tool meant to encourage (or more forcefully, demand) the reader to engage with the narrative. Ultimately, this active engagement drives the audiences to look inward—rather than merely outward at the disciples—to assess their own character. This introspective result is not necessarily located within the narrative but is something produced by it, the *how* of characterization.

Even in these narrative treatments, however, while noting the positive aspects of the disciples' characterization and their potential effect on readers, we find a heavy emphasis placed upon the disciples' negative traits. It is not Mark's positive portrayals of the disciples that encourages such introspection of the audience, but primarily (or perhaps only) their failures. Rather than being exemplars, they become tokens, examples of what *not* to do. Such configurations, while admittedly more positive than Weeden and others, remain unable to divorce the disciples from their failures. Their failures, after all, are what make the characters work rhetorically. While these readings provide much needed nuance to a completely negative portrayal of the disciples and offer an alternative rhetorical function than that proposed by Weeden, they continue to assume an overall negative portrayal of them. Even if the disciples' characterization does not result in a negative evaluation of them in the eyes of an audience, it

presumes that the author of Mark intentionally crafts and portrays the disciples in a negative light. But is this necessarily true?

If so, this raises a number of other questions related to Mark's composition, its reception, and its continued transmission. Regardless of authorial intention, how might first-century audiences react or respond to this depiction of the disciples' characterization with their knowledge of the larger traditions surrounding them?²⁹ Assuming that first-century audiences possess some knowledge of Jesus and his followers, is such an excoriation of the disciples—a group that is ultimately attributed with carrying on and handing down the teachings and mission of Jesus—something an ancient audience would have considered to be legitimate and/or authoritative? More to the point, while it is possible that a work like Mark could survive in a small community that upheld negative views of the disciples—as Weeden suggests—how do we explain why such a text would continue circulating and survive in areas where the life and teachings of the disciples carried a more prominent and positive view? If the disciples' characterization is simply a narrative or rhetorical tool, would reading audiences readily recognize this as a literary element and not allow it to affect their understanding of the disciples as historical persons/characters? Did ancient audiences divorce the “fictive,” “creative,” or “rhetorical” elements of such descriptions from the historical kernels that inform them?

²⁹ Ultimately, we cannot know definitively what an audience may or may not know about the disciples or even Jesus prior to their hearing of Mark. Joanna Dewey summarizes the situation helpfully: “Actual audiences would be greatly influenced by what they knew about Jesus or the disciples, but we have no access to that information” (“Do you not Yet Trust God's Rule Breaking in on Earth? The Disciples in Mark” in *Anatomies of the Gospels and Beyond: Essays in Honor of R. Alan Culpepper* eds. Mikael C. Parsons, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, Paul N. Anderson [Leiden: Brill, 2018], 177 n. 14). Dewey is of course correct that we have no direct access to this, at least explicitly; yet, such considerations of an audience's prior knowledge are necessary for contemplating an audience's experience in performance. As I will suggest below in Chapter 4, there are at least some things we necessarily assume audiences know, as well as things we may suspect an audience knows.

Character(ization) in Performance: A Positive Portrayal of Mark's Disciples?

Notice that each of the above views and the questions that follow presume that a negative characterization of the disciples is intentional on behalf of the author and therefore must be accounted for. From a narrative critical perspective, the disciples' negative characterization must be presumed on behalf of the implied author (and rightfully so given the criteria), and thus each proposed solution is handcuffed by literary assumptions about character(ization). But what if ancient audiences did not in fact read these texts, but instead heard them? What if ancient listening audiences did not find the characterization of the disciples in Mark *as* problematic as modern literary interpreters assume? Joanna Dewey, I think correctly, has suggested that "a first-century audience hearing the Gospel would probably take the negative portrayal of the disciples much less seriously than contemporary scholars do."³⁰ Dewey's suggestion cuts through the literary red-tape that has framed most conversations on this issue.³¹ For a literary approach, the disciples' negative evaluation is a necessary component of this quandary—there is very little within the text to suggest otherwise. But in performance, such an assumption may not be necessary.

By exploring Mark's disciples through an alternative medium, as performance rather than as merely text, biblical performance criticism might help to explain how such dissonance could

³⁰ Dewey, "Oral Methods," 42.

³¹ Here, I am reminded of Clifton Black's insight in retrospect to his project: "Learning which questions cannot be answered by the use of a particular method may not be as thrilling as discovering those which can, but the former is an aspect of scholarship no less important than the latter." (*The Disciples According to Mark*, 291). Unlike Black, who with his statement signals the end of what he refers to as the "hopeless, if not misbegotten enterprise" of redaction criticism, I am not suggesting the end to anything here. I believe narrative criticism certainly has an important and continued role to play within biblical studies. However, it may be that in regard to this question an answer here is not available through the particular limits of narrative-criticism.

occur within a performance event—or at the very least enrich our thinking about such dynamics. Performance influences and creates meanings for verbal narratives in ways quite different than a literary medium. With this background in mind, and at Dewey’s suggestion, this exploration of Mark’s disciples will be guided by the following question: how might the overtly negative *literary* portrayal of the disciples function within an oral performance? I will argue that with a more complex understanding of how characters and characterization function in performance, this problem of literary certainty and historical incongruency becomes less pronounced.

The What: The Hypothetical Performance Event- Some Assumptions

Rather than understanding Mark solely or even primarily as a literary work, intended to be read by individual readers, performance criticism seeks to reconsider Mark in light of its performative potential, as experienced by hearers (plural), within an oral/aural milieu. One of the most important steps before we begin is to configure a particular performance event in which we envision such a performance taking place.³² One of the strengths, and subsequently a limitation, of biblical performance criticism is the necessity of speculating and defining a particular performance event. The proposed event is by no means the only performance event one might envision for Mark among the earliest hearers. Also, I am not suggesting that is an exact replication of an actual performance event that occurred, though as I argue below, it is at least plausible. By detailing a particular event, this has the advantage of situating the performance

³² The idea of the performance event (or sometimes referred to as the performance setting) is crucial to biblical performance criticism. While the proposed event is always and ultimately hypothetical, it serves a necessary heuristic function. Many possible performance events may be reimagined within the ancient world, and yet the event described at the beginning of this work will be the framework through which our understanding of the potential of the script in performance is based. Ultimately, each performance scenario which might be reasonably argued for has the potential to create new sets of meaning within the performance event. For more on some of the various ways in which the performance event might be configured see Whitney T. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 37-52, esp. 49-52.

within one scenario, but unfortunately leaves a number of other potential performance events unexplored. Despite these necessary limitations, this project envisions this particular performance event as follows:³³

(1) Audience and Event: A group of Jesus followers, gathered in a private house, and reclining at a meal.

The audience imagined is primarily, if not exclusively, composed of Jesus followers. It is equally possible that non-Jesus followers could be present at this particular event, or that there are any number of potential performance contexts in which we might envision Mark having been performed for non-Jesus followers. However, given certain elements within the script of Mark which seem to presuppose at least some knowledge of these events by the audience (discussed further in Chapter 4), coupled with the importance of gathering together for the early Jesus follower movement, it seems less speculative to suggest that many of those in attendance were already part of the group.

I have suggested here that these Jesus followers were gathered together in a private house,³⁴ and that they are reclined at a meal when this performance occurs. The importance of

³³ While the decisions made here are my own, this section develops largely in conversation with the following: Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*; William D. Shiell, *Reading Acts: The Lector and the Early Christian Audience* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development, and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries*, VCSup 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Dan Nässelqvist, *Public Reading in Early Christianity: Lectors, Manuscripts, and Sound in the Oral Delivery of John 1-4*, NovTSup 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Michael R. Whinton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship: A Cognitive and Rhetorical Approach to the Characterization of Mark's Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

³⁴ Our earliest evidence for the use of houses as gathering places comes from Paul's letters. For example, in 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of a congregation that meets at the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor.16:19). For a more detailed discussion of the ways in which the private house served as a gathering place for Christians, both in the first-century and beyond see: Abraham Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 60-91; Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 51; Alikin, *Earliest History*, 49-57; Nässelqvist, *Public Reading in Early Christianity*, 96-103.

gathering together for the early Jesus followers need not be further defended here. While I have suggested the house as the setting for this performance event, these gatherings took place in various settings and locations. Whether the public reading of texts, and more specifically Mark's Gospel, was an essential part of these early gatherings in the home may be more speculative, though it is by no means a stretch to suggest that such performances took place at some of these gatherings. Preaching was certainly tied to house gatherings, and there also appears to be some support for public reading at meals within early Christian sources, though these are admittedly late.³⁵ As for the setting of a meal, such practices seem relatively widespread within associations in the Greco-Roman world and also within the early Jesus follower movement. That meals were an important feature of these gatherings of the early Jesus followers seems beyond question, though what exactly transpired at those meals may be open for debate.³⁶ Again, while the event depicted here is not explicitly detailed within our evidence of the gatherings of early Jesus

³⁵ Cf. *Acts of Peter* 20, where Peter enters a dining room and sees the Gospel being read; Tertullian refers to the "books of God" being read at dinner parties and meals (*Tertullian, Apol.* 29.3). While these texts are certainly much later than our reimagined performance event, it is plausible that they reflect a continuation of early practices, even if the specifics of these performance events are not exactly the same.

³⁶ Whether or not public reading was part of the "early Christian" meal, and when it became part of it are contested. For a nuanced discussion see: Nässelqvist, *Public Reading in Early Christianity*, 100-3. William D. Shiell suggests that the "Greco-Roman *symposia* provided the closest example of the kind of recitations conducted in early Christian communities. The audience would listen to a performer recite texts following a meal." (*Reading Acts*, 133). Aiken has suggested that the reading of authoritative texts takes place "in connection with the supper... Prophets and Gospels were read aloud to the community gathered for its weekly supper and conviviality." (*Earliest History*, 157-58); Shiner suggests that the public reading could be tied to other rituals, such as a Eucharistic meal (*Proclaiming the Gospel*, 51); Others, have suggested that the public reading of texts at meals takes place during the meal, while the guests discussed the reading following it (Cf. William A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2010], 127-28).

followers, there seems to be sufficient evidence to support this as a plausible reconstruction of an ancient performance event.³⁷

2) *Content and Extent: At this meal a lector or storyteller performs a version of Mark's narrative in its entirety.*

For this performance, I have suggested that Mark was performed in its entirety. Once again, to my knowledge, I am not aware of any definitive evidence that the Gospel of Mark was performed in its entirety at a meal, at least not within the timeframe I am envisioning here.³⁸ It is also, equally plausible, that Mark was performed in smaller units.³⁹ Nevertheless, the scenario I have suggested is not proposed without reason. Comparatively, there is evidence that books were

³⁷ For similar arguments about performance scenarios of a house (and a meal) see: Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*; Shiell, *Reading Acts*; Whinton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*.

³⁸ By the mid-second century, Justin Martyr describes how in his church the “memoirs of the apostles” were read “aloud as long as time permits” (1 *Apol.* 67). Cf. Shiner, *Performing the Gospel*, 45; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 205. Aiken (*Earliest History*, 107) suggests that this allotted time for reading was determined by when the meal was to begin, as there was occasional need for the deacons to take food to those not in attendance. Thus, the time allotted in this particular community seems to be determined by more practical decisions, to allow those deacons time to return home before it was too late. Dan Nässelqvist (*Public Reading in Early Christianity*, 110) suggests that on special occasions, such as the reading of a Gospel for the first time in a community, that the entire text would be read. For a helpful discussion of these complexities from the perspective of performance criticism see Whinton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 29-30.

³⁹ Michael Whinton provides some helpful nuance here: “While hard evidence for the specific extent to which gospels were read publicly in first- and second-century Christian communities is lacking, a reasonable decision regarding the general early Christian practice would then be that a gospel was sometimes read in full, while at other times only excerpts could be managed for the sake of time.” (*Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 30). It is not that performance critics cannot envision a “liturgical” setting for the performance (though we also lack first-century evidence for this as well), but rather that the extent of the performance of any text most likely was dictated by the particular availability and particular needs of the community. Performance criticism could certainly develop its thinking further in regard to serialized performance (which I suggest again more forcefully in Chapter 2), as well as in repeat performances.

Most often, however, performance critics who are dealing with the gospels suggest a reading in its entirety for the sake of illuminating a particular feature within the script. For example, Whinton is concerned with characterization in his work (as I am here) and thus in order to consider characterization more fully he has chosen a setting in which the gospel was read in its entirety—as this allows Whinton to consider how characters develop over the course of a performance. I have adopted a similar approach here, again not due to any definitive evidence (though there may be suggestive evidence for such), but rather due to the possibility of Mark being read in its entirety and the particular element of the performance to which I am attending.

read aloud at gatherings either in homes or at meals in antiquity, both at smaller or familial meals,⁴⁰ but also in larger gatherings.⁴¹ Given the importance of meeting in houses and sharing meals within early Christian gatherings, the practices of public reading at meals and other gatherings, and compositions (at times) being read in their entirety in these settings, it seems within reason to suggest that Mark also was experienced this way by some if not most of its earliest hearers.

3) *Date and Location: This performance takes place in the late first century, within the Roman Empire.*

As for the date and location, these are intentionally left broadly defined. First as to the date: For this project, I will assume a “middle” dating of Mark’s composition.⁴² Additionally, I am envisioning a date shortly after its composition; a time in which Mark is experienced primarily as performance (script) and before its acceptance as text (scripture) by the particular community in which the performance event occurs.⁴³ Such concerns fit within this project as we attempt to reconsider the “in-between” space, the time between when Mark was written (ca. 70 CE) and before our first evidence of this text being treated as a literary text. However, further delimiting the date beyond this is less essential to this particular project. Mark may still be experienced primarily as performance even after its use by Matthew and Luke and well after its composition. The most important aspects to the dating of this performance event are that it

⁴⁰ Pliny, *Ep.* 9.36-“If I am dining alone with my wife or with a few friends, a book is read aloud (*liber legitur*) during the meal...” Cf. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 37-39.

⁴¹ Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*; Shiell, *Reading Acts*.

⁴² See fns. 4-5 above.

⁴³ For more on this see Chapter 3.

occurs after the deaths of some of the disciples (and following the development of at least some traditions about them), and after the destruction of Jerusalem—both of which occur within the time-frame in question.

As for the location, this is a bit trickier and more complex. A proposal of somewhere within the Roman empire may appear to some to be too broad as to be helpful. From the perspective of biblical performance criticism, the location of Mark's composition may aid us in conceptualizing the "performance" expectations of an early audience, and it may also aid us in demonstrating how views of the script change toward scripture once it moves outside of that originating location. At the same time, the specific location of composition need not be determinative of its performance location. Mark may have been written in Rome, Syria, or Galilee, but it also and most likely moved around and was performed in various locations.⁴⁴ As it moved outside of its originating location, it might have received various receptions, both in performance and as text. I will argue later in this project that it is likely that as a composition moves outside of its originating location (geographically and chronologically) that scripts tend to become "scripturalized."⁴⁵ But such transitions are not universal. To narrow the specific location down even further does not aid in this particular investigation, though specific locations may be a necessary component in other or future explorations of performance events. As such, I have left a geographical location underspecified, including discussion of it here more so for historical considerations than for heuristic purposes.

⁴⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the problems with limiting the geographical location for a performance of Mark see Whintenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 20-22.

⁴⁵ See further the discussion of Foley in Chapter 1 about the loss of metonymic meaning; see also the discussion of Scripts and Scriptures in Chapter 3.

4) Performance dynamics and Performer: Whether read aloud or reproduced from memory, the performance is dynamic. The performer utilizes a variety of communicative techniques available to them—fashioning the performance for the specific audience in attendance. The performer will necessarily make a series of decisions to interpret the script, and those choices directly influence an audience’s understanding of the characters within the narrative.

Whether as a lector, a storyteller, or some other title we might apply to the performer, ancient performances were dynamic events.⁴⁶ What is more, the idea that the performer becomes the mediator of the script to an audience is an important feature of the performance event.

Performers must make decisions of *how* they will communicate a script to an audience, and the audience—without access to the script—is subject to the performer’s decisions.⁴⁷ Thus, moments within the script which present the performer with potential performative decisions must be weighed against the decisions a performer makes at other points in the performance. Such decisions are also made in light of the techniques available to a performer, which speaks to the dynamic elements of a performance.

5) Audience Previous Knowledge of the Jesus Tradition: At this meal, some in attendance would have been familiar with at least one version of the Jesus tradition—whether via performance or texts—and thus, more importantly for our purposes here, the audience

⁴⁶ That ancient performances were dynamic events has been described and defended among those working in performance criticism, so much so that it has now become an assumed trait. See further the discussion in Chapter 1. See also, Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, *passim*; Shiell, *Reading Acts*, *passim*.

⁴⁷ For more on how a performer would orient their performance to the audience and the importance of this see: Plato, *Phaedrus* 271B; Dionysius Halicarnasus, *Lys.* 9; Quint. *Inst.* 4.1; 6.4; 12.10; 11.1, 3. See also further discussions of this and additional evidence see Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 26-30; Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 43-56.

possesses some familiarity with those associated with Jesus. While the audience is familiar with certain pieces of the Jesus tradition, this is their first hearing of Mark's version—at least in its entirety. This audience's experience of Mark's Gospel will come by means of the performance event alone, with limited to no access to the written script.

The first part of this assumption is built upon the reimagined audience. If this audience consists primarily of Jesus followers, it is quite likely that they already knew parts of the Jesus tradition. While the extent of such knowledge is ultimately irretrievable in terms of specificity, it is a necessary consideration within a performance event. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

I mentioned above that Mark was performed in its entirety, but I have further delimited the scenario here to include a first-time hearing. Given some of the evidence we have for ancient publication practices, it is not unlikely that Mark would have shared pieces of his work prior to its completion with a select group. Also, as mentioned above, it is equally plausible that audiences experienced Mark in portions or selections of public readings. I discuss this potential for a “serialized” conception of performance in Chapter 2, and the value such considerations might bring to performance criticism. However, for the sake of our consideration of the disciples' characterization, I will assume here a performance of the script in its entirety.

As for the performance itself, we will assume that it is related to yet distinct from a script of Mark (see more on this in Chapter 3). For the purposes of this project, we will necessarily presume that this script is something resembling the modern critical edition NA28. This of course is not to suggest that NA28 is an accurate or even the best representation of what the script of Mark may have been in the first-century. More simply, this distinction is best

understood as a concession; we do not have any “original” script for Mark, but what we do have *may* resemble something close to that script—or at least a “representative” version of the textual pluralism inherent within the manuscript tradition.

The How: A Summary of What Follows

Given these parameters, artificial as they may at times seem, this project will utilize this particular and reimagined performance event as a framework for considering the potential of Mark’s script in performance. More specifically, we will consider how Mark’s disciples could have been performed for first-century audiences and how particular audiences may have experienced and configured their character(ization) in a performance. The following is a summary of the chapters which follow:

In Chapter One, *Whence and Whither*, I will chart a path as to what led to the development of biblical performance criticism. I follow this path through four related yet distinct phases: key ideas that preceded performance (orality, oral traditions, ancient literacy, and ancient rhetoric), the emergence of performance criticism (the work of David Rhoads), the first public critiques of performance criticism (Larry Hurtado vs. Kelly Iverson) and finally the continued and multi-faceted development of performance criticism following Rhoads. The aim of this chapter is to situate biblical performance criticism within the larger landscape of biblical studies (as well as other studies of antiquity) and to explain how its emergence is both new and not new, how it is a development of ideas of the past (including orality, oral traditions, ancient literacy, and ancient rhetoric), but also how it still in its infancy and in need of refinement. Alternative maps might be drawn for the development of biblical performance criticism, in particular its growth alongside and at times in direct conversation with performance studies, not to mention its

engagement with the larger and more broadly termed “performative turn” within the humanities. However, this map seeks to ground this approach firmly within discussions already happening within biblical studies, and to illustrate what lies at the core of the flavor of performance studies employed in this project.

Chapter Two, *Strange Bedfellows?* will hone-in on characterization, in particular how an interdisciplinary approach to biblical performance criticism opens the doors for a more complex understanding of characters and characterization. While Chapter One focuses on biblical performance criticism’s emergence from and its place beside other developments within the guild, Chapter Two introduces additional interlocutors that may further improve or refine this interdisciplinary approach. In conversation with Homeric and Shakesperean scholarship on characters and performance, Chapter Two will draw a broader framework for conceiving of characters in performance while at the same time offering us some of the language and tools necessary for a performance assessment of Mark’s disciples.

Chapter Three, *Between Script and Scripture*, will consider the ontology of Mark’s Gospel, how and when audiences experienced it, and to what extent our answers to these questions play a role in our understanding of characters and characterization. In this chapter I will engage with an ongoing discussion about which metaphor is best suited for our understanding of how texts work in antiquity, including spandrels and nomads, digital texts, databases, projects, archives, notes and memoirs, ancient books, and media (the interaction between orality, memory, and textuality). As metaphors, each of the above have value, yet as I will argue, there is room for additional metaphors for consideration of the complexities of the ancient textual landscape. Here, I propose the metaphors of script and scripture, dual metaphors

intended to differentiate between two approaches to and receptions of texts in antiquity. While these metaphors are necessarily limited, perhaps even to this single project, they provide a helpful framework for thinking about how texts were viewed and used in the ancient world.

Finally, in Chapter Four we turn to our test case. I consider the characterization of the disciples in Mark and explore how a performance critical lens might offer new or nuanced solutions to question(s) of their character(ization). The objective of this study is not to determine who the disciples “are” in Mark, but rather to investigate, and ultimately demonstrate, ways in which Mark’s script invites its audience to think on who they are, especially in preparation for performance (for the performer) and within a performance event (for the audience). I reimagine the role and purpose of such characterization within an ancient performance event and provide *a* potential solution to the problem of Mark’s disciples.

CHAPTER ONE

WHENCE AND WHITHER: BIBLICAL PERFORMANCE CRITICISM

Introduction

In this chapter I will survey the history of biblical performance criticism, providing an overview of its whence and whither in four distinct phases. The first phase will detail some of the primary works that foregrounded biblical performance criticism. While biblical performance criticism is a relatively new approach, many of its core tenets are intimately woven into both questions and assertions that have long been established within the field. The second phase considers the actual “founding” of biblical performance criticism, focusing primarily on the work of David Rhoads. Performative features of biblical texts were being considered prior to Rhoads; however, he was the first to articulate the terminology “biblical performance criticism” in print and the first to outline a systematic discussion of its potential. Thus, Rhoads’ terminology and framework might well be considered an originating point for the discipline. The third phase—which is not so much a “phase” as an important dialogue—will attend to one of the first public criticisms of biblical performance, and some of the lasting remnants. In the wake of this initial public criticism (though, arguably before it as well), performance critics have been careful to distinguish between a “proto” version and subsequent editions. These later versions have extended the conversation beyond some of its original assumptions and limitations, and thus, beyond some of these initial criticisms. Finally, our fourth phase will consider the “whither,” and will briefly survey some of the ways in which biblical performance criticism has developed upon and beyond Rhoads’ initial

proposals. This final section will provide a brief overview of the field, laying groundwork for a more detailed discussion of characterization in biblical performance criticism in chapter 2. This area of research, as we will see, is still in its early stages. This chapter charts a representative overview of the questions and voices that stand at the heart of the development of biblical performance criticism.

1.1- *Avant la lettre*¹

Many of the fundamental tenets of biblical performance criticism have been a part of foundational conversations within biblical studies for decades. Here I will identify some of the primary voices and questions that led to the inception of biblical performance criticism, focusing primarily on three areas: oral traditions and orality, ancient literacy, and ancient rhetoric.² While these borders here may appear somewhat arbitrary, I will examine the roles that these studies have played in laying the foundation for biblical performance criticism.

1.1.1- Orality/Oral Traditions

The impact of orality and oral traditions on the study of both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament has been significant.³ The question of where to begin is as problematic as the question

¹ Literally, “before the letter.” By this I mean more simply a selection of scholarly works which introduce and explore dynamics related to ancient performances yet predate Rhoads’ specific terminology “biblical performance criticism.” Thus, while these works are not technically performance criticism, they play a key role in its development.

² Many additional precursors could be included here. Within biblical studies alone, we could include works related to Redaction Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, and Narrative Criticism. I will return to Narrative Criticism in more detail below (Chapters 3-4), attending more fully to the complex relationship between Narrative and Performance Criticisms.

³ For discussions of how orality studies have impacted the study of the Hebrew Bible see: Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996) and Robert D. Miller II, SFO, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel*, BPC 4 (Eugene: Cascade, 2011). For helpful overviews of the impact of orality and oral traditions within New Testament Studies see: Kelly R. Iverson, “Orality and the Gospels: A Survey of Recent Research,” *CBR* 8.1 (2009): 71-106; Rafael Rodriguez, *Oral Tradition and the New Testament:*

of what to include. There are at least three distinct points of “origin” that might claim primacy: 1) the early responses to Reimarus;⁴ 2) the form critics and their predecessors;⁵ and 3) the Oral-Formulaic Theory of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord.⁶ To complicate this further, biblical performance criticism is arguably more indebted to the works of later theorists, including Walter Ong and John Miles Foley.⁷

Here, I will sketch an outline of how theories of oral traditions in biblical studies have evolved from an apologetic assumption, to a (presumably) historical object of study, to an approach or an interpretive method. Thus, oral traditions might be understood as both an object

A Guide for the Perplexed (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Nicholas A. Elder, “New Testament Media Criticism,” *CBR* 15.3 (2017): 315-37.

⁴ Stephen E. Young notes that the earliest attention to the oral tradition, within the modern period, begins with those responding to Hermann Samuel Reimarus. After Reimarus suggested that the disciples fabricated much of the gospel tradition, Gotthold Lessing, Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Giesler, and Brooke Foss Wescott each appealed in some way to an oral tradition as support for the reliability of the gospel tradition (*Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers: Their Explicit Appeals to the Words of Jesus in Light of Orality Studies*, WUNT 2: 311 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 1-5). Werner Kelber writes that Richard Simon (1638-1712) recognized that “unwritten tradition lay back of written text” (*The Oral and the Written Gospel*, xiii). However, Rafael Rodriguez observes that “Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) is often credited as the first critic to propose seriously an oral source behind the gospels” (*Oral Tradition*, 33).

⁵ Form critics and their ancestors focused on the fragmentary and flexible nature of oral traditions, which were “open to innovation and invention” by the early church to meet their needs. This group of scholars includes Schleiermacher, Strauss, Wellhausen, Wrede, Gunkel, Schmidt, Dibelius, Bultmann (see Young, *Jesus Tradition*, 1-5).

⁶ The influence of the Parry-Lord theory has been immense; this is often considered an originating point for serious interest in oral traditions within biblical studies. Beginning with Parry could be seen as an arbitrary originating point, given his relationship with Marcel Jousse. For more on the influence of Jousse on Parry see, Werner Kelber, “Oral Tradition, the Comparative Study of” in *The Dictionary of the Bible in Ancient Media*. eds. Thom Thatcher, et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 252-59.

⁷ In addition to these “originating points,” signposts might also be placed beside Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. trans. H.M. Wright (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965 [Orig. 1961]); Jack Goody and Ian Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5.3 (1963): 304-45; Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963); Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), and Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), among others, for works on orality and oral traditions from anthropological and literary perspectives.

of study (i.e., the tradition behind the gospels), as well as an approach to understanding the production of texts (i.e., how orality influences and interfaces with textuality). Within biblical performance criticism both of these concepts are present, though a distinction is not always quite so clear. Most importantly for this study, I suggest that this shift from conceiving of oral traditions as an object of study (independent of texts) to an approach to understanding the composition, function, and ultimately the interpretation of texts has paved the way for the development of biblical performance criticism, and how questions related to each have facilitated its growth.

Oral Traditions as Apologetic

Arguments about the role and function of oral traditions, insofar as they relate to the written texts, are by no means new to biblical studies. In fact, as Stephen Young demonstrates, oral traditions have been suggested as a background to the text since at least the late 1700s. In response to Reimarus's suggestion that the disciples were fabricators of the Jesus tradition, and that much of the gospel material related to history and doctrine belonged to the disciples not Jesus, several of his critics appealed to oral traditions as a means of ensuring the reliability of the gospels. Oral traditions, thus, were not necessarily conceived of nor treated as objects of study independent from the texts, but rather they were couched as an apologetic (and hypothetical) pillar upon which to prop up the reliability of the gospel traditions. Early appeals to oral tradition were employed to support the stability and reliability of the gospels, as a safeguard against the critiques of certain historians. This particular appeal to oral tradition as proof of the gospel's reliability is an idea that persists within but is a more widely contested issue within biblical studies. As scholarship developed around oral traditions, the assumptions shared by many of

Reimarus's respondents could no longer be firmly held. Orality and the traditioning process—whether constituted as the continuation of oral traditions alongside writing or the relationship between the oral tradition and the written texts—cannot simply be conceived of as a one-to-one correspondence, but rather the process itself must be treated as a complex phenomenon. Thus, both our understanding of the relationship between orality and textuality, and our ways of discussing them individually, need to reflect these complexities.

Oral Traditions and Form Criticism

Arguably the more recognized and influential originating point for the study of oral traditions within biblical studies is found within the predecessors and progenitors of Form Criticism (*Formgeschichte*).⁸ For form critics, the individual units of the Jesus tradition circulated within an oral environment and became fixed in certain forms before being written down by the evangelists. Unlike the appeals to oral tradition which preceded them, form critics emphasized the fluid nature of oral tradition prior to the composition of the gospels and how the stories about Jesus took their form over time as they moved into different sociological contexts.⁹ In search of the *Sitz im Leben* of individual pericopes, form critics noted that oral traditions most likely did not remain unadulterated, as the tradents were not passively handing on the tradition, but rather transforming these stories in the process of transmission; the traditions then began to

⁸ More traditionally, the early form critics refer to Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919); Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf (London: Ivor Nicholas and Watson, 1934); Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (Oxford: Basil, Blackwell, 1963); and Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd, 1933).

⁹ See Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 3, where he states that one of the objectives of form criticism is to account for “how the tradition passed from a fluid state to the fixed form in which it meets us in the Synoptics.”

take certain shapes by means of their use in individual communities.¹⁰ As the tradition developed, these forms became more stable and fixed, which can be observed in what we find recorded in the gospels. Thus, the gospels do not record oral traditions as if they were pristine recollections, unmediated from the earliest followers of Jesus, but rather as representative of an emerging and dynamic tradition, stories told and retold to fit within the sociological contexts of the evangelists.¹¹

Form critics wrestled with this relationship between the oral traditions and the gospel records in a way that, while not entirely detrimental to the 18th century apologist argument, correctly problematized any straightforward relationship between oral traditions and the gospel texts. However, form criticism was not without its own limitations and problems. For instance, the entire enterprise of form criticism is predicated on the idea that one can use literary approaches to get back to an “original” oral tradition that existed prior to its textualization. This conflation of the two mediums is a matter that has rightly come under much scrutiny in recent scholarship and is an important point of distinction for this study.¹² Further, the notion that the more primitive of the oral traditions are not already subject to interpretation is a flawed starting position. Additionally, the view that the Gospel writers were merely compilers of stock traditions and forms as opposed to creators of content was subsequently challenged.¹³ While form criticism

¹⁰ For Dibelius, the exception to this was the passion narrative, which he believed was constructed and retained from the earliest stages of the oral tradition. See Dibelius, *Tradition*, 178-217.

¹¹ A point overlooked by form criticism is the role that the gospels played in the tradition itself. Not only are the gospels representatives of the tradition, they are participants in it. The full weight of this will not be felt until the emergence of Narrative Criticism, though there are several early scholars who are hinting in this direction.

¹² Eric Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 28.

¹³ The work of redaction critics Günther Bornkamm (et al., *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium* [1948], trans. Percy Scott, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* [Philadelphia:

was exceedingly influential for several decades, and its remnants are still keenly felt, more recent scholarship has dislodged many of the foundations upon which it rests.

Oral Traditions Outside of Biblical Studies

Form criticism might be properly identified as the precursor to discussions of orality within biblical studies, however, as Kelly Iverson has observed, it is actually “advances in other fields, such as classics, sociology and social anthropology, [that] have more directly shaped current discussions of orality and the Gospels.”¹⁴ Primary influences here are Millman Parry and Albert B. Lord, Walter J. Ong, and John Miles Foley.

Millman Parry¹⁵ is well-known for his influential role in the development of the Oral-Formulaic Theory Hypothesis (also known as the Parry-Lord theory), an idea which did not fully come to fruition until the work of his student A.B. Lord.¹⁶ The Oral-Formulaic Theory Hypothesis attempts to conceptualize the compositional techniques behind the Homeric texts and within ancient epic performances. The Oral-Formulaic Theory ushered in a new paradigm for the

Westminster, 1963]), Hans Conzelmann (*Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* [Tübingen: Mohn, 1954], trans. Geoffrey Buswell, *The Theology of St. Luke* [New York: Harper & Row, 1961]), and Willi Marxsen (*Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959], translated as *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1969]), were primarily responsible for this shift. William Wrede anticipated this shift in 1901 when he concluded that the motifs of the disciples misunderstanding, the messianic secret, and others were concepts developed by the author of the text and were not functioning like historical reports (*Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901] trans. J. C. G. Greig, *The Messianic Secret* [Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971]).

¹⁴ Iverson, “Orality and the Gospels,” 73.

¹⁵ For a helpful summary of Parry’s work and influence see John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 19-35.

¹⁶ Werner Kelber refers to Jousse, Parry, and Lord as “cofounder[s] of the modern discipline of oral tradition studies” (“Oral Tradition, the Comparative Study of,” 254).

study of Homeric poetry but also opened the doors to questions concerning performative dynamics within oral cultures.

While wrestling with the “Homeric Question,”¹⁷ Parry’s research led him to seek clarity on the relationship between oral performance and textuality. By comparison with modern illiterate and oral cultures in former Yugoslavia, Parry was interested in asking how exactly oral poets conveyed their materials in an oral culture, and as such, he sought to determine whether these performances were based on texts which were memorized by the performers, or whether they were generated in performance. Parry concluded that performers in an oral culture not only build upon formulas, handed down from the tradition, which aided memory, but that the performer was also free to explore and expand upon the tradition in performance. Identifying formulaic features present in both the Homeric literature and the Balkan performances, Parry concluded that within the Homeric epics, several of these characteristics (such as formulaic language, meter, etc.) were most likely dictated by the demands of oral composition rather than the result of literary ingenuity or production. In short, the poets and their audiences were bound by formulaic and traditional lines, but ultimately it was the performer who determined their composition in performance. Both fixity (with tradition) and flexibility (within performance) are

¹⁷ By “Homeric Question,” I mean: “Who was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?” Or more broadly it may be asked, “who was Homer?” For a helpful overview of this question and its development within classical scholarship see Christos Tsagalis, “The Homeric Question: A Historical Sketch,” *Yearbook of Ancient Greek Epic Online* 4.1 (2020): 122-62; Robert Fowler, “The Homeric Question,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*. ed. R. Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 220-32. More specifically for how Parry sought to answer this question see: Minna Skafte Jensen, *The Homeric Question and the Oral-Formulaic Theory* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1980); John Miles Foley, “‘Reading’ Homer through Oral Tradition” *College Literature* 34.2 (2007): 1-29, esp. 2-4.

important pieces to understanding the complex relationship between performance and tradition in oral cultures.

Following Parry's unexpected death, his student Albert B. Lord, an assistant to Parry in Yugoslavia, continued his work. In his 1960 *Singer of Tales*, Lord built upon Parry's initial observations and articulated a more comprehensive understanding of epic performances.¹⁸ Lord argues that performances of epic poetry are not prescribed, in the sense that they derive from a written text, but rather they are constructed in performance by the use of traditional formulaic sayings. Because performances were often accompanied by music, the singer, influenced by the rhythm, created new and original performances. The singer, while simultaneously wearing multiple hats of composer, performer, and poet, was not responsible for or dependent upon a written account. These new and original performances problematize any notion of a "singular" or "more original" version, thus Lord advocates for the notion of multiple originals in performance and the importance of recognizing or identifying individual iterations within the tradition.

While these trailblazing works focused primarily on Homeric traditions, their influence has extended beyond classical studies.¹⁹ The theory, however, as foundational as it might have been for future works on orality, has not stood the test of time as originally articulated. More nuance is necessary to account for the complexities of the relationship between writing and performance, as many scholars no longer hold such a sharp contrast between orality and textuality. While the Oral-Formulaic theory might not successfully account for the entirety of

¹⁸ A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

¹⁹ Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition*, 94-111.

these dynamics, and indeed it seems to have perpetuated an unnecessary dichotomy between orality and textuality, Parry and Lord's work laid a foundation upon which many have built. The recognition of the process(es) of composition, moving the tradition between orality and textuality, the importance of identifying the performative dynamics within and behind texts and attending to the sociological realities of the oral cultures from which these texts emerged, and perhaps most importantly initiating a challenge to the primary chirographic approaches to texts emerging from oral cultures, are indebted in great part to these early pioneers.

Walter J. Ong's 1982 volume, *Orality and Literacy*, might be "seen in part as an extension of the hermeneutical tradition of Milman Parry, Albert Lord, Eric Havelock, and Marcel Jousse."²⁰ Not his first work to address questions of orality, this influential study wrestles with human communication, and more specifically the implications of writing on society and the impact that it has on the human psyche.²¹ Ong argues that there is a fundamental distinction between how cultures manage information, whether those cultures are governed by "primary orality" (i.e. where writing does not exist in any substantive sense—societies "untouched by literacy") and "secondary orality" (where texts are present and the majority may be literate, but still engage in oral communication).²² Ong admits that it is difficult for modern thinkers to

²⁰ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (London: Routledge, 1982). Quote from Randy F. Lumpp, "Walter J. Ong." In *DBAM*, 251.

²¹ Kelber notes that Ong's attempt to develop an 'oral noetics' can be traced through two of his previous works, culminating in his *Orality and Literacy* ("Oral Tradition, the comparative study of" 257-58). See Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).

²² Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 5-6; 132-35.

conceive of a world in which primary orality exists, however, remnants or residual orality are present in secondary orality cultures.²³

Ong's distinction between primary and secondary orality has produced much conversation within biblical studies, yet his most important contribution in *Orality and Literacy* is arguably his articulation of the "psychodynamics of orality," which he suggests define any oral culture.²⁴ Rather than limiting our conceptions of orality to the comparison of one oral culture with another (like Parry and Lord), Ong attempts to cast his net more broadly and think about the distinct features in any oral culture, regardless of time and space. Several of these distinct features (or psychodynamics) have influenced biblical scholarship in how it conceives of orality within and behind the text.²⁵ These dynamics led Ong to the conclusion that writing has transformed human consciousness "more than any other single invention."²⁶

In a similar fashion to Parry and Lord, Ong attempts to reset the framework by which we conceive of orality and writtenness and thus sets the stage for many works that follow. Also,

²³ "Today primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows of writing and has some experience of its effects. Still, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambiance, preserve much of the mindset of primary orality." Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 11.

²⁴ It is worth noting that Ong's categories of primary and especially secondary orality have at times been misappropriated within biblical scholarship. For Ong, secondary orality uses the conventions of writing, print, and other media as a means of structuring itself. In this sense, secondary orality is a "more deliberate and self-conscious orality," and it is not the same as the old. Audiences also play a different role and have different expectations in light of these media (Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 133-35, 167). However, for New Testament scholars, secondary orality becomes something like a "re-oralization" of written tradition. For critiques of the use of secondary orality in New Testament studies, see: Young, *Jesus Tradition*, 140, n.123; Rodriguez, *Oral Tradition*, 26-27.

²⁵ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 31-77. Ong identifies nine characteristics of an oral perspective: 1) an additive rather than subordinating style, 2) an aggregative rather than an analytic form of expression, 3) a tendency for the redundant, 4) a conservative outlook, 5) expression corresponding to the human life world, 6) an agonistic tone, 7) a participatory rather than an objective perspective, 8) a homeostatic orientation, and 9) a concrete rather than an abstract mode of thinking.

²⁶ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 78.

those who build on Ong's work suggest a more complex relationship between writing, orality, and human consciousness than is present within this particular work. Despite this criticism, Ong's attempts to conceive of the social and psychological dynamics of cultures dictated by primarily oral or primarily textual conventions play a key role in our understanding of the varying cognitive experiences of history, story, and texts. In particular, biblical studies have employed Ong's psychodynamics in relation to the Gospel of Mark, both in terms of understanding its compositional techniques, but also, its rhetorical impact for listening audiences.²⁷

John Miles Foley is perhaps the most prolific author and arguably the most proficient and ingenious thinker in the last half century as it relates to oral performance in the ancient world.²⁸ Writing at the intersection of multiple disciplines, Foley's approach allows him to develop a more sophisticated and nuanced theoretical framework for the study of performance and its relationship with tradition, one that has continued to be utilized across various disciplines. Foley pushes the Oral-Formulaic theory beyond the divide between text and orality, both in his theory of immanent art, and more importantly in his attempts to articulate how oral communication and orally-derived texts differ from that of literature as written text. As a basis for his theory of immanent art, Foley asserts that our understanding of oral poetry is undertheorized.²⁹ Immanent

²⁷ See Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods," 32-44.

²⁸ Kelber notes that Foley "has carried the discipline of orality-literacy studies to unprecedented heights of theoretical sophistication and originality" (*Oral and Written Gospel*, xxiv). Similarly, Tsagalis refers to Foley as the "uncontested guru" of oral theory ("The Homeric Question," 160-61).

²⁹ "[W]hat we are wrestling with is an inadequate theory of verbal art." John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5.

art moves beyond merely the identification of performance formulas in texts, and into considerations of how tradition(s) generates meaning. Foley summarizes with his oft sighted maxim: “Tradition is the enabling referent, performance the enabling event.”³⁰ As a means of grappling with distinct forms of meaning-making (communication, writing, and oral performance), Foley offers several new categories for our understanding of the dynamics of performance, in particular how words gain meaning in the context of performance (word-power). While many of these features might be discussed further, three of the more important concepts/terms for this particular study, as developed in his *Singer of Tales in Performance*, are performance arena, registers, and communicative economy.³¹

For Foley, the performance arena is “the locus where the event of performance takes place, where words are invested with their special power.”³² It is the interpretive framework through which a performer and audience filter the performance event. A performance arena situates any given performance and imbues it with both traditional and situational meaning. More simply, Foley suggests that “the performance arena describes the place one goes to perform them [re-created events] and the place the audience goes to experience them.”³³ This arena, however, is not limited to a specific geographical location, as features of the performance arena can

³⁰ John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xiii.

³¹ While these categories are not new with Foley, he uses them to demonstrate how his own oral theory overlaps with various disciplines.

³² Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 47; 209.

³³ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 47.

transcend specific locations.³⁴ Rather, the performance arena represents features which key the audience into a specific performance event. Without such features, meaning cannot be made, as the gaps of indeterminacy within the performance are left vacant. The performance arena then is an abstract site, a way of analyzing the frame(s) within which the audience and performer are able to make meaning within a given communication setting. In this sense, individual performances are both unique and bound to the performance tradition. They are unique, in that the performance event is one iteration or instantiation of the tradition, but they are also dependent upon the tradition in order for meaning to take place between performer and audience. The tradition, then, is an orienting and situating frame for a given performance. In order to understand the power words have, the way(s) in which words function within a given performance, the arena(s) in which those words are performed must be carefully considered.

Further, the performance arena is not limited to the physical or actual performance, but extends to the relationship between a text and reader. In terms of a reading event, the performance arena is the situation in which the reader imagines the performance of the orally derived text.³⁵ According to Foley, the act of reading an orally derived text is in itself a re-creation of the performance.³⁶ This re-creation is keyed through signals available within the text. But there are strata to these re-creations. So long as the tradition retains its “umbilical of metonym and meaning,” as the oral tradition continues to inform the text, illocutionary force is

³⁴ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 47-49.

³⁵ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 79-80.

³⁶ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 80.

retained.³⁷ However, as the text becomes further removed from the oral tradition, and the text itself begins to have a life of its own, the umbilical withers, and its “conduit of extratextual meaning” is lost.³⁸ All that is left are the rhetorical features present within the composition itself. This distinction is especially important for our study, as we consider the ways in which Mark may have been performed and read outside of its originating context.

Registers, according to Foley, refer to the system of signs and signals, the “special languages” that facilitate communication between performer and audience, and something that must be shared in order to make meaning.³⁹ Registers might include normal language that functions differently within a particular context, metaphors that are not immediately obvious, the inclusion of archaisms, etc. Within the performance event, these registers key the informed audience to produce certain meanings which may deviate from a word’s denotative meaning. They are the idiom by which the work was produced, and in which the work must be understood. These oral and performance derived registers—what Foley refers to as the *entrée* to performance arenas—contain both the key of the performance and the immanence of the work. This is not limited to the physical performances, as registers (re-)vivify in the written text as well. These registers transcend the oral/written divide, and imbue the work with meaning because of its roots in oral tradition.⁴⁰

³⁷ Illocutionary force here refers to a speaker’s intention with a particular utterance. For more on illocutionary acts and force, see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). For more on how the act of writing obscures illocutionary force see David Olson, *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

³⁸ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 81.

³⁹ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 50.

⁴⁰ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 82.

Communicative economy, then, refers to the way(s) in which particular words or phrases trigger or tap into larger networks of meaning. This refers not only to the semantic associations possible within a given performance arena, but also more practically to the efficient exchange between the performer and audience. When used in a traditional register and the appropriate performance arena, a communicative economy taps into an “untextualizable network of traditional associations.”⁴¹ Thus, words can have power beyond their literal and denotative meanings, and become loaded within a particular network of ideas. This understanding of economy attempts to illuminate the ways in which certain words within particular contexts interact with both oral and written traditions, thus complicating the meaning-making process and opening doors to larger networks of meaning.

As the performer and audience enter the performance arena, as particular registers are established and employed, and as the communicative economy attaches words or phrases to much larger systems of meaning-making by way of nodes, the complexities and dynamics of performance begin to come to light. Put more simply, meaning is made in a distinct way within an oral performance, especially the performance of an orally derived text.⁴² To be clear, this does not mean that the categories of performance arena, registers, or communicative economy do not function also at the level of textualization and composition. Foley has suggested that any reading of an oral-derived work, through a work’s immanence, recreates the performance and gives life

⁴¹ Foley, *Singer of Tales*, 54.

⁴² Foley puts this more pointedly in his conclusion: “Words come to mean immensely more, and differently, than the semiotically narrowed transcriptions into which performances are subsequently reduced, and we mis-‘read’ performances when we simply assimilate them to our own culturally privileged medium of text,” *Singer of Tales*, 208.

to its oral art. However, by examining the sites of performance and the ways words carry meaning within performance, this approach provides us with a more complex theory of how words work in unique and powerful ways within performed traditions.

Foley's notion of performance has been incorporated into various fields. More recently, within biblical studies Foley's work has been employed for discussions of tradition-making, how the gospels as written documents relate to the wider tradition, and more specifically the relationship between oral tradition and written texts.⁴³ His interdisciplinary approach, bridging conversations in anthropology, philology, theater, folklore, and classics attests to the relevance of questions about orality and performance. Additionally, Foley's work demonstrates how fruitful (and indeed necessary) such cross-disciplinary approaches are in understanding the complexities of orality and performance.

Werner Kelber on Oral Traditions and Mark

Within New Testament studies, Werner Kelber's *The Oral and The Written Gospel* launched a new line of questions and concerns related to orality and textuality for New Testament scholarship.⁴⁴ It is difficult to overstate the importance of this work and its impact on the landscape of ancient media studies. As Chris Keith has recently noted: "the answers scholars

⁴³ Foley's contributions to biblical studies include: "Words in Tradition, Words in Text: A Response," *Semeia* 65 (1995): 169-80; "The Riddle of Q: Oral Ancestor, Textual Precedent, or Ideological Creation?" In *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Atlanta: SBL, 2006) 123-40; "Memory in Oral Tradition" in eds. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan Draper, and John Miles Foley, *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark: Essays Dedicated to Werner Kelber* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 83-96; "Plentitude and Diversity: Interactions Between Orality and Writing," in Annette Weissenrieder and Robert B. Coote eds., *The Interface of Orality and Writing: Speaking, Seeing, Writing in the Shaping of New Genres*, BPC 11 (Eugene: Cascade, 2015), 103-18.

⁴⁴ *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983 [Reprinted with New Introduction] 1997).

still seek in New Testament media studies are to questions that originate with Kelber.”⁴⁵ While Kelber’s provocative work looms large over a vast array of questions in media studies, and indeed it is important to this present study, the full extent of his contributions need not be recounted here. Rather this discussion will briefly examine his thesis concerning what prompted Mark to write down the Jesus tradition, and how it is related to the oral tradition which preceded it.⁴⁶

For Kelber, “[Mark] came into existence less by extension of an antecedent oral tradition than by resistance to oral drives, norms, and authorities.”⁴⁷ While Mark’s Gospel may indeed contain elements of residual orality, the very fact that Mark writes his gospel represents something completely new and fundamentally different for the tradition.⁴⁸ The Gospel may include certain elements of the oral tradition, however, it retains these not as a way of perpetuating it, but rather as a way of disorienting, dislodging, and even silencing it.⁴⁹ This written form silences the prophetic voice, in favor a more fixed and finite medium.⁵⁰ For Kelber, traces of this tension can be observed in the way in which Mark characterizes key figures,

⁴⁵ Chris Keith, *The Gospel as Manuscript: An Early History of the Jesus Tradition as Material Artifact* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 78-79.

⁴⁶ Kelber, *Oral and the Written Gospel*, 90-91.

⁴⁷ Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, xix.

⁴⁸ “Granted the ongoing force of synoptic orality, one must nonetheless acknowledge that the gospel’s textuality asserts a new technology of communication over the synoptic tradition,” 93. “That the written medium itself may have exerted pressures has as yet not been considered. The text as text is constantly taken for granted,” 95; Cf. Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 90-131.

⁴⁹ Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 104.

⁵⁰ E.g. “...voices had to be silenced and an oral way of life subverted in order for this gospel to come into existence.” Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 93.

especially the disciples. This characterization is something we will return to in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Kelber's early work is often (mis)understood as perpetuating the "Great Divide" between orality and textuality. In a later edition, with a new introduction, Kelber responds to this criticism. He denies such a categorical distinction between orality and writing, but nonetheless suggests that such a break was necessary to loosen the bonds from the primarily chirographic approaches to texts.⁵¹ Perhaps the most important implication of Kelber's study is the recognition that while there may be traces of oral tradition present within Mark, there is something fundamentally different between Mark's written Gospel and the oral tradition which preceded it.

Summary

This summary of scholarship on orality and oral traditions has illustrated some of the complexities and some of the ways in which the study of orality and oral traditions has manifested itself in NT research. An important feature to note as we move forward is that oral traditions have been conceived of as both an object of study, but also an approach to the understanding of and interpretation of texts. While the Parry-Lord theory in and of itself is too reductionistic, it opened the doors to a vast array of works that contemplate the relationship between oral traditions and texts, and how performance differs from but may influence written compositions. Ong's work on oral cultures paved the way for contemplating the differences between oral and literate cognitive processing, a study of how different technologies affect our

⁵¹ "[T]he strong thesis" of his work was "necessary to break theoretical ground and to challenge the chirographic-typographic hegemony that rules biblical scholarship and many of the human sciences." Additionally, he warns that "once we are forewarned about the perils of the Great Divide, we need to be equally cautious not to relapse into dominantly typographic patterns of thought." Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, xxi-xxii.

understanding of the world. His influence can also be clearly seen in some of the early examinations of performance in New Testament studies, including the works of Werner Kelber, Joanna Dewey, and significantly, David Rhoads. Foley's elaboration of the Oral-Formulaic theory and his theories concerning the traditioning process and meaning-making have already proved fruitful within biblical scholarship, primarily in the work of Rodriguez, Horsley, and Miller to name but a few.⁵² Foley's notions of a performance arena and registers will be implied in our theoretical understanding of how meaning is made in a performance event. With respect to biblical performance criticism, the work of Kelber is undoubtedly the most directly influential as many of the questions which sustain this approach were first articulated or raised within his early works.

Despite a long and complex history of the study of oral traditions and orality, there is still much left to consider.⁵³ Biblical scholarship has recognized the oral dimensions present within the transmission of the Jesus tradition, and the dynamic relationship between orality and textuality that exists within the practices of the early Jesus movement. Approaches to these dynamics have challenged, though not fully overturned, the primarily chirographic slant which has historically dominated the discussion. Performance criticism, at least in part, attempts to further contemplate, identify, and name the dynamics at play between texts and

⁵² Rafael Rodriguez, *Structuring Early Christian Memory: Jesus in Tradition, Performance, and Text*, LNTS 407 (London: T&T Clark, 2010); idem, *Oral Tradition and the New Testament*; Richard A. Horsley, *Text and Tradition in Performance and Writing*, BPC 9 (Eugene: Cascade, 2013); Raymond F. Person, "John Miles Foley" in *DBAM*, 136-137; Shem Miller, *Dead Sea Media: Orality, Textuality, and Memory in the Scrolls from the Judean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

⁵³ Iverson correctly recognizes that "while an appreciation of orality has made inroads into certain segments of Gospels research, it remains a neglected and underexploited dimension of NT interpretation" ("Orality and the Gospels," *CBR* 8.1 [2009]: 71).

orality/performance, both the oral traditions which precede the texts as well as the oral presentation of texts themselves.

1.1.2- Ancient Literacy

The question of literacy in antiquity is perhaps equally as complex as that of oral traditions. Literacy, as its most basic form and as it has generally been understood, refers to the skills of reading and writing. Much of the early scholarship on ancient literacy focused on the physical mechanics of reading (how did ancients read?), education levels, and class distinctions (who was able to read?). More recently, and helpfully, the conversation has shifted to questions of the sociological role of reading (why did people read?), the identification of reading groups and not necessarily classes (who was reading?) and the role of certain texts within such groups in antiquity (what was being read?). The study of literacy in antiquity provides an important historical and sociological basis for consideration of the performance dynamics of biblical texts. While, again, the conversation is much more nuanced than will be presented here, the aim of the following is to provide an overview of the discussion, in particular the works of William Harris, Catherine Hezser, and William A. Johnson, and to introduce how questions of literacy have informed and necessitated conversations concerning the role of performance in antiquity.

As stated above, the earliest works on ancient literacy primarily focused on the mechanics of reading.⁵⁴ Building upon Augustine's observation in *Confessions* 6.3.3,⁵⁵ and his apparent shock at his teacher reading a text silently, a number of classicists understood this particular description of reading as the "norm."⁵⁶ If Augustine was surprised that his teacher was reading silently, this suggests that reading normally was done aloud. While this may seem an overly reductionistic position, and indeed it is, there are a significant number of primary texts that suggest that much reading in antiquity was done aloud.⁵⁷ At the same time, as has been demonstrated in more recent scholarship, such arguments obscure the fact that there are also a

⁵⁴ The debate over whether the ancients read aloud or not was launched initially by Josef Balough, "*Voces Paginarum: Beiträge zur Geschichte des lauten Lesens und Schreibens*," *Philologus* 82 (1927): 85-109, 202-40. Balough's original article was written in Hungarian in 1921 (see Bernard M.W. Knox, "Silent Reading in Antiquity," *GRBS* 9 [1968]: 421-35). Independent of Balough, G.L. Hendrickson's 1929 article, ("Ancient Reading," *CJ* 25 [1929]: 182-96) makes a similar argument, though Hendrickson is more cautious in his conclusions.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.3.3: "But when he was reading, his eyes would scan over the pages and his heart would scrutinize their meaning—yet his voice and tongue remained silent. Often when we were present (no one was ever forbidden to enter, nor was it his custom to have those approaching him announced) we saw him reading like that, silently, but never aloud. We used to sit for long periods of silence—who would presume to intrude on someone so intent?—and then depart, on the assumption that in these short periods of time, carved out from the hustle and bustle of other people's problems, which he secured for refreshing his mind, he did not want to be distracted toward other things. Perhaps he was also avoiding having to explain to an engrossed and attentive listener anything that the author he was reading had put in terms unclear, or to give a commentary on some other complex subjects. Given all the time he spent on such duties, he read fewer books than he wanted to, though in fact the aim of saving his voice, which all too easily became strained, could be a better justification for reading silently. Whatever his reason for doing so, a man like him was certainly doing it for the best." (LCL, trans. Jeffrey Henderson).

⁵⁶ William A. Johnson traces the influence of this thought to the work of Eduard Norden's *Die antike Kunstprosa* I (Leipzig and Berlin, 1889, 4th ed. 1923). In this work, Norden is not as concerned with whether or not ancient people could read aloud, but whether reading literary texts aloud was the "norm" throughout antiquity. (William A Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 4-5).

⁵⁷ A few examples include: Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.2,4, 14; 1.13.1-3; 1.15.2; 1.16.6; 1.20.9-10; 2.3.4; 2.10.2-3, 6; 3.1.4, 8-9; 3.5.10-12; 3.7.5; 3.15.4; 4.19.4; 4.27.1; 5.3.1-2; 5.17.2-3; 5.19.3; 6.15; 6.17.1; 6.21.2; 7.4.3, 9; 7.17.1-4; 7.25.4; 8.1; 8.21; 9.34; 9.36.3-4; Dio Chrysostom, *Disc.* 8.9; 18.6-7; NT examples include: Acts 8:28-30; 15:31; 1 Thess. 5:27; Col 4:16; 1 Tim 4:13; Rev. 1:3, 22:18. For Early Christian references to a "reader" or lector: 2 Clement 19:1; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 41; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.43.11.

number of examples that depict characters and or ancient persons reading texts silently.⁵⁸ The cases for silent or public reading rest not in the ancient person's ability to read in either manner (a neurophysiological ability), but are contextually and socially situated. The mechanics of reading need not deter us from the larger set of sociological questions of (il)literacy in antiquity and the role of texts within it.

Arguably the most influential study of literacy in antiquity is the 1989 work *Ancient Literacy* by William V. Harris.⁵⁹ In this volume, Harris attempts to answer the questions of "how many people could read [and] how many people could write in the Graeco-Roman world?"⁶⁰ Acknowledging from the outset the difficulties of defining literacy and illiteracy, Harris delineates different abilities within a literate spectrum.⁶¹ Additionally, Harris seeks to define the social levels of literacy in antiquity (including his terms "scribal literacy" and "craftsman's literacy")⁶² and argues that despite these different sociological levels, which would include additional literate practices, literacy rates in the Graeco-Roman world were still quite low. Since the necessary pre-conditions for literacy were not present (using a comparative model), there was

⁵⁸ For rebuttals to the "myth" of ancient reading aloud as opposed to silent see: Bernard M.W. Knox, "Silent Reading in Antiquity"; D.J. Allan, "ΑΝΑΓΙΓΝΩΣΚΩ and some cognate words," *Classics Quarterly* 30 (1980): 244-51; Michael Slusser, "Reading Silently in Antiquity," *JBL* 111 (1992): 499; Frank D. Gilliard, "More Silent Reading in Antiquity: *Omne Verbum Sonabat*," *JBL* 112 (1993): 689-94; A.K. Gavrilov, "Reading in Classical Antiquity," *CQ* 47 (1997): 56-73. M.F. Burnyeat, "Postscript on Silent Reading," *Classics Quarterly* 47 (1997): 74-76.

⁵⁹ William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁶⁰ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 3.

⁶¹ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 4-6.

⁶² Harris defines scribal literacy as "literacy restricted to a specialized social group which used it for such purposes as maintaining palace records" and craftsman's literacy as "not the literacy of an individual craftsman but the condition in which the majority, or near-majority of skilled craftsman are literate, while women and unskilled labourers and peasants are mainly not..." *Ancient Literacy*, 7-8.

no need for widespread literacy and thus no incentive to introduce it.⁶³ In his attempt to problematize what he perceives to be an overly optimistic view of literacy in antiquity, Harris suggests that despite the “vast diffusion of reading and writing ability” there was “no mass literacy...”⁶⁴ He concludes that no more than 10% of the Greek and Roman population in any given area was literate, and that certain areas would be lower. Harris’ work has not gone without critique, but his conclusions have remained widely accepted.⁶⁵

Catherine Hezser’s 2001 work *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* offers further evidence for low levels of literacy in antiquity.⁶⁶ While Harris limits his analysis of antiquity to a Greek and Roman milieu, Hezser seeks to widen this view, and ask the same questions concerning Palestinian and Diasporic Jewish readers. In her comprehensive exploration, Hezser suggests that Jewish society in Palestine was characterized by an even lower literacy rate and a more restrictive use of texts than the larger Greco-Roman society.⁶⁷ Rabbis were likely part of a

⁶³ Harris employs a comparative method in order to understand the larger function of literacy in a society. Using studies of literacy in other time periods, Harris justifies his approach and the lack of “pre-conditions” in the following way: “Investigation of the volume of literacy in other societies, and in particular of the growth of literacy in early-modern and modern Europe, has shown that writing ceases to be the arcane accomplishment of small professional or religious or social elite *only* when certain preconditions are fulfilled and *only* when strong positive forces are present to bring the change about. Such forces may be economic, social, or ideological, or any combination of these things,” 11-12. And “The classical world, even at its most advanced, was so lacking in the characteristics which produce extensive literacy that we must suppose that the majority of the people were always illiterate,” 13. See further his comparative materials (Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 11-18).

⁶⁴ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 13.

⁶⁵ For example, see Mary Beard’s critique of Harris: “Writing and Religion: Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion,” in *Literacy in the Roman World*, eds. M. Beard et al., JRASup 3 (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991), 35-58. It is important to note, however, that even works that critique Harris’s argument for lower literacy rates, none have argued for a majority literacy.

⁶⁶ Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

⁶⁷ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 496.

literate class, but the majority of their intellectual practices took place in an oral rather than a written medium.⁶⁸ For Hezser, this evidence points toward an even lower level of literacy than Harris posited for the Greeks and Romans. She suggests that as little as 3% of Jews during this period might have been literate, compared to Harris's estimation of 10% among the Greeks and Romans.⁶⁹ In light of the evidence concerning the restricted use of texts, the low levels of literacy, and the lack of evidence for widespread education, Hezser suggests that these results "must lead us to a new assessment of our understanding of ancient Judaism as a 'book-religion' and a greater emphasis on other, non-textual forms of religious expression."⁷⁰

In the works of Harris and Hezser we find compelling arguments mounted for lower literacy rates in antiquity than previously considered. A literacy rate between 3%-10%, perhaps as high as 15% in certain elite groups raises important questions as to the use and function of texts among an illiterate majority. Low literacy rates in antiquity, based on these historical and sociological re-constructions, has been widely accepted within NT studies, and the implications have been teased out in a variety of ways. Harris began discussing the sociological function of texts within particular groups, while Hezser suggested that we must start thinking about non-textual forms of religious expressions. Low literacy rates do not necessarily dismiss textuality and the role of texts within communities, yet it is important to realize that we are still dealing with primarily an oral culture.

⁶⁸ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 94-109.

⁶⁹ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 35.

⁷⁰ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 503.

Classicist William A. Johnson has more recently highlighted the limitations with previous discussions of ancient reading practices.⁷¹ As discussed above, many of the early works on ancient reading focused on the mechanics of reading (whether readers read silently or aloud) or the cognitive abilities of ancient readers rather than the larger sociological implications. The terms in which the previous discussions of literacy have been couched have necessarily limited analyses to data mining and conjectural approximations of neurophysiological abilities.⁷² Johnson's frustration, and rightfully so, is that the larger and more important sociological implications have too often been ignored.⁷³ In an attempt to direct the discussion toward more constructive ends, Johnson suggests that we shift our focus away from individual reading mechanics and toward exploring the variety of ways in which reading cultures and reading communities are depicted within the Greco-Roman world.

As a way of shifting the debate, Johnson helpfully suggests that we must move beyond a simple cognitive theory of reading and attempt to grasp the sociocultural contexts of reading and readers. In other words, we must have in mind a more realistic and complete notion of reading in order to move the discussion forward. He asserts that reading is not "an individual phenomenon, but [rather] a sociocultural *system* in which an individual participates."⁷⁴ Johnson begins with the more general assertion that reading is a "highly complex sociocultural system," that it is "not

⁷¹ William A. Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity," *The American Journal of Philology* 121.4 (2000): 593-627; idem *Readers and Reading Culture*; William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker, eds. *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷² Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," 594-600; idem, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 4-16.

⁷³ Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," 594; idem, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 14-16.

⁷⁴ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 10.

simply the cognitive process by the individual of the ‘technology’ of writing, but rather the *negotiated construction of meaning within a particular sociocultural context.*”⁷⁵

As a point of entry into his theory of ancient reading cultures, Johnson begins by asking: 1) how exactly did ancients go about reading?, and 2) how did the ancient reading culture differ from the modern reading-from-a-printed book model familiar to us today?⁷⁶ Building upon insights from ethnography, anthropology, and sociolinguistics, Johnson demonstrates the need for a more nuanced definition of reading. Offering five propositions to clarify the necessity for a culturally influenced understanding of reading, it immediately becomes clearer why such distinctions are necessary:

1) “The reading of different types of texts makes for different types of reading events.”⁷⁷ Here, genre distinctions are important in assessing the type of reading event taking place, as a receipt and a novel are two distinct text types which essentially necessitate different types of reading events. One does not apply the same reading strategies for both. Thus, the two texts result in two different types of reading events.

2) “The reading of a given text in two different contexts results in different reading events.”⁷⁸ For example, reading a novel for one’s own personal entertainment or enjoyment is

⁷⁵ Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 603. Emphasis original.

⁷⁶ Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 600. Johnson carefully distinguishes between his use of three different reading terms in an attempt to avoid the complex notion of “literacy.” Reading (which is the experience of reading, broadly conceived); Reading events (which emphasizes the contextualization of a particular “reading”) and Reading Culture (which signals the cultural construct that underpins group and individual behaviors in a reading event). Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 602, n.20.

⁷⁷ Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 602.

⁷⁸ Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 602.

different event than reading that same novel in a book club. Or, more germane to our discussion here, reading biblical texts as one's personal devotion is a different reading event than reading a biblical text in a college classroom. Not only do these different contexts create distinct reading events, but also one must account for both the individual and corporate nature of these events.

3) "A reading event is in part informed by the conceived reading community."⁷⁹ For instance, a reader in a freshman English course will read the text of Shakespeare entirely differently than they did in a high school drama class. While both contexts represent distinct reading groups, the identity of the reader and how it is shaped by and within that group is "an important, and determinative, part of the reading event."⁸⁰

4) "The reading community normally has not only a strict social component (the conception of the group), but also a cultural component, in that the rules of engagement are in part directed by inherited traditions."⁸¹ Again, reading the Bible for personal devotion represents a particular inherited tradition, with its own standards. In contrast, reading the Bible in an academic setting creates different expectations from the inherited interpretive traditions. In other words, the rules of engagement are in many ways dictated by the training one receives (e.g., whether one is trained in historical criticism vs. literary criticism), and these will necessarily shape the reading event.

⁷⁹ Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," 602.

⁸⁰ Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," 602.

⁸¹ Johnson, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," 603.

5) “Reading which is perceived to have a cultural dimension (most obviously, ‘literature’ of any sort) is intimately linked to the self-identity of the reader.”⁸² How one identifies themselves socially within a particular reading culture will necessarily shape the type of reading event that occurs. Johnson uses the example of someone within an elite culture reading a “‘trash’ romance novel” versus reading “difficult, but ‘excellent’ literature.”⁸³ Similarly, one could return to the example of someone belonging to a particular religious tradition, reading their “sacred texts.” Both the perceived inherent value of a work and its particular mode of meaning-making will be shaped by larger cultural influences.

The particularities of each of the above propositions could be discussed and debated. However, each helpfully demonstrates some of the “complexities” of reading, and how it is preferable to understand reading “as not an act, nor even a process, but as a highly complex sociocultural system that involves a great many considerations beyond the decoding by the reader of the words of a text.”⁸⁴ This insight leads Johnson to two principles related to understanding reading in antiquity: 1) we must first understand that what we are trying to analyze is an immensely complex, interlocking system—simplistic questions and reductionistic solutions will further perpetuate our frustrations with the matter; 2) we must seek to set ancient reading within the terms of its own sociocultural context.⁸⁵ This second principle—the framing

⁸² Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 603.

⁸³ Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 603.

⁸⁴ Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 603.

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 14. See also, “The more proper goal...is to understand the particular reading cultures that obtained in antiquity, rather than to try to answer decontextualized questions that assume in ‘reading’ a clarity and simplicity it manifestly does not have.” Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading,” 606.

of discussions of reading in specific sociocultural contexts—is a necessary step in order to have more productive conversations about what we mean when we discuss ancient literacy.

Summary

The works discussed above represent some, but not all of the important contributions on ancient literacy. Discussions of their implications, however, remain varied and contested. The main implications of ancient literacy to this present work relate to way(s) in which we reimagine the emergence of early Christian literature within this “(il)literate” milieu. If the majority of people cannot read, who are the intended audiences of this literature? How did they experience the text? And to state it more pragmatically, for what purpose(s) were texts written within such a milieu? The recent shift in focus toward the sociological phenomenon of reading allows us to think more fully about these questions in the sociocultural context of reading communities, no longer at the level of individual consumption. For instance, low literacy rates do not necessarily mean that the early Jesus followers were primarily an oral culture. Simultaneously, the presence of texts among a majority of illiterate persons does not necessitate that a particular group was necessarily a book or literate culture. The complex sociological construct of reading and the role of texts in individual communities within an illiterate milieu problematizes any one position taking precedence, at least for the time being. The presence or absence of material texts does not, in and of itself, demonstrate one position over the other. Just because we find a sparse number of physical texts, does not mean the community did not think those texts important. At the same time, if we were to find a “relatively” large number of texts in a particular area, this is not necessarily indicative of a larger reading or more literate community.

As it relates to performance criticism, most proponents begin with the assumption that the biblical texts were most likely heard rather than experienced as texts by the majority of early Jesus followers. This assumption is built primarily upon the conclusions of Harris and Hezser with regard to literacy rates, and subsequent works on early Christian practices. Following the work of Johnson, discussions of the sociological phenomenon of literacy and illiteracy must become more complex. It is no longer possible to speak of literacy in monolithic terms, but rather we must consider “literacies” and the various ways in which literacy might function within different communities in antiquity. There were groups in antiquity reading texts together, and those reading communities played a definitive role within group identity. The identification and recognition of reading groups, however, does not disqualify a performance-oriented model, as several of the practices of elite “reading communities” also include oral performances. This recognition is extremely important and will represent a tension throughout this work, as we consider the variety of ways in which the early Jesus followers experienced their texts.

1.1.3- Ancient Rhetoric and Oratory

Perhaps the most immediate evidence in favor of developing a performance hermeneutic is the work of ancient rhetoricians and orators.⁸⁶ Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero, and Longinus, among others, provide not only a prescriptive but also a descriptive base for investigating the impact of oral performances in antiquity. Whitney Shiner’s work on performance and the Gospel of Mark, as well as William Shiell’s work on the role of the lector in Acts have been

⁸⁶ Ancient theater and epic performances (discussed briefly above with Foley) are also potential areas of contact. These will be addressed further below in Chapter 2.

foundational for the development of performance criticism.⁸⁷ The value of these works is not merely in their collection and organization of the prescriptive methods of oral communication in antiquity, but also for teasing out the descriptive elements of the culture as presented within these texts. In particular their emphasis on the high cultural valuation of orality is key to constructing a framework for performance.

Whitney Shiner

Shiner's *Proclaiming the Gospel of Mark* stands out as one of the foundational texts in the development of biblical performance criticism. Shiner's work begins by defending the need for an oral performance hermeneutic for the gospels. Two key historical observations inform his pursuits: 1) the low level of literacy rates in antiquity; and 2) the cultural valuation of oral communication, specifically, how writing was viewed as in the service of oral communication.⁸⁸ After marshalling a great deal of textual evidence for these two claims, Shiner proceeds to itemize various types of performances in antiquity.⁸⁹ These types of ancient performances theoretically create an infinite number of potential performance scenarios or performance events for the gospels. Shiner then speculates on the potential situations and locations where gospel performance events might have occurred among the early Christian communities, and notes how

⁸⁷ Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003); William D. Shiell, *Reading Acts: The Lector and the Early Christian Audience* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁸⁸ Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 11.

⁸⁹ Private and Public readings, storytelling, novels, drama, pantomime, poetry, epic, reading in worship, scriptural chant, early Christian speaking styles, social settings for a gospel performance, and physical settings for a gospel performance. *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 37-52.

physical location would also affect the performance event.⁹⁰ It is worth noting here that for Shiner his goal is to posit potential performance scenarios, an “idealized” performance, and not the recreation of actual or concrete performances in antiquity. In other words, he is not attempting to offer a singular situation in which the gospels were experienced, as if he were reconstructing an actual history, but rather he offers a helpful heuristic for considering the potential ways in which the text might have been performed. This is clear in his treatment of style and location, as he offers many different scenarios, without proposing a definitive situation.

After establishing both the need for an ancient performance hermeneutic and positing the various scenarios and locations of performances in antiquity, Shiner then turns to specific Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions used in performances: emotion, delivery, memorization, gesture and movement.⁹¹ These conventions, each of which is well-attested within the works of ancient rhetors, constitute some of the various ways in which a performance creates “meaning” within the performance event.⁹² Shiner also discusses the role of the audience, their input on the performance event, how performers might include applause lines at certain points, and how their performances would necessitate audience inclusion.⁹³ While Shiner discusses ways in which each of these conventions illuminate our understanding of Mark, the enduring contribution of

⁹⁰ Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 49-52.

⁹¹ Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 57-142.

⁹² Cf. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 192. Shiner sees the early Christian experience of the gospel not simply as one telling of the story, but as a performance event: “The rhetoricians of the Greek and Roman world understood the intense power that could be generated by the embodied word. They studied carefully how to create the desired effects. They practiced constantly the power of their presence... This is the power that a performer of Mark would have harnessed to make the Gospel present. The Gospel was not a story. It was an event.”

⁹³ Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 143-90.

this work is the case he makes for Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions as a way of enhancing our understanding of biblical texts in performance. He identifies what he perceives to be a lacuna in previous analyses of the Gospels, as texts rather than as performances, and presents a new set of evaluative features, all of which are present and supported within the literature of ancient rhetoricians. Whether one agrees with his premise concerning literacy rates in antiquity, one must wrestle with the compounding evidence he has presented for a cultural milieu that highly values orality and performance.

William Shiell

Similar to Shiner, William Shiell draws on evidence from ancient rhetoricians but focuses primarily on the dynamics between the lector (as performer) and the audience. In *Reading Acts*, Shiell begins his investigation with a simple yet profound question:

If there were so few copies of early Christian writings, and most people in the Greco-Roman period lacked the basic skills of reading, then the documents had to be communicated orally. What would we need to know in order to reconstruct a hypothetical performance of these texts?⁹⁴

Shiell begins from the position that the early Christian authors wrote their texts anticipating their being performed publicly.⁹⁵ His approach to answering the question of reconstruction is to investigate the role of the lector in early Christian performances, to explore the ways in which a lector could impact an audience's experience of the Book of Acts.⁹⁶ The lector is a filter through which an audience experiences the text, and as such, the audience is subject to the interpretive

⁹⁴ Shiell, *Reading Acts*, xix.

⁹⁵ Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 1.

⁹⁶ Cf. Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 2. "the performance of a text significantly affected an audience's understanding and interpretation of Christian writings."

decisions of the lector. The lector conveys meaning beyond the written text through gestures, expressions, vocal inflections, and other such extralinguistic and paralinguistic features.⁹⁷ Even if the audience is not educated in rhetoric, its members would be familiar with these conventions of delivery, having seen “them practiced in drama, speeches, and recitations, and from observing them in works of art displayed throughout the empire.”⁹⁸ After discussing the various conventions of performance, Shiell then ties these conventions to particular scenes within Acts, showing how the text not only includes keys to performance, but also how it evokes particular conventions of a lector and how these can generate meaning in particular scenes.

In a second book, *Delivering from Memory*, Shiell focuses more on the interaction between audience and lector, with specific emphasis on how the audience might shape the meaning of performance.⁹⁹ The audience is an active participant in the performance event, and as such, performances are subject to response, interruption, and debate.¹⁰⁰ This engagement, between reader and audience, functioned as instruction or early Christian *paideia*, and facilitated memory and remembrance of the texts.¹⁰¹ While Shiner introduced audience engagement in his work, Shiell collects and collates a plethora of ancient sources showing the lively and interactive milieu in which the biblical texts were composed, and subsequently performed. The continued

⁹⁷ Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 34-101. See especially the helpful tables on pp. 91-100.

⁹⁸ Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 34.

⁹⁹ William D. Shiell, *Delivering from Memory: The Effect of Performance on the Early Christian Audience* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 23-28.

¹⁰⁰ Shiell, *Delivering from Memory*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Shiell’s examples of *paideia* within early Christianity include: 1 Tim 4:13-16; Heb 10-13; Eph 5:19-6:9; Tit 2:11-14; 2 Tim 1:4-2:26; Ps. Sol. 3-16; 1 Clem 35, 56; Herm, Vis. 2. See Shiell, *Delivering from Memory*, 52-68.

emphasis on conceptualizing a “performance event” and the various elements within the event that influence meaning-making will be discussed further below in the work of Rhoads.

Summary:

What Shiner and Shiell have done most effectively is to ground reconstructions of ancient performance soundly within the context of ancient rhetoric. In particular, they have ferreted out conventions of delivery espoused by the ancient rhetoricians, marshalling a significant amount of evidence for them, and have offered ways in which these conventions might help illuminate our understanding and reconstructions of performance events of these narratives among the early Christians.¹⁰² Outside the tradition of the orators there is significant evidence for the preference of orality over texts, but the appeal to the work of the rhetoricians and orators has provided a more descriptive means of understanding those events.¹⁰³ If Shiner and Shiell are correct in their assessment concerning the relationship between spoken and written word (which this work assumes), then appealing to ancient rhetoricians may serve as a point of reference and comparison to ancient performances of the gospels.

¹⁰² Critics of performance analyses have been quick to point out the differences between the settings of the orators or their types of speech (normally, judicial settings), and that of the gospel performances. This is a fair criticism, though it overlooks one key assertion that justifies such an approach: the high valuation of orality in antiquity. For critiques, see especially Dan Nässelqvist’s critique of Shiner in *Public Reading in Early Christianity*, 4-5; Similarly, Hurtado critiques the conflation of lectors with orators/actors (“Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? ‘Orality’, ‘Performance’, and Reading Texts in Early Christianity,” *NTS* 60.3 [2014]: 334-35).

¹⁰³ Another response by critics has been to counter the viewpoint of a preference for orality with the competing notion of a high valuation of textuality in early Christianity. While this serves to shift the pendulum closer to center, perhaps a necessary and helpful corrective, this does not necessarily refute the evidence which Shiner and Shiell have presented. See also, Loveday Alexander, “The Living Voice: Skepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and Greco-Roman Texts,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, eds. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter, JSOTSup 87 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 221-47; Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3.

In many ways, the work of Shiner and Shiell might also have the effect of freeing NT scholarship from the bonds of “style,” shifting the conversation of the study of rhetoric away from static forms and structuralism toward dynamic effects. This is not to downplay the importance of analyzing rhetorical writing styles in the text, but rather it allows us to consider how real (re-imagined) audiences might have been influenced by these texts and how they would have responded to them. Rather than looking for particular or definitive rhetorical forms in the texts, the focus is more on the interaction between performers and audiences, and how in the act of hearing the gospels performed and/or read aloud meaning is produced in a variety of new ways.

While it is clear that most of the conversation partners discussed above contribute meaningfully to what will eventually become biblical performance criticism, it is not until Rhoads’s two-part article that these various contributions are brought together to theorize a more comprehensive criticism and to create a framework for what becomes “biblical performance criticism.”¹⁰⁴ We turn now to a consideration of Rhoads’s work and its impact.

1.2- David Rhoads and the Emergence of Biblical Performance Criticism

Rarely does a scholar produce a single volume with such a seismic impact on a discipline as Rhoads’s contributions to narrative-criticism.¹⁰⁵ It is even rarer for a scholar to have such an impact at the forefront of two distinct approaches. While performance criticism will be our focus

¹⁰⁴ The exceptions here are Johnson’s *Readers and Reading Culture* and Shiell’s *Delivering from Memory*, both of which were published after Rhoads’s initial proposal.

¹⁰⁵ David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story*. For an overview of the impact of this volume and its importance in introducing narrative criticism to New Testament studies, see: Christopher W. Skinner, “Telling the Story: The Appearance and Impact of *Mark as Story*” in *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*. eds. Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 1-18.

here, the relationship between narrative and performance has been well documented.¹⁰⁶ In many ways, for both disciplines, Rhoads's work has provided an entry point and has ushered in a paradigm shift in the ways New Testament scholars think about and interpret texts.

In 2006, Rhoads published a seminal two-part article, "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies."¹⁰⁷ This is one of the most commonly referenced works on biblical performance criticism to date. Thomas Boomershine, Joanna Dewey, Paul Achtemeier, and Pieter J.J. Botha, along with Kelber, Shiner, and Shiell, all preceded Rhoads in considering the impact of orality and performance on the biblical text, but it was Rhoads who coined the terminology and articulated a standard for the discipline.¹⁰⁸ One

¹⁰⁶ Christopher Skinner notes that some performance critics have suggested that performance criticism is "the next organic methodological step after narrative criticism." ("The Study of Character(s) in the Gospel of Mark," 31) Holly Hearon states that "It would be possible to fold much if not most of what is said under narrative criticism into the discussion of performance criticism, and vice versa, with the result that both would be enriched." ("Characters in Text and Performance: The Gospel of John," in *From Text to Performance: Narrative and Performance Criticisms in Dialogue and Debate*, BPC 10, ed. Kelly R. Iverson [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014], 76) Kelly Iverson writes that performance criticism's roots "lie within narrative-critical soil." ("The Present Tense of Performance: Immediacy and Transformative Power in Luke's Passion" in *From Text to Performance*, 133). Geert Van Oyen has suggested that performance criticism is best understood as a test for narrative criticism (something also suggested by performance critics), as the performer must in some way do narrative analysis before performing. It is only after narrative analysis has occurred that a performance can take place ("No Performance Criticism Without Narrative Criticism," in *Communication, Pedagogy, and the Gospel of Mark*, eds. Elizabeth E. Shively and Geert Van Oyen [Atlanta: SBL, 2016], 128). Below, I will challenge the trajectories of these two methods, and suggest that performance criticism should not be considered as a "next step" in the process, though based on its proponents and its chronology, such a relationship is understandable.

¹⁰⁷ David Rhoads, "Performance Criticism: Part I"; idem, "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies-Part II," *BTB* 36 (2006): 164-84. In addition to these two, see also: idem, "What is Performance Criticism?" in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, eds. Holly E. Hearon and Philip Ruge-Jones, BPC 1 (Eugene: Cascade, 2009), 83-100; idem, "Biblical Performance Criticism: Performance as Research," *Oral Traditions* 25.1 (2010): 157-98; David Rhoads and Joanna Dewey, "Performance Criticism: A Paradigm Shift in New Testament Studies," in *From Text to Performance*, 1-26.

¹⁰⁸ See Thomas E. Boomershine, "Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession: The Implications of Media Criticism for Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 39 (1987): 47-68; idem, "Biblical Megatrends: Towards a Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in Electronic Media," *SBLSP* 26 (1987): 144-57; idem, "Jesus of Nazareth and the Watershed of Ancient Orality and Literacy," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 7-36; Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods" 32-44; idem, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 221-36; idem, "Textuality in an Oral Culture: A Survey of the Pauline Traditions," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 37-65; idem, "The Gospel of Mark as Oral/Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation," in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*,

important contribution of Rhoads's initial explorations is his insistence that performance is a unique and not merely supplementary approach to interpretation.

Performance criticism, at its core, is eclectic and interdisciplinary.¹⁰⁹ Because of this, it has either been considered supplementary to other criticisms (e.g., narrative, rhetorical, etc.) or seen as a sub-set of a larger interpretive enterprise (e.g., ancient media studies). As noted above, while most biblical scholars acknowledge the “oral culture” of the first-century, and that most early Christians experienced the text primarily through oral/aural means, the centrality of performance in the life of the early church has made relatively little impact on the field. More specifically, considerations of performance events and the medium shift from text to performance have had little significant impact at the level of interpretation.

Echoing Hans Frei's now famous lament, Rhoads suggests that the “eclipse of biblical orality” has prohibited, or at least has misguided us in our attempts to interpret New Testament texts.¹¹⁰ For Rhoads, following Boomershine, our failure to acknowledge the importance of different mediums and the failure to recognize performative aspects of the early Christian experiences of these texts is nothing short of “media anachronism.”¹¹¹ In order to recover the lost

eds. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon & Edgar McKnight (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 145-61.; idem, “From Storytelling to Written Text: The Loss of Early Christian Women's Voices,” *BTB* 26 (1996): 71-78; idem, “The Gospel of John in Its Oral-Written Media World,” In *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, eds. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 239-52; idem, “The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?” *JBL* 123.3 (2004): 495-507; Paul J. Achtemeier, “*Omne Verbum Sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity,” *JBL* 109.1 (1990): 3-27; Pieter J.J. Botha, “Mark's Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of some Traditions about Jesus,” *HTS* 47.2 (1991): 304-31; idem, “Schools in the World of Jesus: Analyzing the Evidence,” *Neotestamentica* 33.1 (1999): 225-60.

¹⁰⁹ Rhoads, “Part II,” 164-74.

¹¹⁰ Rhoads, “Part I,” 119.

¹¹¹ Rhoads, “Part I,” 126. Cf. Boomershine, “Biblical Megatrends,” 144-57.

impact of performance, we need to rethink methods, reassess the object of study, and develop new methods of interpretation.¹¹² Thus, Rhoads sets out to establish a method by which we might consider the performative aspects of texts by means of understanding the dynamics of performance and its impact on the text's composition and reception. The overarching purpose of his two-part article is to establish 1) the centrality of performance in the life of the early church, and 2) performance as a discrete discipline.¹¹³

In Part I, Rhoads demonstrates the need to develop a performance hermeneutic in light of the historical context in which the NT texts were written. After demonstrating that oral performances were an “integral and formative part” of the early Christians’ experiences, and that they were the “primary medium through which early Christians received and passed on the compositions” of the gospels,¹¹⁴ Rhoads clarifies what he perceives as the object of study: the “performance event,” which he refers to as a blind spot within NT studies.¹¹⁵ By situating his analysis at the level of event rather than text, he opens up additional criteria for exploration, including: the act of performing, the composition of the text as/for performance, the performer, the audience, the material context, the socio-historical circumstances, and the rhetorical impact of a performance.¹¹⁶ Rhoads proposes that the way forward in analyzing these criteria is by reimagining “audience scenarios,” situations in which an actual audience and actual performance

¹¹² Rhoads, “Part I,” 123.

¹¹³ Rhoads, “Part I,” 118.

¹¹⁴ Rhoads, “Part I,” 126.

¹¹⁵ Rhoads, “Part I,” 119, 126.

¹¹⁶ Rhoads, “Part I,” 126-31.

might have taken place.¹¹⁷ After re-orienting the object of study from text to performance event, Rhoads is still faced with constructing “a rigorous way to analyze all of these elements.”¹¹⁸

Shifting his attention in Part II, Rhoads attempts to locate performance within a wide range of interpretive frameworks found in NT studies including, historical criticism, form and genre criticisms, narrative criticism, reader-response criticism, rhetorical criticism, textual criticism, orality, socio-scientific criticism, speech-act theory, linguistic criticism, the art of translation, ideological criticism, theater studies, and oral interpretation studies. After this analysis, he suggests ways in which performance might both inform and be informed by each. While some of these sub-disciplines integrate with performance more organically than others, each offers possibilities for a broader paradigm shift. Further, an exploration of their various theoretical underpinnings reveals how they might support the construction of a more expansive interpretive method. Contemporary scholars appeal to this interdisciplinary approach as key to understanding and constructing a coherent approach to performance. This recognition is foundational to what this dissertation is attempting to demonstrate and build upon.

The lasting impact of Rhoads’s work on performance is yet to be determined, though he has initiated another paradigm shift for analyzing early Christian texts. What Rhoads’s introductory work lacks in specificity and nuance, it makes up for in breadth and prospects for future exploration. As we will see below, more recent scholars have judged that Rhoads’s

¹¹⁷ Rhoads, “Part I,” 131.

¹¹⁸ Rhoads, “Part I,” 131.

introductory foray leaves much to be fleshed out. This is true both for those who embrace performance as a viable method and for those who do not.

1.3- The Pendulum Swings Back

Performance criticism has not gone without its detractors.¹¹⁹ In 2014, Larry Hurtado's article "Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies?" launched into the broader scholarly community a series of rebuttals to performance critics.¹²⁰ The primary issues Hurtado critiques are 1) the assertion that Christian texts were "performed" and memorized rather than read, and more specifically the faulty comparison of such practices with ancient oratory and theatrical performance; and 2) the suggestion that texts like the Gospel of Mark were composed-in-performance, as opposed to the more traditional notion of an author penning a written text. At the heart of the matter, Hurtado seeks to correct what he perceives to be "oversimplifications" of the historical data, which have subsequently led to problematic reconstructions (and in his view, a dismissal) of the use of texts in the early church. In an attempt to correct these "oversimplifications" and "dubious" assertions, he focuses particularly on six areas that need further nuance and/or qualification: 1) whether the notion of 'orality' should minimize the place of texts; 2) the prominence of reading texts aloud in the Roman-era; 3) the physically demanding nature of reading ancient texts; 4) estimates of literacy in antiquity; 5) confusing public reading

¹¹⁹ For criticisms of performance see, among others: Larry W. Hurtado, "Oral Fixation"; idem, "Correcting Iverson's 'Correction'" *NTS* 62.2 (2016): 201-6; Alan Kirk, *Q in Matthew: Ancient Media, Memory, and Early Scribal Transmission of the Jesus Tradition*, LNTS 564 (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 15; Dan Nässeqvist, *Public Reading in Early Christianity*, 1-16, esp. 12-13; Brian J. Wright, *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window into Early Christian Reading Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 7-8, 19; Chris Keith, *The Gospel as Manuscript*, 166-71, 177-80.

¹²⁰ Peter Perry refers to this critique as a key moment in launching what he refers to as BPC 2.0. "Biblical Performance Criticism: Survey and Prospects" *Religions* 10, 117 (2019): 84.

with the actions of orators and/or actors; and 6) the role of “dictation,” and whether texts could be composed in ‘performance.’¹²¹

Hurtado’s critique of performance criticism, while fair at times, is itself guilty of several oversimplifications. Kelly Iverson responded to several of these criticisms in his 2016 response “Oral Fixation or Oral Corrective?”¹²² Chief among Iverson’s concerns was the way in which Hurtado appears to caricature performance criticism as a homogenous group. Within performance criticism, even at that time, several strands had already developed. Hurtado’s critiques appear to be levied at what I will refer to below as a “proto” version of the method. As such, many of the concerns Hurtado raised were not “crucial claims” or “key assumptions” of performance criticism but rather categories that continue to be debated among its proponents.¹²³ Such generalizations, Iverson warns, have the rhetorical effect of obscuring the heart of the discussion.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Hurtado, “Oral Fixation,” 326-335.

¹²² Kelly Iverson, “Oral Fixation or Oral Corrective? A Response to Larry Hurtado,” *NTS* 62.2 (2016): 183-200.

¹²³ Perhaps the best example of this is Hurtado’s extended critique of “composition-in-performance,” which takes on various levels of nuance among performance critics. It is true that Parry and Lord advocated for a composition-in-performance model of composition, and while (1) Rhoads and Shiner acknowledge the historical reality of the practice, and (2) individual critics argue for Mark being composed in-performance (e.g., Wire and Dewey, among others) the matter itself is not a “key assumption” of performance criticism, but rather the subject of much debate.

¹²⁴ “Sensitivity to these nuances might seem like a benign oversight, but the collective impact creates a false impression that distorts the contours of the discussion” (Iverson, “Oral Corrective?” 188). Hurtado (in his response to Iverson) denies such a caricature. While Hurtado does at times attempt to qualify *some* of his comments, Iverson acknowledges these qualifications in his response, but correctly notices the rhetorical effect of the occasional qualification and suggests that “these qualifications are too minor to be helpful” (Iverson, “Oral Corrective?” 188, fn.25).

After pointing out the need for greater nuance in discussing “performance critics” as a homogenous group, Iverson then takes up some of the “corrections” and offers a brief response to some of Hurtado’s oversimplifications. In particular, Iverson responds to Hurtado’s depictions of 1) ancient literacy/literacies; 2) ancient delivery practices, and 3) the oral/aural reception of texts. In each of his responses, Iverson seeks not to offer the “final” word on the matter, but rather to demonstrate the wide range of evidence available in constructing these features. In short, Iverson calls for greater nuance in these discussions, arguing that performance critics have done this for some time. It is not that the performance critics’ claims are “dubious,” rather, they take seriously the various ways in which people experienced texts in the ancient world. By taking seriously the levels of literacy and the diverse experiences of early Christians, performance critics are helpfully contributing to a key idea held by biblical scholars: that texts are never neutral and/or complete conveyors of ideas. This pendulum, which most performance critics now recognize may have swung too far, does not need to be returned to its previous static location.

Before moving forward, it is important to note one key agreement, and one key disagreement in this debate. Throughout both of Hurtado’s articles, he acknowledges that texts were undeniably read aloud at certain times in certain communities.¹²⁵ Indeed, as he states at the end of his response to Iverson, his concern ultimately seems to be related to the performance critics’ conflation of the various activities in which texts were used by early Christians.¹²⁶ By

¹²⁵ See “Oral Fixation” 323, 326, 327, 329, 334, 335, 336, 338, 340; “Correcting Iverson” 203-6.

¹²⁶ Such concerns may be observed throughout both pieces, but are keenly felt in statements such as the following from Hurtado: “I submit that in the recent advocacy of the ‘performance’ of texts in earliest Christianity there is often the fallacy of a kind of zero-sum game in which emphasising the place of Roman-era ‘orality’ is at the expense of recognizing the significant place of written texts and their various uses in that period, producing an oversimplification of matters” (“Oral Fixation,” 323-24).

emphasizing performance, Hurtado suggests, scholars have neglected the role texts played in the life and practice of early Christians. This is an important point, and one that is certainly worthy of further consideration. Similarly, Iverson points to the evidence of texts being read in early Christian gatherings, and attempts to highlight the necessity of understanding the text not (only) by means of its literariness, but rather (and also) by means of its performative dynamics. Iverson's concern is with the conflation of media as well, one that prioritizes the role of physical "texts" and too quickly discounts the way(s) in which the early Christians most likely experienced that text, in an oral/aural medium.

In addition to the portrayal of performance criticism and how it is characterized in broader scholarly discussions, what is at stake in this debate is neither whether texts were present in early Christian gatherings, nor whether Christians read the text or heard the text read aloud. Rather, the primary concern is over the categories one might use in discussing the variety of early Christian experiences of them. While it is certainly clear that early Christians experienced texts in a variety of ways, the ways in which we analyze or conceive of their experiences necessitates further nuance and terminological clarity.

There are certainly conflicting narratives constructed out of the same data by both parties, a debate keenly felt in Classical studies as well, but the differences here seem to be more categorical and terminological than historical. For Hurtado, the role of the physical manuscript (and perhaps also its interpretation as a literary work) cannot be discarded for the sake of 'performance' analyses of texts. In this sense, he is correct, that most depictions of ancient performance events state or assume the presence of a text in the event. While some performance critics emphasize the role of memory, most do not deny the presence and role of texts

during/preceding the performance event, nor do they make light of the fact that the only “evidence” we have of early Christian performances are the texts themselves. The difference is that those who privilege the written text in such constructions fail to account for the primary medium by and through which the earliest audiences experienced it. Different media affect one’s experience of a narrative, and in this case, the failure to take into account the primary means by which early Christians experienced texts, aurally, needs correction.

1.4- After Rhoads

Following Rhoads, a significant number of works related to performance criticism began to emerge. Included in these works are a variety of approaches. Such variety within the literature is representative of both the invitation for biblical performance criticism to diversify its conversation partners, but also the continued insider debates among biblical performance critics. In addition to this growing amount of literature, many of these conversations are taking place in the hallways and conference rooms, presentations and panel discussions at the Network of Biblical Storytellers Scholars Seminar (NBSI SS), as well as the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media (BAMM) and Performance Criticism of Biblical and Other Ancient Texts (PCBOAT) sections of the Society of Biblical Literature. What is clear, at least at this time, is that when one speaks of biblical performance criticism, there is not a single approach, but many, each with their own emphases and implications.¹²⁷

There are currently sixteen volumes published in Cascade’s Biblical Performance Criticism series. Other important monographs utilizing performance-oriented approaches have

¹²⁷ For an overview of the variety of approaches, see Peter Perry, “Biblical Performance Criticism: Survey and Prospects,” 81-95.

been published elsewhere,¹²⁸ in addition to a great many articles.¹²⁹ Within this series, four monographs are dedicated to specific biblical texts, three of which are related to the NT: two on Mark and one more generally on Pauline literature.¹³⁰ Multiple collections consist of republished essays written by scholars important to the growth of performance criticism.¹³¹ Some essays directly paved the way for its development, while others find new life in light of its birth. Three

¹²⁸ See, among others, Doan and Giles, *Prophets, Performance, and Power: Performance Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Kirsten Marie Hartvigsen, *Prepare the Way of the Lord: Towards a Cognitive Poetic Analysis of Audience Involvement with Characters and Events in the Markan World*, BZBW 180 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012); Jeanette Mathews, *Performing Habbakuk: Faithful Re-enactment In The Midst of Crisis* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012); idem *Prophets as Performers: Biblical Performance Criticism and Israel's Prophets* (Eugene: Cascade, 2020); Richard F. Ward and David J. Trobisch, *Bringing the Word to Life: Engaging the New Testament Through Performing It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Kayle B. DeWaal, *An Aural-Performance Analysis of Revelation 1 and 11*, Studies in Biblical Literature 163 (New York: Peter Lang, 2015); Peter Perry, *Insights from Performance Criticism, Reading the Bible in the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016); Michael R. Whinton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*; idem, *Configuring Nicodemus: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Complex Characterization*, LNTS 549 (London: T&T Clark, 2018); Jan Rügemeier, *Poetik der markinischen Christologie: Eine kognitiv-narratologische Exegese*. WUNT 458 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

¹²⁹ See, among others, Lee A. Johnson. "Paul's Letters as Artifacts: The Value of the Written Text among Non-Literate People," *BTB* 46.1 (2006): 25-34; idem, "Paul's Letters Reheard: A Performance-Critical Examination of the Preparation, Transportation, and Delivery of Paul's Correspondence," *CBQ* 79.1 (2017): 60-76; Terry Giles and William J. Doan, "The Song of Asaph: A Performance-Critical Analysis of 1 Chronicles 16:8-36," *CBQ* 70.1 (2008): 29-43; Glenn S. Holland, "Playing to the Groundlings: Shakespeare Performance Criticism and Performance Criticism of the Biblical Texts," *Neotestamentica* 41.2 (2007): 317-40; Peter Perry, "Relevance Theory in the Performance of Revelation 17-19," *Bible Translator* 66.3 (2015): 246-57; idem "Biblical Performance Criticism: Survey and Prospects," 81-95; Sherri Brown, "What is Truth? Jesus, Pilate, and the Staging of the Dialogue of the Cross in John 18:28-19:16a," *CBQ*, 77.1 (2015): 69-86; Jeanette Mathews, "Jonah as Performance: Performance Critical Guides for Reading a Prophetic Text," *The Bible & Critical Theory* 12.1 (2016): 23-39; David Seal, "A Performance Critical Analysis of the Lukan Parable of the Banquet (Luke 14:15-24)," *Review and Expositor* 115.2 (2018): 243-53; Shem Miller, "The Role of Performance and the Performance of Role: Cultural Memory in the Hodayot," *JBL* 137.2 (2018): 359-82; Rebekah Haigh, "Oral Aspects: A Performative Approach to 1QM" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 26.2 (2019): 189-219.

¹³⁰ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance*, BPC 3 (Eugene: Cascade, 2011); Thomas E. Boomershine, *The Messiah of Peace*, BPC 12 (Eugene: Cascade, 2015); Bernhard Oestereich, *Performance Criticism of the Pauline Letters*, BPC 14 (Eugene: Cascade, 2016); Terry Giles and William J. Doan, *The Story of Naomi—The Book of Ruth: From Gender to Politics*, BPC 13 (Eugene: Cascade, 2016).

¹³¹ James A. Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible*, BPC 2 (Eugene: Cascade, 2009); J.A. Loubser, *Oral and Manuscript Culture in the Bible: Studies on the Media Texture of the New Testament—Explorative Hermeneutics*, BPC 7 (Eugene: Cascade, 2013); Joanna Dewey, *The Oral Ethos of the Early Church: Speaking, Writing, and The Gospel of Mark*, BPC 8 (Eugene: Cascade, 2013); Richard A. Horsley, *Text and Tradition*; Marcel Jousse, *Memory, Memorization, and Memorizers: The Galilean Oral-Style Tradition and Its Traditionists*, Trans. Edgard Sienaert, BPC 15 (Eugene: Cascade, 2018).

volumes specifically address oral traditions, while several others contain chapters on the subject.¹³² Issues of orality, more generally, are discussed in virtually every volume. Some of these discussions are more closely tied to “oral traditions” while others seek to articulate the importance of understanding the oral/aural culture. Other studies focus on the art of translation, in particular how performance studies shape our understanding of the task of the translator, and how translation for certain groups (specifically oral cultures) ought to be considered.¹³³ Two more recent volumes address sound mapping, both in terms of its implications for translation and interpretation.¹³⁴ And still chapters abound on ancient writing practices, writing materials, and more broadly, on the ways in which writing interfaced with orality in antiquity, each can be found throughout.¹³⁵

Despite this variety, relatively little has been written on characterization in performance.¹³⁶ This is not to suggest that characterization is unimportant or insignificant to performance-oriented approaches.¹³⁷ Rhoads recognized the importance of characters and

¹³² Maxey, *From Orality to Orality*; Miller, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel*; Pieter J.J. Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, BPC 5 (Eugene: Cascade, 2012).

¹³³ Maxey, *From Orality to Orality*; James A. Maxey and Ernst R. Wendland eds., *Translating Scripture for Sound and Performance: New Directions in Biblical Studies*, BPC 6 (Eugene: Cascade, 2012).

¹³⁴ Margaret E. Lee, ed. *Sound Matters: New Testament Studies in Sound Mapping*, BPC 16 (Eugene: Cascade, 2018); see also Margaret E. Lee and Bernard Brandon Scott *Sound Mapping the New Testament 2nd ed.*, BPC 18 (Eugene: Cascade, 2022).

¹³⁵ See, among others, Wire, *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance*, 41-59; Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, 62-88, 193-211; Dewey, *The Oral Ethos of the Early Church*, 31-50; multiple chapters in Weissenrieder and Coote, *The Interface of Orality and Writing*.

¹³⁶ For instance, within the BPC series only a few chapters explicitly discuss characters and characterization in a constructive sense. Holly E. Hearon, “Characters in Text and Performance,” 53-79; Marti J. Steussy, “Life, Story, and the Bible” in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, 117-20.

¹³⁷ A few examples of studies addressing characters and characterization in relation to a specific text or a broader concern of performance include: Holly E. Hearon, “The Storytelling World of the First Century and the Gospels,” in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, 21-35, esp. 31-33; Richard W. Swanson, “Taking

characterization, but left it to his readers to deal with the question of “how does this all work” in performance?¹³⁸ While there have been some attempts to wrestle with characterization and performance, these works are still relatively sparse. As Christopher W. Skinner suggests, there is a need for a systematic treatment of characters in performance:

Since the performance of biblical narratives includes both an interpretation and a dramatic presentation of characters, a theory of character for interpretation and performance is needed... These observations, along with the growing interest in performance criticism, point to the need for a systematic treatment of how characters are to be understood and represented by performance critics.¹³⁹

More recently, Michael Whinton notes that works on characterization in New Testament studies have “tended to remain within the borders of traditional narrative and historical criticisms when it comes to character and characterization studies.” Because of this, “the effects of the oral-aural exchange between a lector/performer and his or her audience members remain largely uncharted waters in character and characterization studies.”¹⁴⁰ Despite the progress made in areas related to ancient performance, studies in characterization remain relatively untapped. It is to this lacuna that this dissertation seeks to attend. The following chapter will discuss in greater detail the works of the two most prominent voices in discussions of performance and New Testament characterization, Kelly R. Iverson and his student Whinton.

Place/Taking up Space” in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, esp. 134-41; Philip Ruge-Jones, “Those Sitting Around Jesus: Situating the Storyteller within Mark’s Gospel.” In *From Text to Performance*, 27-52; Iverson, “The Present Tense of Performance,” 131-57.

¹³⁸ Rhoads, “Part II,” 166-67.

¹³⁹ Skinner, “The Study of Character(s) in the Gospel of Mark,” 33.

¹⁴⁰ Whinton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 3-4.

1.5-Summary

Studies of oral traditions, orality, ancient literacy, and ancient rhetoric have each played a pivotal role in the formation of biblical performance criticism. Orality and oral tradition studies have complicated the relationship between texts and the traditions which preceded them, raising a host of questions concerning how the tradition informs both ancient texts and their performances. More specifically, they have called into question the primacy of chirographic methods in assessing ancient texts which emerge from a primarily oral culture and inaugurated the exploration of performance dynamics necessary to account for the complexity of ancient performance. Studies in ancient literacy lend further support in the necessity to consider performance dynamics in antiquity, as the majority of audiences in the ancient world could not access texts by means of traditional literary methods. Most likely, the majority of persons in antiquity would only have access to texts via oral/aural presentations of them. As suggested above, this does not necessarily mean that illiterate audiences were not bookish communities, in the sense that the physical book played no role in the process, but it does prompt a further evaluation of the various ways in which texts functioned and were used in these communities. More specific to this study, the question of how illiterate persons and groups experienced and drew meaning from these texts in a particular environment will be important. Studies in ancient rhetoric have helpfully shifted scholarly attention from purely formalized features of rhetoric, into more complex conversations concerning the effects of a work upon listening audiences. Ancient rhetoricians show awareness of performance dynamics, and discussed these to a great extent. By shifting focus on ancient rhetoric away from primarily forms and toward considering the performance of speeches and texts, this brings into play the entirety of a performance event,

the dynamics between a reader, hearer, physical location, gestures, etc. all of which contribute to meaning in the event itself. Studies in ancient rhetoric have illuminated the need to move beyond merely the words of a text, and to move towards a more holistic hermeneutic which attends to how ancient audiences would hear and engage with them. Orality, oral traditions, literacy, and ancient rhetoric invite further consideration of the performative dynamics at play when ancient audiences experience these texts in an oral/aural event.

While a shift toward performance dynamics, even if subtle, emerged independently within these various areas of study, Rhoads' synthetic work not only marks an originating point for biblical performance criticism proper, but also more widely it represents a pendulum shift in the field of biblical studies. Performance criticism has been used previously in other fields of study, but Rhoads introduction of performance criticism to biblical studies signals an intentional and significant campaign to attend to the first century audience's experience of these ancient texts. This shift in focus, towards ancient medias and the diverse ways in which meaning is produced in them, opens the door to several new lines of inquiry, many of which are still left to be fleshed out. Despite criticisms of this early installment, biblical performance critics have continued to refine and redefine the methods and means by which our understanding of ancient performances shed light on early Christian experiences of the New Testament. Key to this continued growth, is the recognition that biblical performance criticism is not a monolithic approach, but rather, due to its interdisciplinary influence, it is fluid and often contested even among its proponents. Biblical performance criticism is comprised of a variety of emphases which seek to illuminate ancient texts by means of (re-)envisioning ancient performance events. It is at this intersection that this dissertation is situated, in building on some of the earliest

assumptions, refining them, but also contributing to alternative ways of analyzing biblical texts in light of performance dynamics and ancient performance events.

This chapter has offered a representative overview of the whence of biblical performance criticism while providing a glimpse of its whither. A more detailed treatment of the potential of performance criticism within biblical studies will be taken up in the next chapter as I focus on a particular feature of ancient performance: characterization.

CHAPTER TWO
STRANGE BEDFELLOWS? CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION IN
PERFORMANCE

Introduction

Paraphrasing the sage, it would not be an exaggeration to say that to the writings on characters and characterization there is no end.¹ These terms are ubiquitous, found in virtually every category of the Dewey decimal system.² Due to this ubiquity, they are also fraught terms,

¹ Within New Testament studies alone there have been numerous monographs published on characters and characterization within the last decade. Monographs include: Kristen Marie Hartvigsen, *Prepare the Way of the Lord*; Alicia D. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus: A Rhetorical Analysis on the Fourth Gospel's use of Scripture in its Presentation of Jesus*, LNTS 458 (New York: T&T Clark, 2012); Frank Dicken, *Herod as a Composite Character in Luke-Acts*, WUNT 2/375 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); Brian C. Small, *The Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Heather M. Gorman, *Interweaving Innocence: A Rhetorical Analysis of Luke's Passion Narrative* (Luke 22:66-23:49) (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015); Michael R. Whinton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*; Jan Rügemeier, *Poetik der markinischen Christologie*; Susanna Asikainen, *Jesus and Other Men: Ideal Masculinities in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Michael R. Whinton, *Configuring Nicodemus*; Paul C. J. Riley, *The Lord of The Gospel of John: Narrative Theory, Textual Criticism, and the Semantics of Kyrios*, WUNT 2/478 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); Paul L Danove, *Theology of the Gospel of Mark: A Semantic, Narrative, and Rhetorical Study of the Characterization of God* (New York: T&T Clark, 2019); Lyons-Pardue, *Gospel Women*. Edited collections include: Christopher W. Skinner ed., *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*, LNTS 461 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013); Stephen A Hunt et al., eds., *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, WUNT 314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Matthew Ryan Hauge and Christopher W. Skinner, *Character Studies in the Gospel of Mark*; Frank Dicken and Julia A. Snyder, *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, LNTS 548 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016); see multiple chapters in Edwin K. Broadhead, ed., *Let the Reader Understand: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Struthers Malbon*, LNTS 583 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

² One way of demonstrating how broad these terms are is to look at their entries in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). The OED has 15 numbered entries for the noun "character," ranging from a physical mark to magical sign; from signs and symbols to letters and handwriting; from mathematical terms to figurative and literary sense; from natural (scientific/biological) to moral, or mental qualities; etc. The OED has three lines for characterization, but the second definition "a description or analysis of the character of someone or something; a portrayal in words" or the process of specifying the identifying qualities of something" leaves its potential extraordinarily broad. A simple search in the Loyola University Chicago Library database, brings up 97 results for the word characterization, none of which refer to characterization as a literary term (only one result was non-scientific).

resistant to rigid definitions.³ Adding qualifiers such as “biblical,” “ancient,” “modern,” or “Shakespearean,” gives the impression of clarity (even if temporarily), yet still these terms resist consensus. Debates over characters are often presented as dichotomies. For example: are characters merely literary devices or a reflection of human subjectivity? Are they literary constructs, restricted to the world of the narrative, or simulated persons, in one sense “fiction” though like real persons they extend beyond the confines of the story? Are they subject to literary analysis alone or also to psychological analysis? Are characters who “exist” in the “real-world” to be treated the same way as “entirely” fictional characters? Such dichotomies, while perhaps necessary for argumentation, fail to account for the complexities of character(ization) as an abstraction, as well as its particularity in usage. Thus, character(ization) has invited a host of general definitions for particular uses within academic works. Due to this diversity, to cover such a variety of definitions and uses, even within a single field of study, would be a Sisyphean task. At the same time, the very fact that studies on characters and characterization are so prevalent, and that these roadways continue to be (re)tread, suggests that these terms are important, even if complex and elusive.

³ Joe Falocco, recalling a seminar at the Shakespeare Association of America, notes how the term “character” was “banned from discussion because of the contradictory connotations it evokes” (“‘Shakespeare Has it Both Ways:’ Character and Form in Performance,” *New England Theatre Journal* 25 [2014]: 105). This anecdote concerning the state of “character” within Shakespearean scholarship is supported by the views found in Paul Yachnin and Jessica Slights, eds., *Shakespeare and Character: Theory, History, Performance, and Theatrical Persons* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Edward Pechter, “Character Criticism, The Cognitive Turn, and the Problem of Shakespeare Studies,” *Shakespeare Studies* 42 (2014): 196-228; Yu Jin Ko and M.W. Shurgot, eds., *Shakespeare’s Sense of Character: On the Page and From the Stage* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), et al. For some of the issues that character(ization) raises as an ancient concept see: “Introduction” in Koen de Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, eds., *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1-23; Bernd Seidensticker, “Character and Characterization in Greek Tragedy” in Martin Revermann and Peter Wilson, eds., *Performance, Iconography, Reception: Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 333-46.

This chapter will introduce performance-oriented conceptualizations of character(ization), as they are found within three areas of study: Biblical (specifically New Testament), Classical (Homeric), and Shakespearean.⁴ To be clear at the outset, performance-oriented approaches do not represent the majority position in any of the aforementioned fields. Recent publications within each discipline, however, suggest that there is a growing theoretical interest in rethinking character(ization) in terms of performance.⁵ Despite the particularities of each discipline, the specific texts examined, the questions on which they deliberate, and the contexts in which those questions are raised, each field shares a common intellectual history, as each has been traditionally dominated by historical, philological, and literary approaches. Thus, each discipline, with the introduction of performance-oriented approaches, faces similar difficulties in navigating the complex literary/performance divide. This turn represents an important step in challenging traditional literary conceptualizations of character(ization).

What follows may at first glance appear a peculiar and disparate mix of theoretical models, or as the title of the chapter suggests, strange bedfellows. This, unfortunately, is

⁴ I refer to these three here as distinct areas of study, however, this is an artificial border and not intended to discount the significant overlap between these three fields historically, methodologically, and theoretically. While each has its own history and conversations, they do not exist in a vacuum. More practically, each could fall under broader institutional umbrellas such as humanities, philosophy, history, or literary studies. Biblical studies are certainly indebted to, informed by, and in constant conversation with classics, and some would argue biblical studies is a subset of classics. Narrative criticism emerges from collaborative work of David Rhoads and Donald Michie, the latter a Shakespearean scholar. Classical and Shakespearean texts are often studied, performed, and located side-by-side in performance studies programs or theatre departments. I speak of these as distinct areas of study not to perpetuate nor construct a rigid divide, but rather to recognize the “specialization” of scholarship within each, to distinguish the particular contexts in which these questions are being raised, and also to denote the gap between the fields as it relates to the issue of character(ization) in performance. As will hopefully be demonstrated in this chapter, there is more in common and more overlap with these groups than this artificial distinction implies.

⁵ There are many reasons for this shift, but at least in part, this arises from reconfigurations of the historical contexts and cultural situations from which the texts were produced. Also, in part, it stems from critiques related to, and a recognition of, the limitations of literary approaches to assess characters in certain texts (specifically texts with a demonstrable performance history).

necessary due to the contested nature of character(ization). Nevertheless, there are moments at which these varied views of character(ization) in performance intersect, and I will argue that *analogously* these have the potential to inform our understanding of Mark's disciples in considerable ways. To be clear: I am by no means suggesting or assuming a direct correlation between these fields of study, to the specific methods, situations, or histories found within them. Rather I will argue that placing these studies in dialogue with one another provides us with analogous notions of performance, which have the potential to lead toward a more complex, theoretically nuanced, and more appreciative understanding of these issues and how they might inform biblical studies. In presenting a variety of theories from diverse fields, my intention is not to synthesize them, nor is it to construct a rigid or fixed framework, thus creating something like a reading (or performance) machine through which we might distill Markan characters. While elements of each work discussed below will inform our understanding of Mark's disciples to some extent, this should not be understood as an attempt to synthesize their views. Rather, the purpose is to present these diverse theories in order to provide us with a starting point for an investigation of Mark's disciples, as we explore (and reveal) the multi-faceted and elusive, yet distinctive nature of character(ization) in performance.

2.1- Characters and Characterization in Biblical Performance Criticism

As stated in the previous chapter, relatively little has been written that explicitly addresses a performance analysis of character(ization) within biblical studies. This is not to suggest that these features are unimportant to biblical performance critics, but rather that they have been subordinate or tangential to attempts to establish or demonstrate other performance

features.⁶ Due to the paucity of explicit treatments, the following necessarily gives extended attention to the recent work of Kelly Iverson and Michael Whinton, in order to set the stage for an investigation of the disciples in the Gospel of Mark.

2.1.1- Kelly Iverson

Few scholars have demonstrated both the interdisciplinary potential and the hermeneutical value of biblical performance criticism to the extent of Kelly Iverson.⁷ Building primarily upon the work of Shiner and Rhoads, Iverson integrates the study of ancient rhetoric with theories of communication, speech-acts, and theater studies.⁸ More specifically, Iverson employs a performance-oriented approach to wrestle with key narrative critical questions in the Gospels. While Iverson's work on performance will inform this study to various degrees, two

⁶ See discussion in "After Rhoads" in Chapter 1.

⁷ "'A Centurion's Confession': A Performance Critical Analysis of Mark 15:39," *JBL* 130.2 (2011): 329-50; "'Wherever the Gospel is Preached': The Paradox of Secrecy in the Gospel of Mark," in *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, 181-210; "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark: Performance and the use of Laughter in the Second Gospel," *NTS* 59, (2013): 2-19; "The Present Tense of Performance," 131-57; "Who do you say that I am? Characters and Characterization in Narrative and Performance," in *Let the Reader Understand: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Struthers Malbon*, LNTS 583, ed. Edwin K. Broadhead (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 51-65. See also the following works which were published after the writing of this chapter: *Performing Early Christian Literature: Audience Experience and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) and "A Postmodern Riddle? Gaps, Inferences, and Mark's Abrupt Ending," *JSNT* 44.3 (2022): 337-67.

⁸ Cf. Rhoads, "Part II," 164-184; "Performance as Research," 166-70. Others outside of performance criticism have pointed out the similarities between biblical texts and ancient drama and have explored the study of theatre as a way of the understanding biblical texts. For the Hebrew Bible see Shimon Levy, *The Bible as Theater* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2000). For the NT, and more specifically the Gospel of John see Jo Ann Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004).

essays in particular are worth engaging in greater detail as we consider the potential for characters and characterization.

First, in his 2011 article “A Centurion’s Confession,” Iverson offers a performance critical analysis of the centurion’s (in)famous words at the cross in Mark 15:39.⁹ He further problematizes this already difficult statement by appealing to various factors, both within the text and within the interpretive tradition. As Iverson correctly observes, “the verse hinges on elements that are not really obvious in the textual remains of Mark’s story.”¹⁰ This raises the question: what information is/can be used in order to determine a text’s meaning? At the heart of Iverson’s pursuit lies a clarification of the illocutionary force in performance. How does performance shed light on the intended force of a composition, and more specifically how might a performance of Mark clarify the intended force behind the difficult utterance of the centurion at the cross?

In a performance event, illocution is conveyed through various extralinguistic and paralinguistic means.¹¹ Features such as gestures, eye contact, facial expressions (extralinguistic) as well as how one chooses to deliver the lines by their pitch, tone, loudness or softness (paralinguistic) are inherent within all forms of communication, and are essential to determining illocution. Drawing on the work of David Olson, Iverson examines what happens to illocution when words are divorced from their dynamic state as spoken word and transcribed as text.¹²

⁹ See full citation above in fn. 7.

¹⁰ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 329.

¹¹ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 331-32.

¹² David Olson, *The World on Paper*.

Olson suggests that illocution in an oral context comes not through the lexical forms of a word, but rather is embedded within the act of communication.¹³ As such, writing captures the locutionary act (the act of speaking), but often leaves the illocutionary force underspecified.¹⁴

There is thus a breakdown in the shift in medium, from performance to text. What would be quite obvious in a performance can become muddled in a transcript. If the Gospel of Mark is a transcription of an oral performance (Botha), or a written document shaped by an oral milieu and composed in performance (Dewey) there will undoubtedly be situations when there is ambiguity as to the intended force of a sentence or phrase.¹⁵ When words are transcribed, separated from their non-verbal signifiers, they have the potential to become obscured. This ambiguity or gap must first be resolved by the performer in order to convey it to an audience in performance.

An additional problem is the theoretical assumption that a transcription is an accurate and whole representation of the communicative process. As Olson observes, one problem with this is that “naïve readers often fail” to question the intended meaning of a particular utterance.¹⁶ There are times where the illocutionary force becomes obscured, as it lacks the additional signifiers that indicate meaning. In order for a performer, storyteller, or reader to convey meaning to an audience in a performance event, interpretation must necessarily take place. The interpretation of such a statement must then be made based on other metalinguistic features within the text, such

¹³ Olson, *World on Paper*, 92-97.

¹⁴ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 332; Olson, *World on Paper*, 93.

¹⁵ Botha, “Mark’s Story as Oral Traditional Literature,” 318-26; Dewey, “Oral Methods of Structuring Mark,” 43-44.

¹⁶ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 332; Olson, *World on Paper*, 93.

as descriptive commentary, mental state terms, verbal descriptors, and other attempts by the author to articulate illocutionary force in text.

For Iverson, the question becomes, how does the storyteller (here Mark) employ metalinguistic commentary in the gospel? Iverson points out various places in Mark where the author uses mental state terms and descriptive commentary to illuminate the illocutionary force. In each of these places “the storyteller makes a deliberate effort to underscore the illocutionary force of the speaker’s words through the inclusion of verbal descriptors.”¹⁷ The passion narrative is replete with these instances of verbal description of those against Jesus, yet, with the characterization of the centurion, we have no such descriptions. Given Mark’s use of verbal description throughout, and his lack of description with the centurion, Iverson concludes that “it is unlikely that the centurion’s confession intended to mock the crucified Jesus.”¹⁸

Following this metalinguistic analysis, Iverson sets this scene within a context of performance and plot. Historical and literary approaches to this passage have highlighted the incongruity with the social historical data.¹⁹ In other words, no first-century Jews hearing this story would think the Roman centurion capable of making such a confession of faith. Iverson suggests that the failures of historical and literary attempts to solve this problem are due to the “psychological distance” of those approaches, and he explores how this distance obscures the

¹⁷ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 333-34.

¹⁸ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 336.

¹⁹ For a few examples see: Earl S. Johnson, “Is Mark 15.39 the Key to Mark’s Christology?” *JSNT* 31 (1987): 3-22; Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 393; Robert Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 207.

performative and emotive aspects of the narrative.²⁰ Pushing back on the historical data, Iverson draws on Bernard Beckerman's work concerning audience, and demonstrates how in theater an audience's background information works in confluence with the information supplied by the emerging narrative.²¹ Sometimes an audience's prior knowledge is affirmed within the performance, other times it is subverted. Thus, the interpretation of such a verse in the performative contexts owes as much to the performance itself rather than more simply to the audience's previous knowledge. The emerging narrative can either support the audience's preconceptions, or it might subvert it, but it is not entirely dependent upon it.

To illustrate this further, Iverson highlights Mark's asymmetrical portrayal of characters. In Mark, characters can act within their prescribed roles, but they can also act outside of them. To say that a character is limited to the group to which they belong betrays one of the key aspects of Markan characterization—as Elizabeth Struthers Malbon has argued—that characters in Mark betray simplistic characterization.²² Iverson warns that “[w]hat must not be lost in this analysis is the communication medium through which the story was delivered since, as Elizabeth C. Fine observes, a performance is an aesthetic experience that is “something more than words.”²³ This something “more than words” is the multi-sensory experience of the audience with the performer “characterized by immediacy and directness.”²⁴

²⁰ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 337.

²¹ Cf. Bernard Beckerman, *Theatrical Presentation: Performer, Audience, and Act*. eds., Gloria Brim Beckerman and William Vincent Coco (New York: Routledge, 1990).

²² Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox, 2000), 195-96.

²³ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession,” 341.

²⁴ Iverson, “A Centurion’s Confession” 341.

To clarify and/or explain the illocutionary force behind 15:39, Iverson considers whether the verse could function as an audience applause line. He argues that the emotional impact of the performance has been building throughout the passion narrative, and now settles on this scene. As Mark depicts character after character mocking Jesus, the audience has also experienced these taunts and is moved to intense anger. The audience shares in the emotional sufferings of Jesus. At the moment when their anger is at its peak, the centurion's statement functions as a reprieve to the emotion that has been building throughout. This cathartic experience manifests itself in applause, and the audience recognizes that it is not with derision or sarcasm that the centurion has made his statement, but in confession of who Jesus is. This statement reverses the anger which had been building and replaces it with another emotion, applause at the centurion's recognition of who Jesus is, something that the audience has known from the beginning.

Regardless of whether one agrees with Iverson's conclusion, that the centurion's confession functions as an applause line, his argument serves as a prime example of the value and potential for performance criticism to both complicate and enrich our understanding of characters and characterization. Mark 15:39 is a one-line statement, yet as text alone it is fraught with interpretive difficulty. Historical critical and narrative methods may indeed posit potential solutions, but each is theoretically limited in determining the illocutionary force of this text. What a performance-oriented approach attempts to do is to reconsider the audience's orientation (whether ancient or modern) to a narrative in relation to media: to reimagine a narrative within a performative event, to consider the rhetorical impact of that narrative on a listening (and seeing) audience as opposed to a reading one, and to ask different (but essential) questions concerning "how" narratives convey meaning.

At the heart of Iverson's investigation lies the illocutionary force of the performance. There are several additional elements of performance which Iverson anticipates here and develops more fully in later works. These include the temporal experience of performance and its linear progression;²⁵ the audience's involvement in the narrative as characters;²⁶ the performer as interpreter; and characterization as an embodied, three-dimensional experience,²⁷ among others. In Iverson's hypothetical performance, Mark lends itself to a dramatic enactment of 15:39, which leads the audience to an intense emotional upheaval, one that intends to evoke an applause by the audience. The illocutionary force (which is not explicitly located in the text, and which must be "interpreted" by the performer) is found in the emotional dimensions of performance, and it is here at the site of performance where we can posit potential explanations as to how a composition and its performer communicate to an audience. Thus, the illocution is located not in "what" is said, but "how" it is said. It is located at the site of performance, outside of text. More specifically, in terms of the characterization of the centurion, "how" the line is performed might support or subvert audience expectations, but his characterization is not dependent upon (or perhaps more strongly determined by) the audience's expectation. This insight will be more fully developed below, but it is significant to the model of performance criticism I am using in this study, as it demonstrates how a performance-oriented approach differs from other approaches.

²⁵ Iverson, "The Present Tense of Performance," 131-57.

²⁶ Iverson, "Characters and Characterization," 62-65.

²⁷ Iverson, "Incongruity, Humor, and Mark," 15; idem, "Characters and Characterization," 59-62.

Another example from Iverson's *oeuvre* important to this present study is his 2018 essay in the Elizabeth Struthers Malbon *Festschrift, Let the Reader Understand*.²⁸ Here, Iverson explores the similarities and differences between narrative and performance criticisms, particularly their approaches to characterization. Beginning with narrative criticism, Iverson identifies two primary ways for determining characterization: showing and telling.²⁹ Showing refers to the indirect presentation of characters within the narrative. Examples of showing include, among others, the words and deeds of characters, their physical descriptions, the settings in which they are located, character evaluations from other characters (in explicit terms), "inside views" or the internal thoughts and feelings of a character; and ambiguity (specifically, in their indirect presentation). In addition to showing, narratives also inform us about characters by telling. Telling refers to the direct presentation of characters in narratives, as seen from the view of the narrator. Telling is the narrator's explicit assessment of a character, comments which shape the reader's interpretation of characters and their various interactions with others in the story. In order for telling to apply, the narrator must be considered both authoritative and trustworthy.³⁰

Showing and telling both imply a particular distance from the narrative. While characterization is constructed based on the reader's identification of instances of showing and telling, this assessment occurs at a distance and from an outside view of the story itself. As alluded to above, an important distinction between narrative and performance constructions of

²⁸ See full citation above fn. 7.

²⁹ Iverson, "Characters and Characterization," 52-57.

³⁰ The assumption that the narrator is trustworthy has more recently been problematized in Mark by Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 243-44.

characterization is the intimacy which a performer and their audience have with the story world. Building upon two particular foundations of performance, the oral/aural context in which first century audiences most likely would have experienced the text, and the communal setting, Iverson suggests that these two foundations necessarily reorient the performer and audience in relation to the text. In particular, this relationship offers two new dimensions to the construction of character: embodiment and the audience as a character.

Assessing characters as readers is a two-dimensional experience. From the clues provided within the narrative, the reader is forced to reconstruct characters mentally from the literary creation. While characters in a text may share similarities with people, they are never actually real. Because they are an assimilation of character traits, characters in a narrative-oriented approach are ultimately the mental construction of readers. In performance, however, this dynamic shifts, even if slightly. Characters in performance are not merely constructed from our neurological pathways, but rather, they become multi-dimensional representations, embodied beings, from which the audience gains a new (even if already interpreted) perspective. This shift in form allows characters to be “brought to life in the storytelling event.”³¹ The notion of embodiment highlights two key differences between the approaches: first, it represents an already interpreted (even if partial) representation of a character. The performer is not a mouthpiece, merely transferring information from text to voice unadulterated, but rather the performer becomes an intermediary for the audience. As interpreter, the performer provides the audience with a different orientation, a new hermeneutical position relative to the story.³² While

³¹ Iverson, “Characters and Characterization,” 60.

³² Iverson, “Characters and Characterization,” 60.

the reader must construct character at a distance, fashioning depicted traits into a mental representation, thus interpreting the data, the performer carries out the first part of this task, at least partially, in present time. This may seem like a minor distinction at first, and indeed depending on how one conceives of the reading process it may be easy to dismiss or downplay its significance, but the difference is not trivial. As Iverson notes:

[T]he performer acts as an interpreter of the narrative before the audience (potentially) has the opportunity to engage the story...At the very least, characterization is not only what ‘the implied author provides the implied reader,’ but what the performer interprets from the implied author and conveys to the audience.³³

While Iverson does not specifically address the multiple acts of interpretation an audience must make even in performance, it stands to reason that in performance, embodiment of characters and their characterization may bring clarity to ambiguous scenarios in texts. Thus, the audience’s interpretation does not rely on a text, but rather on the performer’s choices.

A second key difference that embodiment illuminates, related to the first, is agency. Rather than existing only as a mental construction, a *similitudine* yet non-person, a performer “functions as an agent through which characters are brought to life.”³⁴ No longer a construct solely of the imagination, the character is physically present with an audience. The performer, as a living, moving, and breathing representation of the character, not only provides a physical representation, but they might also supplement characterization with non-verbal cues, both extralinguistic and paralinguistic,³⁵ informing the audience how they are to interpret and relate to

³³ Iverson, “Characters and Characterization,” 60.

³⁴ Iverson, “Characters and Characterization,” 60.

³⁵ Extralinguistic and paralinguistic features of communication are vital to the meaning making process. Extralinguistic features refer to the parts of the communicative process that are not verbal but determine meaning in face-to-face communication. Examples of extralinguistic features include gestures, eye contact, facial expressions,

a given character. Because of this present-ness, both the physical and temporal dimensions, ambiguous features of the text are necessarily less ambiguous. Instances of humor, irony, tension, doubt, fear, confidence, etc. are heightened in performance and become less ambiguous, as each may be portrayed in the present through extralinguistic and paralinguistic features. They must be interpreted by the performer first in order to portray the character, yet, in performance they are clearer to an audience.³⁶ Iverson once again cites the example of Mark 15:39 as an occasion where such ambiguity exists at the level of the text, but its force must necessarily be portrayed in performance. It is impossible to uphold this ambiguity in a single performance of the scene.³⁷ In addition to this clarity, the physical presence of a character makes it more difficult to remain distant from their experiences, facilitating a new and stronger sense of empathy or sympathy, a greater emotional depth of meaning-making.³⁸

In a narrative-oriented approach, the audience is always “distant” from the story world. They are outsiders, viewing the story at a distance, and making judgements from afar. As readers we might envision ourselves within a particular scene, we might try to understand motivations or

etc. Paralinguistic features refer to the parts of verbal communication which are unrelated to the denotative and connotative meanings of words yet help to determine a speakers’ intention for a particular word. Examples of paralinguistic features include pitch, tone, loudness or softness, etc.

³⁶ See for example Quintilian’s discussion about the necessity for the lector to read and re-read a text in order to draw out these features (*Inst.* 10.1.19-20).

³⁷ It is important to note here that this assumes a singular performance. Multiple (or the much more contentious, “repeat”) performances might very well bring about different results. The idea of multiple (or repeat) performances is something that ought to be considered further by biblical performance critics. This, however, must be approached from a more general and abstract angle, as a particular work must also restrict their analysis to a single performance event, which they have re-constructed. For a promising step forward in considering the assumptions and the “deeper-faith” assumed by reconstructions/reperformances, see the collection of essays in Richard Hunter and Anna Uhlig, eds., *Imagining Reperformance in Ancient Culture: Studies in the Traditions of Drama and Lyric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

³⁸ For a helpful discussion and a visual representation of various emotional responses to narrative see: Michael R. Whinton, “Feeling the Silence: A Moment-by-Moment Account of Emotions at the End of Mark (16:1-8).” *CBQ* 78.2 (2016): 272-89 (see esp. the chart on p.283).

place ourselves within parts of the narrative, yet we are not actually there. The characters do not speak to us directly, they cannot lock eyes with the audience, smile or wink. In theater, the language of the fourth wall is used as a way of expressing this distance on stage. On stage, the cast and characters might represent a different world, a world which the audience is merely viewing as spectator. However, in a performance event, as opposed to a reading one, it is also possible for the performer to break the fourth wall and invite an audience in.³⁹ While the decision whether or not to break the fourth wall is ultimately up to the performer, the potential leads toward a more complex notion of characterization in performance.

Within this incomplete review of Iverson's work on performance we find several important features of a performance analysis of character(ization). First, the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and the way in which studies of rhetoric, communication, and theater provide layers and/or depth to our understanding of an ancient oral event. Second, considering the oral/aural context of the first-century hearers, a performance event as opposed to a text, changes how we understand particular features of the story. Illocutionary force is often left underspecified in text, yet in performance it may be communicated through extralinguistic and paralinguistic features. Ambiguity in texts, whether intentional or not, is often clarified in performance. The audience itself may be brought into the story as a character, thus, performance forces audiences to view the narrative from a different hermeneutical position, relative to both the story and the characters. While there is certainly terminological overlap between narrative

³⁹ Iverson, "Characters and Characterization," 63-64; See also Philip Ruge- Jones: "This is perhaps the biggest gift that performance offers. The audience enters the story with their whole being. Not only do their minds get addressed, their bodies and spirits are engaged" ("The Word Heard: How Hearing a Text Differs from Reading One" in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, 112).

and performance criticisms (something seen consistently throughout this chapter), several assumptions of each stand diametrically opposed to each other in the way that meaning is made. Illocutionary force, embodiment, audience perspective and location, are all features unique to performance that bring about a more complex understanding of the communication and meaning-making process. Thus, we must reconsider ways in which certain features, such as characterization, function, as the literary approach fails to account for the experiences of ancient audiences who heard the text rather than read it. This brief survey of Iverson's work demonstrates both the need and the potential for performance to draw upon the insights from other disciplines in order to provide answers for our questions about these texts. This insight is advanced in the works of Iverson's student, Michael Whintont, though with a different interdisciplinary focus.

2.1.2- Michael Whintont

In his published dissertation, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, Whintont explores a more complex theory of characterization in performance, specifically through the confluence of ancient rhetorical theory and modern cognitive research.⁴⁰ Recognizing a lacuna in characterization studies, he suggests that attention to ancient rhetoric may elucidate one of the key difficulties in assessing Mark's characterization of Jesus.⁴¹ Literary methods have a tendency

⁴⁰ See full citation in Introduction, fn. 33. The turn to cognitive studies as a way of understanding characters can be seen in the other two disciplines discussed in this chapter as well. For a recent example from classics see Rutger J. Allan, "Narrative Immersion: Some Linguistic and Narratological Aspects," in *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece: Under the Spells of Stories*, eds. Jonas Grethlein, Luuk Huitink, and Aldo Tagliabue (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 15-35. For Shakespearean studies see, Nicholas R. Helms, *Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare's Characters*, Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance (Switzerland; Palgrave Macmillian, 2019).

⁴¹ Whintont, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 40.

to emphasize the “direct” meanings in a text, rather than potential “hidden” meanings.⁴² By restricting characterization to “direct” statements, Whitenon suggests that narrative-critical approaches overlook a key persuasive element featured within ancient rhetorical handbooks—intentional omission. Ancient rhetors frequently contemplated and discussed the value of intentionally omitting information in order to draw audiences in, to invite them to make conclusions on their own, so that the audience becomes their “witnesses.”⁴³ As such, an approach that focuses on what is present within the text, yet does not attend to the inherent gaps in narratives, may fail to attend to the effect(s) a narrative and its characters have upon an audience, in particular an audience that is listening to the narrative.⁴⁴ Recognizing these gaps and their potential rhetorical effect opens the door for further consideration of the complex process(es) of meaning making, more specifically here how hearer’s constructions of character may be (or perhaps more strongly, necessarily are) framed by the scripts and schemas available to them.

⁴² Whitenon, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 1-2.

⁴³ Whitenon, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 1. For more on the rhetorical idea of “witness” (Demetrius, *Eloc.* 222) and how omission works as a rhetorical device see Kathy R. Maxwell, *Hearing Between the Lines: The Audience as Fellow-Worker in Luke-Acts and its Literary Milieu*, LNTS 425 (London: T&T Clark, 2010). An extension of this idea of “witness,” but from the perspective of the performer, may be seen in Freddie Rokem’s discussion of the relationship between acting, spectating, and witnessing as demonstrated in Brecht and Stanislowski (*Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010], 155-61).

⁴⁴ The idea of narrative-gaps and how readers/audiences fill these gaps is of course not unique to Whitenon nor to a performance-critical approach. (See for example Wolfgang Iser’s discussion on the function of gaps and how readers fill them: “Indeterminacy and the Reader’s Response in Prose Fiction,” *Aspects of Narrative*, English Institute Essays, ed. by J. Hillis Miller [New York, 1971]: 1-45; for a narrative-critical reading in biblical studies that attends to gaps in the narrative see: Michal Beth Dinkler, *Silent Statements: Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke*, BZBW 191 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013]). More specifically, Whitenon’s appeal to scripts and schemas becomes more convincing when seen as a dynamic within the performance event—not only are the mechanics of gap-filling necessary considerations in terms of a listening audience’s construction of character(ization), but perhaps more importantly considerations of the linearity of performance, the subconscious’ role in the gap-filling process, and the speed at which listeners must do all of this are all essential points for consideration. In performance, linearity is determinative for characters in a way not always practiced or conceptualized in reading, and more importantly the time allotted to listeners for this gap-filling is far more condensed than the time afforded readers. (On the variegated time dynamics of reading and the importance of distinguishing time-sequences from reading and “re-reading” see among others, Wolfgang Iser, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” *New Literary History* 3.2 [1972]: 279-99).

Whitenton begins his work with a lengthy treatment of performance in antiquity, building upon many of the same premises as Iverson. After reiterating the necessity of performance in antiquity, the skills one needed to read the text aloud, and the differences between hearing and reading a text,⁴⁵ he turns toward his unique contribution: inference generation as depicted within ancient rhetoric and modern cognitive studies. Within ancient rhetorical handbooks, Whitenton identifies several ways in which ancient rhetors sought to engage with audiences, to win their favor and make them their witnesses: intentional omissions, emphasis, irony, appropriation and reversal, and allusion.⁴⁶ In addition to these inference generating devices, Whitenton discusses the relationship of testimonia to them. While testimony is not directly linked to the aforementioned features within the rhetorical handbooks, it functions as particular type of emphasis, a way of reinforcing key ideas. Mark's continued use of testimony throughout the narrative plays a key role not only in conveying Jesus's identity and character, but also serves a rhetorical function in that it invites audiences themselves to become witnesses.

After discussing these rhetorical features, Whitenton seeks to situate them within narratives, and demonstrate the importance of inference for understanding character(ization) in

⁴⁵ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 43-65.

⁴⁶ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 65-86. The importance of inference for characterization can be seen within early Shakespearean character studies, specifically in the work of Maurice Morgann. Credited as "the pioneer" of character criticism, in his 1777 *Essay on Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*, Morgann writes "I affirm...that these characters in Shakespeare, which are seen only in part, are yet capable of being unfolded and understood in the whole; every part being in fact relative, and *inferring* all the rest...[Shakespeare] boldly makes a character act and speak from those parts of the composition which are *inferred* only, and not distinctly shewn...and when occasion requires, [we must] account for their conduction from the *whole* of character." He argues that this inference exemplifies "the *highest* point of Poetic composition" (61-62, Italics are mine). Later, Harold Bloom will pick up Morgann's idea of inference in his own influential work on Shakespeare's characters, where he suggests that "Shakespeare invents...a mode of representation that depends...upon the audience to surmise just how... [certain characters] got to be the way they are." (*Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* [New York: Riverhead Books, 1998], 737-38).

performance.⁴⁷ Turning to modern cognitive science, he suggests that recent studies on inference generation confirm ancient rhetors' assessment, especially within narratives. Narratives in any medium are inherently incomplete, fragmented, and subject to inference. Because there are gaps, the brain must attempt to make sense of the fragmentation. This process often occurs "effortlessly, automatically, and subconsciously."⁴⁸ Gaps are filled by the use of schemas and scripts available to the audience at the time of the event.

The role of schemas and scripts in the meaning making process is especially important in performance due to the temporal restrictions of the event. For example, hearing a text is far more demanding upon an audience than reading one. Due to the temporal restrictions of performance, an audience is forced to make split-second decisions when it comes to assessing characters. While an audience member may stop listening briefly in order to reflect upon a singular moment within a narrative, they risk losing track of the narrative flow. In order to keep up with the continuing narrative, quick assessments must be made. The preexisting schemas and scripts available to audiences will dictate much of this gap filling, often occurring subconsciously. Schemas and scripts may stem from cultural memory or previous literary examples, but also and perhaps more importantly, from audiences' real-life experiences. As such, audiences make sense of characters in a similar way to how they assess people in their everyday lives. The present-ness of performance does not allow for extended reflection in the same way as reading, where one may navigate back and forth through the words and pages. In order to keep up with the performance, an audience necessarily makes a series of quick decisions in order to fill-in gaps.

⁴⁷ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 89-95.

⁴⁸ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 88.

These decisions directly affect the audience's construction of character, in particular which schema or script is employed at a given time.

After discussing the importance of a rhetoric of inference, Whittenton examines the powerful ways in which narratives persuade audiences.⁴⁹ While this phenomenon is by no means novel, it is an important step for linking rhetorical studies with character(ization).⁵⁰ Beyond the empirical assertion, that stories have the power to change audiences, cognitive studies help to explain why this is the case. When audiences experience narratives they automatically create a visual representation of the story in their mind's eye (mimetic theory).⁵¹ This internal mental simulation "confronts audience members with the emotional experiences of characters in the story," evoking a variety of responses, including "admiration, sympathy/antipathy, pity, hope, and fear."⁵² Cognitive scientists have linked these emotive responses to mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are the part of the brain that fires when a person sees someone doing something to which they can relate. In short, as an audience experiences a narrative, they create a visual image of what they are hearing or seeing. This mental simulation activates the mirror neurons, resulting in emotive and real responses to the characters in the story. As such, it may be said that audiences "process stories just as they do events in the 'real world.'"⁵³ Cognitive studies suggests then that

⁴⁹ Narratives "influence the real world beliefs of audience members in powerful ways" (*Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 89).

⁵⁰ Specifically discussed are Plato, *Rep.* 3.391-392; Plutarch, *Tim.* 235.1-3.

⁵¹ Whittenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 92. Mimetic theory described here is from Keith Oatley, "A Taxonomy of the Emotions of Literary Response and a Theory of Identification in Fictional Narrative," *Poetics* 23 (1994): 53-74.

⁵² Whittenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 92.

⁵³ Whittenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 93. This is not to suggest that audiences experience these emotions to the same degree, only to suggest that during the processing of narratives mirror neurons are activated which can be equated to "real world" experiences (see 92-93).

the brain does not differentiate between fiction and non-fiction when it comes to constructing characters. While this conclusion is not restricted to any particular medium, it has significant implications for the ways in which performance criticism may offer an alternative to traditional narrative approaches.

Having set the stage for a complex understanding of characters in performance, Whitenton then turns his attention to Jesus's characterization in Mark. Certain narrative-critical treatments of Mark's Jesus are limited by their attention to only the "explicit" statements about Jesus. Because of this, the characterization of Mark's Jesus appears to be either messianic, Davidic, or neither divine nor royal. Such readings, however, as Whitenton argues, fail to account for the inferred and allusive features of character, and as such, they provide an incomplete picture of the rhetorical force of Jesus's characterization. Throughout the narrative, Mark depicts Jesus with traits commonly attributed to both God and David. This matrix of assimilation, or combination of scripts, which Whitenton refers to as *kyriotic sonship*, are the behaviors and qualities which form the "fabric of his [Jesus's] character."⁵⁴ From the perspective of inference generation and narrative persuasion, a particular first-century performance of Mark's gospel could prime or activate both the messianic (divine) and royal (Davidic) schemas, each of which could be available to a first-century Jewish audience. While Mark's Jesus does not fit neatly into either frame, at least not explicitly, scripts and schemas for each are primed at different points throughout the narrative.⁵⁵ When approached through a rhetoric of inference, the paucity of "definitive" statements concerning Mark's Jesus need not disqualify him from being

⁵⁴ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 3.

⁵⁵ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 39-40.

understood within each of these existing schemas. These omissions might be understood as intentional omissions, a strategic and rhetorical device employed by the author and speaker to evoke audience inference. An informed lector and audience, familiar with messianic and royal scripts, would see in Mark's Jesus a complex character, one who is functionally equivalent to (though not necessarily the same as) both Israel's God and their Davidic king. This complex characterization aids in answering the question Mark poses in 12:37, "David himself calls him Lord, how then can he be David's son?"

Whitenton argues that this *synkristic* assimilation (an open-ended comparison) and complex characterization of Jesus play a significant rhetorical function in Mark. The rhetorical effect is that in light of this assimilation the audience recognizes but is forced to adjust their views of both messiahship and royalty, attributing to Jesus a unique characterization, one "more Davidic and more divine" than traditional literary configurations.⁵⁶ As the audience has received "pieces" of Jesus's character from various testimonies throughout the narrative, now they have a testimony of their own, one that represents a more complex and fuller description of who Jesus is. Mark's assimilation of Jesus to both God and David assumes an audience's familiarity with these schemas, but more importantly, by means of inference, it assimilates existing schemas toward creating a new one that fits Jesus's unique character.

In a second monograph, *Configuring Nicodemus*, Whitenton builds upon this framework by expanding the potential schemas available to ancient audiences.⁵⁷ Utilizing Theophrastus's *On Characters*, Whitenton identifies two descriptions of characters that could possibly serve as

⁵⁶ Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 319.

⁵⁷ See full citation above Chapter 1, fn.128.

literary and cultural frames for the audience in their configuration of Nicodemus: the fool and the dissembler.⁵⁸ After exploring the implications of each, Whintenton concludes that Nicodemus would initially be identified as a fool at the beginning of John 3, however, by the end of his first appearance an audience would identify him as a suspicious dissembler. In his second appearance in John, Nicodemus's character has shifted, to where he faithfully dissembles on behalf of Jesus. By his final appearance, Nicodemus has become an open follower of Jesus, one who bears the financial and social cost of contributing to Jesus's burial. Each stage in Nicodemus's development serves a rhetorical function, as it meets the audience at different stages of their own involvement with the community. The story invites the audience to follow Nicodemus's actions, whether to join the community (John 3), dissemble on behalf of Jesus (John 7), or contribute at whatever cost to the aims of the community (John 19). The development of Nicodemus over the course of the narrative not only contradicts a "flat" understanding of ancient characters, an idea long held from Aristotle's notion of character, but also it reveals the dynamic nature of characterization.⁵⁹

As part of this dynamic view of characterization, Whintenton underscores the ways in which characters are often humanized by audiences. While recognizing that characters are still theoretically "paper people,"⁶⁰ an important distinction for literary approaches, as alluded to

⁵⁸ Whintenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 55-78.

⁵⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 1450a-b. For more on how Aristotle's notion of character being more complex than has generally been understood, and not always representative of ancient views of characters, see among others, Christopher Gill, "The Question of Character-Development: Plutarch and Tacitus," *CQ* 33.2 (1983): 469-87; Whintenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 40-44.

⁶⁰ For more on "paper people" see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). According to Bal, literary characters are "paper people without flesh and blood...The character is not a human being, but it resembles one. It has no real psyche, personality, ideology, or

above, both neuro-science as well as empirical evidence suggests that the way in which the human brain processes these two-dimensional characters is not so clearly distinct.⁶¹ The recognition of characters as fictional entities belonging to the world of story is a helpful heuristic; however, it fails to account for the ways an actual audience tends to humanize characters. While characters in a given story world may be actual or fictional, the brain does not process characters in terms of fiction or nonfiction.⁶² Lest one think that such humanizing tendencies are stable or a given, it is important to note that there is a spectrum of viewpoints from which one might conceive of characters.⁶³ The more important suggestion is that characters, particularly in performance, are not simply agents or plot functionaries, but rather they are complex figures, moving from paper-people to realistic figures in the minds of audiences.⁶⁴ This humanizing element plays an essential role in the rhetorical function of characterization. As characters are imagined and created in the mind, audiences seek to make sense of these characters in light of pre-existing schema and their experiences with real people. While in literary theory characters may be reduced to paper-people and plot functionaries, and for good reason, in the minds of actual audiences, however, they do not remain in this state. It is true that characters are inextricable from their narratives, yet the fragmented and incomplete

competence to act, but it does possess characteristics that make readers assume it does and makes psychological and ideological descriptions possible" (113).

⁶¹ Whitenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 23-39; esp. 37-39.

⁶² Whitenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 21.

⁶³ Whitenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 23-27.

⁶⁴ Whitenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 39, 42.

nature of narratives leaves room for gap-filling which may extend outside of the strict confines of the narrative.

In Whintenton's work we see a major step forward in utilizing interdisciplinary insights and applying them to our understanding of ancient performances, specifically in terms of understanding the role of characters and narratives in ancient rhetoric. By fusing together insights from ancient rhetoric and modern cognitive sciences, Whintenton has fanned into flame new efforts for understanding ancient performances, approaches which extend beyond and help to distinguish a performance-oriented approach from the more traditional literary one. The shift that Whintenton envisions is not simply one of degree, but an entirely new way of thinking about the role of characters and their constructed characterization by listening audiences.⁶⁵

2.1.3- Summary

Both Iverson and Whintenton utilize a performance-oriented approach to the New Testament as a means of attending to the social realities of first-century audiences and their experiences of texts, as well as a way of addressing gaps within narrative-critical approaches. Situating the gospels in the oral/aural context of the first-century, and envisioning a historically plausible yet ultimately hypothetical and (re)constructed scenario, provides a setting for assessing performance. Both recognize that the shift from reading a text to viewing and listening to a performance plays an essential role in audiences' construction of characters. Both are able to

⁶⁵ Whintenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 8.

identify some key differences between narrative and performance analyses of characters, and do so with exceptional nuance, acknowledging the complex and ephemeral nature of performance.

Iverson identifies several features of performance that aid in our understanding of how characters are constructed differently in performance than in narratives. Beginning with ancient rhetoric and moving toward more modern concepts of communication theory, Iverson notes how written texts often fail to account for the spoken word. Illocutionary force, as defined by Austin and expanded by Olsen, is often underspecified in written texts, and extralinguistic and paralinguistic features of communication (often located outside of texts) are at times necessary in order to determine such force. From theater studies, Iverson identifies parallel aspects of the performance that would be present within first-century performances, and notes how these features shift the dynamics of audience experience. For instance, the role of the performer as agent and mediator, an audience's location relative to the story, the audience's background knowledge as enabling (but not necessarily determining) feature, the "present-ness" of performance, and how the performance event is an aesthetic experience where meaning consists of "something more than words." More specifically as it relates to characters, their embodiment in performance, a shift from paper-people and mental constructions of fictive characters to representation by actual persons, places the audience in a different hermeneutical position relative to characters and their role in a story, and as such, this evokes different responses from audiences.

Character configuration in performance gains further theoretical credence in the work of Whitenton. Whitenton incorporates cognitive science as a way of reinforcing ancient orators' notions of the persuasive nature of stories, the rhetorical force of intentional omission, and the

value of inference generating devices in rhetoric. Perhaps more importantly, this construction of character(ization) complicates the process of character configuration as articulated within traditional narrative-criticism. The idea of a character existing only as a paper-person, while reasoned and heuristically helpful, fails to account for the ways in which real persons engage with and ultimately construct characters. Audiences view characters in light of the scripts and schemas available to them. A listening audience must make judgments more quickly than a reader, due to the continual nature and temporal restrictions of performance, and these decisions occur in a linear progression. These subconscious and effortless decisions made by audiences necessarily affect their configuration of character as they are the filter through which understanding occurs. Audiences construct these characters by engaging them as real persons, and these mental constructs they create are informed by the emotive responses to them as real persons.

2.2- Characters and Characterization in Performance in Homeric Studies and Classical Scholarship

2.2.1-Ancient Performances and Characterization

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, questions of ancient performance and its dynamics have occupied scholars within the field of classics for some time. Not only has performance been included among a variety of methods, but Rosenbloom states that “performance as a category of analysis” has come to a dominant position within contemporary

scholarship.⁶⁶ While Rosenbloom's statement is specifically in reference to ancient dramas,⁶⁷ concerns with performance in Homeric studies are by no means negligible. Investigations into ancient performances of Homer have led to a variety of reconstructive approaches including examinations of the historical contexts of ancient performances, reimagining the practices and locations of singers and rhapsodes, etc.⁶⁸ Questions of performance are even more prominent in scholarship on the Greek playwrights, the spaces,⁶⁹ actors,⁷⁰ audiences,⁷¹ the materials of the ancient theatre,⁷² performance histories,⁷³ and re-performances of the plays in both the original

⁶⁶ David Rosenbloom and John Davidson, eds., *Greek Drama IV: Texts, Contexts, Performance* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2012) 1.

⁶⁷ While there is certainly a "genre" shift from epic poets to the dramatists, distinctions in conceptualizing epic and drama in performance are more complex. For example, Mark Griffith, while discussing the history and development of performance traditions, suggests: "the differences between 'epic' and 'drama' could be less sharp than they came to be in later generations of western culture and criticism" ("Telling the Tale": A Performing Tradition from Homer to Pantomime," In Marianne McDonald and Michael Walton, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 19).

⁶⁸ For example, see Christos C. Tsagalis, "Performance Contexts for Rhapsodic Recitals in the Archaic and Classical Periods," in Johnathan L. Ready and Christos C. Tsagalis, eds., *Homer in Performance: Rhapsodes, Narrators, and Characters* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 29-75.

⁶⁹ Oliver Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

⁷⁰ Pat Easterling and Edith Hall, eds., *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); For the Roman stage, especially the role of mime and pantomime see: Ruth Webb, *Demons and Dancers: Performance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); see also A.K. Petrides, "Lucian's *On Dance* and the Poetics of the Pantomime Mask," in *Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre*, eds. George W. M. Harrison and Vayos Liapis, Mnemosyne Supp. 353 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 433-50; Edith Hall, "Pantomime: Visualising Myth in the Roman Empire" in *Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre*, 451-75. For more on iconography and depictions of comedic actors see: Eric Csapo, "The Iconography of Comedy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Comedy*, ed. Martin Revermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 95-130 (esp. 104-14).

⁷¹ For example, Martin Revermann, "The Competence of Theatre Audiences in Fifth- and Fourth- Century Athens," *JHS* 126 (2006): 99-124.

⁷² For masks and other materials see representative discussions by Gregory McCart ("Masks in Greek and Roman Theatre," 247-67) and Graham Ley ("A Material World: Costume, Properties, and Scenic Effects," 268-302) in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁷³ See for example the database available at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/>.

languages as well as modern, among others.⁷⁴ This summary is by no means exhaustive, but it is revealing—despite the voluminous works produced on ancient performances, works specifically on characters and characterization in performance are relatively less prominent.⁷⁵ Again, this is not to suggest that the study of character is unimportant in reconstructions and reimagining of ancient performances, but rather that the study of characters has thus far played a more tangential role to broader notions of performance. More recently, however, select publications have given more explicit consideration to character(ization), from diverse and unique perspectives. What follows then is not a “status” of classics approaches, but rather, a select yet representative coupling of works which approach characters in light of their place in performance. These works, which have shifted or at least challenged literary concepts of characters and characterization,

⁷⁴ For helpful introductions to the larger discussion of performance in theatre and to some of these diverse approaches found here see: Vayos Liapis, Costas Panayotakis, and George W.M. Harrison, “Making Sense of Performance” in Harrison and Liapis eds., *Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre*, 1-42.

⁷⁵ This is not to say that they are non-existent. See for example, the 2018 volume *Homer in Performance* which takes up the issues of a narrator and characters in performance (see especially the essays by Mary R. Bachvarova [“Formed on the Festival Stage: Plot and Characterization in the *Iliad* as a Competitive Collaborative Process,” 151-77], Lorenzo F. Garcia Jr. [“Hektor, the Marginal Hero: Performance Theory and the Homeric Monologue,” 299-319], and Jonathan L. Ready [“Performance, Oral Texts, and Entextualization in Homeric Epics,” 320-350] in Jonathan L. Ready and Christos C. Tsagalis eds., *Homer in Performance*); see also, Bernd Seidenstricker, “Character and Characterization in Greek Tragedy,” in Revermann and Wilson eds., *Performance, Iconography, Reception*, 333-346.

It is telling, as Andrew Porter notes that “[A] limited amount of work has been published solely devoted to a consideration of epic characterization itself since the initial findings of Parry and Lord. Most scholars have not attempted to consider what oral traditional research might mean for the study of character” (*Agamemnon, The Pathetic Despot: Reading Characterization in Homer*, HSS 78 [Wash. D.C: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2019], 2). This is perhaps less due to a rejection of the Oral-Formulaic theory itself, but to the fluid and contested constructions of characters and characterization in ancient texts, and the difficulty of wrestling with this variety. For instance, in the “Epilogue” of their edited volume *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature*, de Temmerman and van Emde Boas write the following as a reflection of the issues of character(ization): “part of the fussiness and fluidity of a concept like character(ization) has to do precisely with the fact that it is continually ‘in progress’: it involves constant, often simultaneous, readerly activities of interpretation, comparison, negotiation, balancing, compilation, accommodation, assessment, and re-assessment of multifiform (and often diverging) cues.” (650) While de Temmerman and van Emde Boas are speaking about “literary” concepts of character(ization), it is not incongruous with the difficulties of the far more “hypothetical” task of assessing characters in performance. Rather than a “comprehensive” notion of character in performance, perhaps analyses of characters must necessarily be restricted to assessing a single author, or single character (or group) assessments rather than a more general notion through which we filter all ancient characters.

reflect a growing concern for understanding characters in performance and have posited ways in which at least certain characters may be constructed in the performance event.

2.2.2- An Oral-Traditional Approach to Characters in Performance

Drawing heavily upon the Oral-Formulaic theory and his mentor John Miles Foley's theory of Immanent Art, Andrew Porter seeks to understand the role of what he refers to as traditional-characterization in Homeric epic, and how this influences the earliest hearers.⁷⁶ By traditional-characterization, Porter refers to how previous or shared traditions inform the decisions made by the singers in their particular portrayals of Homeric characters.⁷⁷ According to Porter, communication between the singer and an audience is based on preexisting characters established within previous performances. While a particular singer has the freedom to explore additional character traits in their localized performance, and thus invent within the confines of a particular event, these decisions are informed by an already developed and distinguishable sense of the character, shared by singer and audience alike.⁷⁸ Porter argues that when a character's portrayal conflicts with or betrays traditional characterization, this marks a point of emphasis for the singer, as the shift informs the audience of something important happening.⁷⁹ More

⁷⁶ For full citation see previous FN.

⁷⁷ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 23; For more on the role of tradition, together with the poet's memory, in the construction of Homeric characterization see, Elizabeth Minchin, *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of Cognitive Theory to the Iliad and the Odyssey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); idem, "'Themes' and 'Mental Moulds': Roger Schank, Malcom Willcock and the Creation of Character in Homer," *CQ* 61.2 (2011): 323-43; idem, "Voice and Voices: Homer and the Stewardship of Memory," in *Voice and Voices in Antiquity: Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World*, ed. Niall W Slater, Mnemosyne Supp. 396, Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 11-30.

⁷⁸ "The singer can be inventive and a character is never fully static, yet the consistent nature of the character a singer knows from the tradition in which he works will form the basis for much that he invents." Porter, *Agamemnon*, 24.

⁷⁹ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 26.

importantly, Porter asserts that within the Homeric epic tradition, knowledge of pre-existing traditions are necessary for an audience to make sense of characterization, as seen in his analysis of Agamemnon and other characters within the epics.⁸⁰

In his description of traditional-characterization, Porter suggests three defining traits. The first is consistency. Reapplying Lord's description of the narrative, he argues that there is a "stable skeleton" of the character from which the singer builds. Because the singer draws on a pre-existing tradition "a character calls forth in any particular moment of his or her appearance character traits present in other instances inherent within the tradition."⁸¹ But characters are not necessarily independent of the larger narrative itself, as their characterization at particular times is interwoven into the plot, both within the arc of particular characters and the larger themes of the epic. To conceptualize this complex relationship, Porter appeals to Dué's "paradigmatic" and "syntagmatic" sense of character in performance.⁸² The paradigmatic refers to the "universal" aspects of character (horizontal axis), that which ties individual characters to each other within the larger story. The syntagmatic (vertical axis) refers to the "depth of particular characters," and the ways in which they are known "to Homer and his core audiences in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*."⁸³ Thus, the singer does not have *carte blanche* in the presentation of a character, since

⁸⁰ This sense of traditional-characterization is applicable (perhaps even more persuasively) to the Greek playwrights. That the understanding of these plays requires audiences to be familiar with the tradition is well documented and demonstrated.

⁸¹ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 24.

⁸² Casey Dué, *Homeric Variations on a Lament by Briseis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Press, 2002), esp. 1-20. Dué also presents the ideas of "expansion" and "compression" in the tradition, which, while not discussed explicitly here (though, see Foley's "traditional referentiality" for a similar idea of how a "compressed" representation actually depends upon the "expanded" tradition), may also be helpful in thinking about characterization in the New Testament.

⁸³ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 24.

both the singer and audience already have a developed sense of individual characters and their relationship to other characters from previous performances.

To demonstrate traditional character consistency, and how the singer “plays” with an audience’s knowledge of the tradition, utilizing this common knowledge toward rhetorical effect at particular moments in performance, Porter suggests that when a character does not act within their traditional sense, this breach of character signals something important to the audience.⁸⁴ For example, Achilles’s failure to show pity to his *philoï* (*Iliad* 9.228-251) and be moved to action by them, is a breach in his traditional characterization. Achilles is capable of showing pity as a character, and the audience expectation is that he will act in accordance with this traditional character trait. The result of this breach, however, is a moment of “lopsided” characterization.⁸⁵ The internal audience (Achilles’s *philoï*) are distraught at this rejection, and as Porter suggests, so too is the audience. Not only does this action betray the traditional characterization of Achilles, who is capable of pity at least before Hektor kills Patroklos, but more importantly in the narrative, this breach signals an important turn in the story. Achilles’s failure to extend pity to his *philoï* (in)directly leads to his own suffering—the death of Patroklos—an event of which the audience is already aware of within the larger tradition. Thus, in performance, Achilles’s action in this particular scene is predetermined by the larger narrative, as its influence on the larger story is an intentional break from his traditional characterization.⁸⁶ This breach in

⁸⁴ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 26, 31.

⁸⁵ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 25.

⁸⁶ Porter goes on to discuss how consistency in character plays a role in oral traditions, exploring the following examples: Idomeneus (*Iliad*); Tale of Orašac (South Slavic epics); Sanasar (Armenian epics). This example of Achilles may seem to reinforce the Aristotelian notion of character as subordinate to plot, and indeed it may be seen as such. However, I think Porter’s argument of consistency with the tradition, even if implicitly, emphasizes the idea that an individual character’s tradition does exist (or at least *may* exist) independent of the plot of the *Iliad*. The

traditional characterization marks an important point in the performance, as it signals something important happening in the story.⁸⁷ Thus, Homer's presentation of character is one "where change or inconsistency suggests *something* for singer and audience members aware of the tradition."⁸⁸

A second feature of Homeric tradition-based characterization is the presence of particular character traits and their history.⁸⁹ First, Porter notes that emphasizing a character's history "does not deny the importance of character type or story pattern in shaping and preserving a particular character."⁹⁰ Rather, it implies that the characters within the epic are "actual characters with particular histories [which] live within Homer's tradition as real persons." These persons have "distinct stories and personalities, [similar to] the way literary characters also have the potential to live within a successive book series."⁹¹ Because performances of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* would last longer than a single day, and in many cases were not performed by a single performer, it is analogous to characters in a book series (or as Lynn Kozak will discuss below, a serial TV show) where the characters exist outside of any single performance. In considering characterization of the epics, one must consider the "continuation" of the story, perhaps even multiple singers, and

ramifications of this distinction, while not made explicit in Porter's work, are important. A particular character might be configured as either intraperformative or transperformative, singular in its performance event, but existing across multiple "plots." Thus, the character may (even if artificially- as character and plot are integral to each other) come to be considered or regarded as something that exists beyond the confines of a single story, and as such, a singular characterization is constructed over many "plots."

⁸⁷ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 26-31.

⁸⁸ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 26 (Italics mine).

⁸⁹ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 31-34.

⁹⁰ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 31.

⁹¹ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 31-32.

take into consideration how the larger (“universal”) tradition informs understanding of characters in given (“localized”) performances.⁹² Audience’s memories and knowledge of the tradition, which the performer presumes, will necessarily inform an audience’s understanding of characters. Some portions of the epic include characters which have preexistent character traits, derived from the tradition (whether oral or written) and each iteration fits within this tradition in some shape or form. Even if the particular performance rejects certain character traits in favor of alternative characteristics that fit the current and particular iteration/situation, the audience is not unfamiliar with these other traditions, and thus these changes are weighed against their prior understanding of the character.

As an example of this complexity, Porter briefly discusses Odysseus’s portrayal between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It is important to note that Porter argues for a unity of both narratives, and that they inform each other.⁹³ In support of this argument, Porter identifies the various ways in which Odysseus is characterized in the *Iliad* in ways that make more sense with his actions and traits in the *Odyssey*.⁹⁴ If you were to construct a characterization of Odysseus from the *Iliad* alone, the ways in which he is described by epithets and by the narrator do not necessarily fit his actions within that story. Porter suggests that the reason for this is that the epithets are clearly linked to the larger tradition, and as such, his characterization is constructed upon “meaning that lies beyond the temporal moment where they occur in a particular memorialized text.”⁹⁵ Thus, in

⁹² Porter, *Agamemnon*, 33-34.

⁹³ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 18-22.

⁹⁴ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 34.

⁹⁵ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 34.

a performance, because it is often only a portion of the larger story, and because it is a shared tradition, character's traits and history necessarily inform the audience's perception.

A third feature of Porter's tradition-based characterization is how words and deeds function for character(ization). The least controversial of the three, as words and deeds are generally regarded as the primary means of assessing characters, Porter notes the emphasis on action over abstraction in epic performances.⁹⁶ Moments where abstract ideas appear in Homer, such as particular epithets, these are most often related to concrete stories and actions from elsewhere in the story, whether the actions are narrated or directly reported in speeches.

After distinguishing these features, Porter looks specifically to the character Agamemnon. Porter identifies Agamemnon as a complex character, one whose place within the larger tradition must be accounted for in order to understand the way in which he is characterized in the *Iliad*. He refers to this configuration as a tapestry of Agamemnon's characterization.⁹⁷ Similar to Odysseus, while Agamemnon is portrayed with certain traits throughout the *Iliad*, these are not immediately clear from *this* narrative alone. Porter argues that it is difficult (if not impossible) to understand the Homeric characterization of Agamemnon without also keeping in mind his *kakos nostos* and his cursed family history, neither of which are present within the story. These ideas, which are part of the larger Agamemnon tradition, inform his characterization within a performance of the epic. The way in which Agamemnon is constructed within the *Iliad*

⁹⁶ For Homeric characterization, most cite the words of Phoenix to Achilles in *Iliad* book 9.443: "of words, be a speaker, and a doer of deeds." Similar constructions also serves as the basis for character construction in other fields. For example, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon's definition for characters: "characters are known by what they say and do and by what others say and do in relation to them" (*Mark's Jesus*, 14).

⁹⁷ "The audience is left to draw conclusions based upon its traditional knowledge and the tenor of the words or actions of a particular character in a local narrative moment as it transpires" (Porter, *Agamemnon*, 179-80).

is based upon a characterization which the audience must already be familiar, not only from the *Odyssey*, but also the larger tradition about him. He concludes:

The poet of the Iliad is aware of much else and presents us with an Agamemnon after the development (rather than the commencement) of a mature and deep performance tradition. Imbedded references to this tradition, while difficult for us to tease out as later readers, inform the early audience's experience as they hear the *aoidos*. This has implications for how Homer's core audience heard epic poetry and how we should read the *Iliad* (and *Odyssey*). It may provide one answer for the query of why Agamemnon is presented with so many ignoble character attributes.⁹⁸

While Porter leaves his reader with several questions, including not least of which the role and relationship of the particular songs to the continued development of the tradition, he shows how characters and their characterization in Homeric epics are constructed in light of and dependent upon particular character traits from the larger tradition of the character. As such, the singer must also presume an audience's familiarity with them. This is an important idea not only within epic, but also within all orally-derived texts of various genres. Such tendencies can be seen in various scripts for performance, such as the Greek playwrights, Shakespeare, and, as I will explore below, in the Gospel of Mark. Performers assumed audience's knowledge of certain characters, and thus their characterization is enabled within (though not necessarily dependent upon) the larger tradition. For audiences, these characters are real persons, with real stories, and real traditions. Because of this, characterization is necessarily constructed and enabled by tradition (though, as Iverson notes above, the particular iterations might subvert audience's knowledge of these traditions, thus it is not determined by that tradition). While characters in the

⁹⁸ Porter, *Agamemnon*, 192.

Homeric epics may be understood, at least partially, as unique to a particular performance, there are certain features about them which are (and must be) presumed from the tradition itself.

2.2.3-A Serial-Narrative Approach to Characters

Shifting gears, even if slightly, Lynn Kozak seeks an alternative paradigm for understanding Homeric characterization, one that attends to the oral/aural medium of performance but also seeks to understand audiences' experiences with and constructions of characters. Kozak approaches the *Iliad* as not only a scholar, but also as a performer and translator for modern performance.⁹⁹ In *Experiencing Hektor*, she argues that the *Iliad*, when understood in light of performance, has much in common with modern TV series.¹⁰⁰ Despite the many differences in the media, in a creative and unique analysis, Kozak demonstrates how the Homeric epic and serial television employ similar narrative strategies, especially when it comes to presenting characters and how audiences come to construct them. When viewed through a "serial analysis," attention to these strategies may give us a clue into how characterization functions within the epic, or at least by analogy, it may provide us with a greater sense of the demands that serial performance places on an audience. Approaching the epic by means of performance (in particular, through performance time) helps to illuminate some of these dynamics at work in constructing characters.

⁹⁹ Lynn Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor: Character in the Iliad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 2, 231.

¹⁰⁰ Kozak uses Mittell's narrative definition of a serial narrative: "the serial 'creates a sustained narrative world populated by a consistent set of characters who experience a chain of events over time.'" (Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* [New York: New York University Press, 2015], 10). While this may seem relevant to any number of narrative types, the distinguishing element is that serial narratives "balance the 'episodic' and 'continuous' in such a way that maintains audience engagement over great lengths of time and multiple breaks from the narrative" (Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 3).

In what is perhaps the most obvious similarity between Homeric epics and serial television, one that is far less obvious when considering New Testament texts, is the length of the narrative. The *Iliad* (as it exists in textual form), like much of serial TV, cannot be consumed in a single sitting. As such, the “[t]he *Iliad* is long-form serial performance...(every performer, every audience member, must take breaks from the *Iliad*).”¹⁰¹ Much like modern serial TV, the *Iliad* must be broken up into smaller units, experienced in episodes rather as complete story, and in more than one sitting. While some of these units may stand alone, others are entirely dependent upon the larger story.¹⁰² There is much debate about how long a performance of the *Iliad* would have lasted in antiquity, and where these breaks would occur, with numerous suggestions as to how it would have been performed.¹⁰³ Estimating from modern performances of the *Iliad*, Kozak suggests that the performance of the *Iliad* would last approximately 19 hours, agreeing with others that it was most likely performed over a two or three-day period.¹⁰⁴ Even if an audience

¹⁰¹ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 2.

¹⁰² For instance, Kozak notes how book 16 of the *Iliad* “recaps” more events from previous episodes than usual. This suggests that it could work as an individual episode in a “stand-alone” performance (*Experiencing Hektor*, 148).

¹⁰³ Andrew Ford, when considering the length of the Homeric epic notes that “whether one believes in an oral or a literate Homer, the question of performance may rightfully be termed ‘the most troublesome’ problem in Homeric studies” (84) He warns that to presume “that audiences acquired a distinct sense of individual poems as complete, self-contained, and unified works may be to project a literate mode of aesthetic reception onto the archaic period” (85) He then argues that “it is not only improbable but distorting to posit a full performance of a complete epic as the normative presentation against which all partial (or eccentric) presentations were measured.” For this reason, he employs Wulf’s image of a grounded ship to suggest that the written epic is the equivalent of an “inland ship” which is built so far from the sea it is unable to be tested (“The Inland Ship: Problems in the Performance and Reception of Homeric Epic,” in Egbert Bakker and Ahuvia Kahane, eds., *Written Voices, Spoken Signs: Tradition, Performance, and the Epic Text* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997], 83-109). This problem has raised a variety of estimations to performance time, in an attempt to understand how the epic was performed. For a brief view of the diversity of times offered, Oliver Taplin estimates 25 hours of performance time (*Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992], 27); the 2015 Almeida Theatre was able to perform it in 15 hours, though performing in English may speed up the process.

¹⁰⁴ Kozak’s 19 hours is extrapolated from a “time-per-line” equation. “While it is impossible to know the exact length of any given performance of the *Iliad*, it is nonetheless worthwhile to consider approximate

“binged” the *Iliad*, listening to and experiencing prolonged performances over subsequent days, there is a high demand on audience memory that is involved, as well as the performer’s memory, as it relates to the construction of characters.¹⁰⁵ While acknowledging the many differences between epic and contemporary television, Kozak notes that both, “are non-literate narrative forms that work harder to construct and are more reliant on audience memory than literary serial narratives like novels...So contemporary television serial poetics can provide a helpful analogue to those of the ancient epic.”¹⁰⁶

Kozak introduces four different levels of development as it relates to characters in serial narratives: beats, sequences, episodes, and arcs.¹⁰⁷ At each level, characterization must be analyzed, as “narrative strategies and audience response combine to construct characters within serial narratives.”¹⁰⁸ Kozak’s notion of character here, as an interaction and construction occurring between performer(s) and audience, is important. Characterization is not located solely

performance times, because they can help place narrative events in relative position to each other within an experience of the *Iliad*’s story” (Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 2).

¹⁰⁵ The sense of time and the dynamics of continued narration are worth considering as they relate to this project. One of the implicit critiques of performance criticism is that many of its proponents assume a unified telling of the story, from beginning to end, in a single (or at least singular) performance event. This assumption is shared in this investigation (see Introduction), and not without historical justification. That being said, I recognize that it is equally likely that Mark, at least over time, was most likely performed and experienced in parts, not as a whole (supporting both views of Mark as performance and text). Indeed, this is the way in which these texts are (often) used within modern liturgical settings. This assumption from performances in antiquity, however, need not deter the reader who rejects the assumption of a complete performance of Mark in a single sitting. Kozak’s suggestion that the Homeric epics function like modern serial TV is one that might also be applied to characterization within the gospels. In particular, it emphasizes how audiences must hold in tension previous knowledge of the story and the continued building of their characterization within individual episodes.

¹⁰⁶ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ The terms “beats,” “episodes, and “arcs” are borrowed from the configuration offered by Michael Z. Newman (“From Beats to Arcs: Towards a Poetics of Television Narrative,” *The Velvet Light Trap* 58 [2006]: 16-28).

¹⁰⁸ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 4.

within a text but is a construction made in performance. Counter to some literary notions of characters, “[c]haracter exists as a constructed analogue to a person, or a fictional being, rather than a sign, symbol or even a type.”¹⁰⁹ An audience’s construction of character is informed by all information offered about them, both direct and indirect, and the audience’s engagement with that material. Thus, the narrative “strategically provides a constellation of character information that we as the audience connect into a whole.”¹¹⁰ Often the word “identification” is used to refer to this relationship between audience and character, however, as Kozak rightly notes, there are varying levels of “identification” among audiences and various ways in which an audience connects with different characters.¹¹¹ As such, she seeks to define further a model of the relationship between characters and audiences by defining a series of movements through which an audience progresses in order to understand characters: recognition, alignment, and allegiance.¹¹²

The first level of audience engagement with a character is through recognition. Narratives introduce characters to their audiences in several ways, including names, physical cues, their roles and relationships to other characters.¹¹³ In addition to these explicit features, serial

¹⁰⁹ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 5.

¹¹¹ This is a key idea, as it complicates the notion of a “singular” response by an audience. This is also an important idea within biblical performance criticism. See for example Whittenton, (*Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 27, 65; *Configuring Nicodemus*, 46-47) who suggests that audiences themselves are complex, made up of various persons, and we must think of audiences in terms of “heterogeneity.” This idea is not “explicitly” covered in this chapter but is discussed above in the Introduction.

¹¹² Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 5. Borrowed from Murry Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75-86.

¹¹³ Kozak mentions this relational aspect in her discussion of recognition, but also elaborates on this further in terms of alignment and allegiance. To a certain degree this makes sense, as these later two levels necessitate a decision be made (and continues to be made throughout the narrative) by the audience in relation to other characters. However, I think the way narratives associate characters with others (either implicitly or explicitly) also plays an

narratives fuel an audience's recognition of characters by means of the time allotted to them as well as the situation(s) in which the characters are located. Once a character has been introduced, and once the audience is able to recognize the character as a distinct figure (though also via their relationships with other characters), the serial narrative begins to offer the means of "character alignment." Alignment is when an audience begins to construct their first real sense of a character in light of the available knowledge about them. Two significant aspects of this alignment are what Mittell and Smith refer to as *attachment* and *subjective access*.¹¹⁴ In both cases, the audience follows along with the experiences of particular characters, they get to know them, their words and deeds (whether generated by the narrator, others, or by the character itself), and in some instances audiences are given access to a character's inner thoughts, motivations, emotions, and desires. Even when audiences are not given "direct" access to a character's interior state, serial narratives allow for inference of these traits "through an accumulation of external markers" which are made explicit within the narrative (appearance, gesture, dialogue, etc.).¹¹⁵ Once alignment takes place, the audience is open to character allegiance. Allegiance is the level at which an audience begins to make moral judgments concerning a character.¹¹⁶

important part in how audiences come to "recognize" characters. This idea will be important in terms of the disciples' character(ization) in Mark.

¹¹⁴ See Murry Smith *Engaging Characters*, 75-86; Jason Mittell, *Complex TV*, 129.

¹¹⁵ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 5.

¹¹⁶ A literary equivalent to this triad might be seen in de Temmerman and van Emde Boas description of the process of characterization: "the reader continually acquires, evaluates, and re-evaluates a multi-form body of information (new or known)" ("Epilogue" in *Characters and Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature*, 650).

Building upon these premises, namely that (1) certain characters in the *Iliad* are presented using serial-form narrative techniques, (2) characterization is a construction between performer and audience, and (3) audiences are presented with and form ideas about characters in levels and experience characters through a series of movements, Kozak states that the objective of her book then “is not to determine who Hektor is, but rather to demonstrate where the epic invites its audience to think on who he is.”¹¹⁷ This nuance is both necessary and helpful as we think through what exactly a performance-oriented approach to character actually seeks to accomplish. One of the theoretical limits of performance is the variability with which these component parts might be constructed. As alluded to in the Introduction, a performance-oriented analysis of character is necessarily limited, as it cannot determine characterization across all performances, but rather must limit analysis to the way(s) in which a particular narrative in a particular performance invites an audience (both as a group and as individuals) to think about and configure a character. Niall Slater’s definition of performance criticism echoes here, as performance criticism might be articulated as the “*recovery of performable meaning*.”¹¹⁸ The recovery of performable meaning is not the same as “determining” character in a text, which in and of itself is problematic, but rather it must limit its claims to the demonstration of potential performability and potential audience engagement.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 21.

¹¹⁸ Niall W. Slater, “From Ancient Performance to New Historicism,” in Niall W. Slater and Bernhard Zimmermann eds. *Intertextualität in der griechischen-romischen Komödie* (Stuttgart: M&P, 1993), 1-13, quote from 8.

¹¹⁹ This seems to be a widely held view among performance critics. For example, Glenn Holland concludes that if Biblical performance criticism is “to take seriously the theories and methods of performance criticism, contingent and polyvalent meanings are all we may hope to achieve” (“Playing to the Groundlings,” 337). Whinton notes, “Naturally, I make no claims that [this] reading...is anything other than a hypothetical (re)construction...When I write...that this or that script or schema ‘may’ or ‘might’ be primed or activated, I mean just that and leave open the possibility that the script or schema will lie dormant” (*Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 40).

Thus, in evaluating “an” experience of Hektor, Kozak utilizes personal (individual) experience to launch her investigation: for her, Hektor is the most impactful character in the *Iliad*.¹²⁰ Yet, she also recognizes that Hektor is not *the* main character. It is not Hektor’s story. There are times when Hektor is absent for extended portions of the narrative,¹²¹ and she finds herself rooting for another character(s),¹²² even though her strongest resonances are with Hektor. She mourns Hektor at his death (together with Andromache) each time she experiences books 22-24,¹²³ though she doesn’t always understand why. Reflecting on all of this, her emotional alignment and fascination with Hektor’s character, she recognizes, somewhat paradoxically, that these experiences have “given [her] little insight into his character” and that ultimately he seems “unknowable.”¹²⁴

Kozak’s relationship with Hektor is not unique in its complexity. Audience members often find themselves aligning with and giving allegiance to characters subconsciously, effortlessly, and occasionally they are unable to explain why such allegiance occurs. In an effort to determine why she is inclined toward Hektor, Kozak provides the following list of traits, literary features which have been cited in arguments seeking to “determine” his character:

Hektor is of course, the defender of Troy, but he fails in that role.
What might be said of Hektor? He is brave. He is a coward. He is a

Similarly, Iverson comments, “Though it is impossible to revert to a pre-literate mind-set and our only remains are written documents, we can and must do a better job of attempting to reconstruct likely performance scenarios that are based on the social realities of the first century” (“A Centurion’s Confession, 330).

¹²⁰ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 21.

¹²¹ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 13-14.

¹²² Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 22.

¹²³ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 231.

¹²⁴ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 21.

great fighter. He is a mediocre fighter. He makes mistakes. He goes mad. He is civil. He is a gentle man. He is cruel, boastful, and vindictive. He is delusional. He is tall, handsome. He is constrained by his own masculinity. He is connected to femininity. He is a type. He is a character. He exists only as a foil for Paris. He serves as ‘whipping-boy’ for the Greeks.¹²⁵

This list of traits and vices, however, does not equate to an “experience” of Hektor, nor does it fully define him as a character. By itself, removed from context, dislocated from space and time within the narrative, this list cannot explain the way in which an audience is (or individuals within an audience are) drawn to the character (for whatever reason), nor does it explain how a character is constructed in the mind. While it is indeed true that Hektor is described (either implicitly or explicitly) as all of these things throughout the course of the *Iliad*, and his characterization in performance must be informed by these parts, audience experiences of him as a character are not equal to the sum of these parts. Not every trait carries the same evaluative weight. Each of these characteristics is contextual, existing along a spectrum, in relationship with other characters, and located in a particular time and space within the narrative. “Specific scenarios,” “character relationships,” and audience allegiances are more determinative of these traits than are the terms themselves. As Kozak argues, much like serial narratives, audiences in performance “must build and rebuild their understanding of both character and story throughout their experience.”¹²⁶ This is one of the challenges of both epic and serial narratives, the continued re-evaluation, alignment, and contested allegiances that these stories create. Each level of the character (beats, sequences, episodes, arcs) both shape and reshape our previous attempts

¹²⁵ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 21.

¹²⁶ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 21-22.

to construct them. This does not include the social factors which will inform audience's experience of characters, which might be the most formative in configuring character(ization).

In what is perhaps the most intriguing portion of Kozak's argument, she discusses the social and parasocial effects of serial narratives and how these inform character configuration. For modern serials, time between episodes may consist of audiences thinking about possibilities for the narrative, going online and reading reviews, speaking with friends who are also watching the series, coming up with conspiracies, thinking about the latest episode and trying to make connections to prior episodes, etc. The narrative consumes our thoughts as we eagerly await its completion. What is often lost in considerations of the individual construction of character, however, are the social effects of performance and how these contribute to character construction. Serial narratives and performances create community (or better yet communities within communities), and within this social engagement comes another layer of character construction. Characters are no longer entirely fiction, but rather they break the bounds of the fictional world and are transported into real-world conversations. As Kozak observes "[s]erial narratives become interwoven in our lives, their length and their focus on characters and character responses ripe for social and parasocial modes of cognitive engagement."¹²⁷ This communal aspect of character construction is an important and necessary part in conceptualizing the construction of characters in performance.

Experiencing Hektor offers much to consider in terms of assessing characters in performance. As alluded to earlier, the idea of assessing the Gospel of Mark through a poetics of serial narratives is both less obvious and more complex than its application to a performance of

¹²⁷ Kozak, *Experiencing Hektor*, 22.

the *Iliad*. One can experience Mark in a single setting (as this study assumes), and this complicates certain dynamics of a serial analysis of character and its construction. However, this does not necessarily mean that one *has* to experience Mark in a single sitting, nor that it was not also performed over several days. In fact, critics of performance criticism have highlighted this very feature, that Mark could have been (and probably was at different times) read aloud in shorter sections, perhaps in liturgical settings. Thus, while shorter readings of Mark add further complexity to characterization (and performance), Kozak's work invites further reflection on how character(ization) is constructed over multiple sessions. Regardless of whether one assumes Mark was performed as a whole or in parts, Kozak's serial analysis of Hektor brings up several points for our consideration of Mark's characterization of the disciples.

2.2.4- Summary

In Porter and Kozak, we find two interdisciplinary (or at least cross-disciplinary) approaches to understanding Homeric characterization within performance. While these two are not representative of the majority of classical scholarship on characters and characterization, they are representative of a growing trend within Homeric studies to consider and attend more fully to the potential performance dynamics of classical texts. Neither approach may be directly applied to the Gospel of Mark. For a variety of reasons, however, they do provide us with some analogous features for further consideration in our understanding of characterization in performance. Porter's notion of traditional-characterization and Kozak's suggestion of serial narrative strategies and how audiences engage with characters in serial narratives both enrich our understanding of how ancient audiences might have constructed characterization in performance events.

Porter's notion of traditional characterization is important for understanding the role tradition plays in character construction within oral/aural performances of orally-derived narratives. Similar to the Homeric epics, as I will argue in Chapter 4, there are instances in Mark where the script seems to presume an audience's familiarity with the tradition. If we can demonstrate that the script/performer presumes an audience's familiarity with a character or characters within the larger tradition, and if Foley and Porter are correct in their observation that characters in orally-derived texts are indebted to their characterization within the larger tradition (whether in performance or as text), an understanding of Markan characterization will be enabled in (though not necessarily determined by) relation to that larger tradition. In the case of Homer, fictional characters are seen as real persons, each with their own tradition which precedes the epic. In the case of Mark, even if we contest the disciples' characterization as representative of "historical" figures, acknowledging that the tradition may not be an accurate depiction of their historical personages, the oral traditions surrounding Jesus and his followers might still be seen as parallel to the oral traditions of figures within Homeric epics. This by no means suggests that Mark reproduces those traditions verbatim, nor does it suggest that a performer is unable to alter particular portions of that tradition, but rather it emphasizes the idea that in performance audiences will construct characters in light of larger traditions they already know about them.

Similarly, Kozak's work leaves us with several questions, and while less directly, it too has implications for our understanding of Mark, both in terms of how [serial] narratives invoke audience allegiance but also how sections of Mark reorient audiences to the characters at particular times. While my analysis in Chapter 4 presumes a singular performance event, a poetics of serial narrative may still prove illuminating, even if not for the same reasons as

Homer's *Iliad*. As we will see when looking at particular moments (or to use Kozak's term, "beats" and "sequences") in Mark, there are instances where the narrative seems to recapitulate or reinforce ideas of the disciples, forcing audiences to shape and reshape their views of them, all of which lead to a more complex construction of them as characters. These smaller portions of the story, experienced sequentially, will necessarily inform the larger constructions of characters.

2.3- Characters and Characterization in Shakespearean Performance

Given the great disparity between ancient characters and those found in Shakespeare's works, it may seem jarring to shift to a discussion of Shakespearean performance. The relationship here will be analogous, at best, as direct comparisons are problematic on multiple fronts. Further, it should be clear that the roles of a Hellenistic singer, a first-century lector, and an Elizabethan actor are not identical when it comes to "presenting" characters in performance. For a richer understanding of characters in performance, however, there is arguably no better interlocutor than Shakespearean studies on performance. If biblical performance criticism is to develop a fuller sense of the dynamics of performance, more specifically, conceptualizing the interface between the written and the performed, Shakespearean studies is a vital conversation partner.¹²⁸

2.3.1- Why Shakespearean Studies?

Correlations between biblical studies and Shakespearean studies are admittedly less intuitive than those with classics. Classics provides several access points to biblical texts which are not shared with the sixteenth-century playwright, such as antecedence, historical and

¹²⁸ This suggestion is not new to this study, as it was alluded to by Rhoads and made explicit by Holland ("Playing to the Groundlings").

geographic proximity, common language, and worldview, among others. This, therefore, raises the question: what exactly might Shakespearean studies contribute to our knowledge of the ancient world, and more specifically, how might analysis of sixteenth-century plays enhance our understanding of the early performances of biblical texts? A further word addressing some of these concerns may be warranted before moving forward.

As introduced in the beginning of this chapter, biblical, classical, and Shakespearean scholarship are often envisioned (even if artificially) as distinct areas of study.¹²⁹ In terms of their intellectual histories, however, they follow a similar path. Each has been dominated traditionally by historical-critical, text-critical, and more broadly literary approaches. Each possesses a well-established, traditional canon,¹³⁰ situated within specific historical location(s) and context(s), distinct (or distinguishable) in time and space. In light of this, and in some sense, each discipline has established its own set of tools for historical inquiry as well as textual and literary analysis. From the perspective of these more traditional approaches, the connections between biblical studies, classics, and Shakespearean scholarship are essentially non-existent.¹³¹

Following that same intellectual history, however, both biblical studies and Shakespearean studies have more recently given greater consideration to the various media by which audiences engaged with these works. This shift in medium, from text to performance, has

¹²⁹ See fn4 above.

¹³⁰ By well-established, I do not mean uncontested, as issues of canon are prevalent in all three fields of study. Rather, I mean that each discipline has traditionally (though not exclusively) worked from an established canon, which guides much of the thought within that field.

¹³¹ A notable exception to this, as discussed above, is *Mark as Story*. Narrative criticism emerges within biblical studies in conversation with a literary scholar whose expertise was in Shakespeare. Perhaps the appeal to Shakespearean studies is not so far-fetched (or at least, not as unique) as it first may appear.

opened the door to new ways of thinking about both the ontological and experiential nature of them. While the value of Shakespearean studies for addressing historical and literary concerns within biblical studies may indeed be minimal, is this necessarily true in relation to performance? If the introduction of performance criticism to biblical studies is indeed a paradigm shift, as has been argued by Rhoads and Dewey, are conceptions of performance bound by time and space in the same way that historical and literary approaches have been? In other words, is there a way in which we might think of performance as something that transcends chronological, geographic, and canonical divides? Yes and no.

Performance is an inherently complex and elusive concept, despite its pervasiveness in human life and thus academic fields. Due to this diversity, both in theory and application, performance as a universal or even stable category for analysis resists rigid frameworks, inviting cross- and inter-disciplinary discourse to help attend to its many complexities. Such cross-disciplinary discussions necessarily create new and complex ways of thinking, some of which, as I suggest here, aid in further conceptualizing the promises and pitfalls of biblical performance criticism. What I propose then is that an open dialogue between biblical and Shakespearean studies will help to establish a broader framework, providing borrowed and new vocabulary and frameworks for consideration. Such dialogue will hopefully lead toward a more complex understanding of performance and how character(ization) works within it.

But if performance is so prevalent, why Shakespearean studies specifically?¹³² This work is by no means the first appeal to Shakespearean scholarship for understanding biblical

¹³² To be clear, I am not suggesting that performance criticism should not also extend into these other fields, but rather why Shakespearean studies is a particularly fruitful conversation partner for this project. A great number of works on biblical performance have profited from being in dialogue with theater studies, gender studies,

performance criticism, as it was initially alluded to by Rhoads, and more forcefully defended by Holland.¹³³ More than simply carrying the baton, the concerns of Shakespearean studies on both texts and of character(ization) in performance coalesce with the focus of this project. While it is essential to uphold the marked differences between the two fields, both in terms of the portrayals of characters as well as the genre distinctions, theoretically there are points of overlap which supply additional insight into the nature of character(ization) in performance. These points *analogically* help us to better grasp some of the differences in the object of study. Despite initial appearances of strangeness, Shakespearean studies of characters in performance may prove a well-suited bedfellow for thinking about first-century receptions of biblical characters. By engaging in such dialogue, this may open the doors to solutions previously unconsidered, or better yet, to questions yet to materialize.

Shakespearean performance studies in itself constitutes a broad range of interests, a number of which may be promising for biblical performance to consider.¹³⁴ However, our focus for the remainder of this chapter will necessarily be more limited. The following will examine how certain Shakespearean performance studies have understood characters at the interface of text and performance, and how their navigating of this relationship may have significant implications for analyzing biblical characters.

and a number of other voices working on performance. There is room for further advancement and engagement in these arenas.

¹³³ Holland, "Playing to the Groundlings," 317-40.

¹³⁴ For instance, there are numerous books considering original practices, which may indeed be fruitful areas for further dialogue but will not be explored here. For an overview of original practices and its many facets see Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper, eds., *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For a helpful critique of some of the claims and assumptions of "original practices" as authentic reconstructions of original performances see W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 79-116.

2.3.2-Shakespearean Performance and Characterization

Sir Thomas Overbury's oft cited description of Shakespeare's characters on stage is telling: "what we see him personate, we think truly done before us."¹³⁵ Similarly, over a hundred years later, William Jackson notes that "Shakespeare's characters, have the appearance of reality, which always has the effect of actual life."¹³⁶ Overbury and Jackson both highlight the "realness" of Shakespeare's characters, even as this realness is recognized in different mediums.¹³⁷ These dynamics of character raise an important question: if fictional characters produce effects which seem real, both in performance and as text, how is that effect produced?¹³⁸

Analysis of characters and their characterization in Shakespeare studies is divisive.¹³⁹ The most influential work on the subject is A.C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, published in 1904.¹⁴⁰ Bradley's notion of character is often described as the "culmination" of Romanticism.

¹³⁵ Overbury, here is specifically referring to Richard Burbage's acting style. Cited in Travis Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017), 1.

¹³⁶ William Jackson, 'Letter XIV', in *Thirty Letters on Various Subjects*, 3rd vol (London: T. Cadell, 1795), 93. Cited in Jelena Marelj, *Shakespearean Character: Language in Performance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 1.

¹³⁷ To this list we could add countless others who throughout the past 400 years have noted the "realness" of Shakespeare's characters either in a performance of the play or through their experience reading it. It is only recently that characters and characterization have made their return to Shakespearean scholarship, and as I hope to demonstrate below, this is at least partially due to a reconfiguration of character(ization) in light of performance.

¹³⁸ Cf. Jelena Marelj, *Shakespearean Character*, 1. Similarly, Luke observes, "What was it about the plays that made certain Shakespearean characters seem different: to seem as if they were *more* than characters? Something must happen to them...for they do not start out being more than characters" (Nicholas Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals: The Birth of Character* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018], 2).

¹³⁹ For more on the complex history of characters and characterization in Shakespearean scholarship see: Yachnin and Slights, "Introduction" in *Shakespeare and Character*, 1-20, esp. 1-4; Ko, "Introduction" in *Shakespeare's Sense of Character*, 1-18; E. Pechter, "Character Criticism," 196-228.

¹⁴⁰ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (Glasgow: University Press, 1904). Preceding Bradley, scholars who champion Shakespeare's characters include: Alexander Pope, Elizabeth Montagu, William Richardson, Maurice Morgann, Thomas Whatley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, August van Schlegel, William Hazlitt, Anna Jameson.

However, since the parodic yet scathing critique by L.C. Knights, character studies have been looked at with some derision.¹⁴¹ Luke Nicholas notes the enduring legacy of Knights's critique on the field: "for more than eighty years, we have been told to look somewhat condescendingly at Bradley."¹⁴² But as Yachnin and Slights note, it was not that character studies went away entirely.¹⁴³ Indeed there has been a recent resurgence in character criticism within the field.¹⁴⁴ The question then is not whether characters "should" be studied, as any analysis of Shakespeare in one way or another must necessarily deal with the characters, but rather how that work should be accomplished, specifically what theoretical assumptions should underlie interpretation.

This contention, more recently, is especially felt between the literary and theatrical approaches, though there are still divisions on both sides of the page/stage divide. Regardless of the position one prefers, questions remain about the nature and role of characters. For instance, there are a variety of definitions of what a character *is* within Shakespeare's scripts. On the one hand, Yachnin and Slights suggest that "Shakespearean characters are best understood as mimetic representations of imagined persons."¹⁴⁵ On the other, Orgel writes that "characters...are not people, they are elements of a linguistic structure, lines in a drama, and

¹⁴¹ L.C. Knights, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism," *Explorations* (1934): 15-54.

¹⁴² Nicholas Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 14.

¹⁴³ Yachnin and Slights, *Shakespeare and Character*, 3; See also Falocco, "'Shakespeare Has It Both Ways,'" 96.

¹⁴⁴ Pechter identifies no less than six Shakespeare scholars who have announced this resurgence: "'Character is certainly back'; 'character criticism seems to be coming back'; 'Character has made a comeback'; there is a 'powerful resurgence of academic interest in character-based approaches to Shakespeare'..." (Pechter, "Character Criticism," 197).

¹⁴⁵ Yachnin and Slights, *Shakespeare and Character*, 2.

more basically, words on a page.”¹⁴⁶ Similarly, questions about what a character *does* are disputed. For some, because characters are (primarily) fictional, pre-Cartesian, and were written before theater’s shift from formal to naturalistic and Stanislavskian methods, thus they are merely plot functionaries, necessary to convey the more significant ideas of the play. Any attempt at getting behind their “inner motivations” or seeing them as “real entities” is not only anachronistic, but is a misappropriation of the work of the playwright entirely.¹⁴⁷ For others, to suggest that Shakespeare’s characters are anything less than a complete reversal of the Aristotelian subordination of characterization to plot, is to miss the beauty and transcendence of Shakespeare’s characters, as the “organizing *formal* principle of his plays.”¹⁴⁸ This divide is also indicative of the “scholar” vs “actor” tensions which reify the role that medium plays on differences between approaches.¹⁴⁹

Despite this tumultuous past, with continued tensions and diversity, the study of characters is now returning as a more widely recognized and even appreciated area of Shakespearean studies.¹⁵⁰ In their own way, the following works respond, contribute to, and represent this renewed interest in characters within Shakespearean studies, but in particular, their

¹⁴⁶ Stephen Orgel, *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁴⁷ For a similar criticism within biblical studies see, Stephen Moore, “Why There Are No Humans or Animals in the Gospel of Mark,” in Iverson and Skinner eds., *Mark as Story: Retrospect*, 71-93.

¹⁴⁸ Yachin and Slights, *Shakespeare and Character*, 6-7; See also Ko, “Introduction,” 2-3.

¹⁴⁹ See Yachin and Slights, “Although recognizing ‘character’ as a valid analytic category became anathema for many scholars, Shakespeare’s characters have continued to have a lively existence for theater practitioners, playgoers, students, and general readers.” (*Shakespeare and Character*, 3) See also, Falocco, “Shakespeare Has it Both Ways,” 93.

¹⁵⁰ See Edward Pechter, “Character Criticism,” 196-228. For a more detailed discussion of the state of character criticism see Yu Jin Ko, “Introduction” in Ko and Shurgot, *Shakespeare’s Sense of Character*, 1-18.

studies have implications for understanding how characters are presented and experienced in performance.

2.3.3- Shakespearean Characters and Classical Rhetoric: “Character-Effects”

In *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, Travis Curtright seeks to “renegotiate the longstanding critical dichotomy between formalism and naturalism.”¹⁵¹ Much of the debate concerning Shakespeare’s characters has historically centered upon acting styles available to the Elizabethan performers, and whether or not a shift occurred during Shakespeare’s time in the theater, away from a formalist model of acting and toward a more naturalistic one.¹⁵² Such discussions, however, overlook an important feature of Shakespeare’s characters: their rhetorical configuration. Situating his work within this dichotomy between formalism and naturalism, Curtright attempts to ground notions of “lifelike” characters within the classical rhetorical techniques, known both by Shakespeare (who employed them in his texts) as well as his actors. The use of such techniques is essential to Shakespeare’s “crafting dramatic persons.” In performance, such rhetorical techniques are “actualized for audiences with personation, the performance of all such techniques on the stage.”¹⁵³ This embodiment of rhetorical style, “first and formally emerges from the linguistic structure of dramatic persons” as these rhetorical techniques “provide the eluctionary [sic], relational, behavioral, and dialogical purview for actualization of ‘embodied characters’ upon the stage.”¹⁵⁴ These rhetorical techniques in

¹⁵¹ See full citation above, fn.135.

¹⁵² Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 1-8.

¹⁵³ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 4-5.

¹⁵⁴ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 5.

performance result in “character-effects” or “person-effects” which “capture the potentialities of the text or a particular role to provide audiences with mimetic action.”¹⁵⁵ The result of such a reorientation is that rather than providing a “Whiggish history” concerning the “progress of naturalism in early modern acting styles” an investigation into the classical rhetorical tradition reveals that it “already anticipated supposedly later techniques of personation, including the illusions of interiority or inwardness.”¹⁵⁶

Curtright identifies his pursuit as “explor[ing] how the classical rhetorical tradition would inform an actor’s personation of character in ways that could enhance the illusion of what was ‘truly done’ on stage.”¹⁵⁷ He contends that dichotomies such as naturalism and formalism “however accurate within a general history of ideas, ultimately misconstrues the theoretical workings of rhetoric.”¹⁵⁸ Such dichotomies, “set antithetical parameters of discussion about character and its enactment.”¹⁵⁹ As Curtright contends, naturalism and formalism, while helpful heuristics, are not the only ways of accounting for “lifelike” presentations that emerge on stage. Comparative argumentation, however, has influenced the debate “over the ‘real’ and ‘all around, solid human beings’ quality of Shakespeare’s characters in performance for decades....”¹⁶⁰ Acknowledging caution against importing ahistorical styles upon Shakespeare’s stage as both correct and helpful, Curtright contends that arguments concerned with Elizabethan modes of

¹⁵⁵ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 5.

¹⁵⁶ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 1.

¹⁵⁹ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 2.

¹⁶⁰ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 2.

delivery have overlooked classical rhetorical techniques in Shakespeare's dramas, which he suggests are a key ingredient to "lifelike" characters.

Curtright employs the terms character-effect or person-effect to describe the relationship between the rhetorical techniques employed by Shakespeare to craft his dramatic persons and their "effect" on stage, bringing "lifelike(ness)" to characters. While embodiment of *dramatis personae* plays a role, this alone does not account for "lifelike" effects of characters (as demonstrated in the formalism vs naturalism debate). Curtright argues that, "character should be indicated or qualified by 'effects' less because of how character has been deconstructed or shown to be a construct and more because dramatic persons are designed to become present only when they are performed."¹⁶¹ This is an essential distinction in how a performance-oriented approach, at least for Shakespeare's plays, necessarily reorients analysis of character. As unperformed text, there are no true "characters" but rather *dramatis personae*, the "masks through which the text speaks."¹⁶² In performance, the medium for which the *dramatis personae* were crafted, characters emerge as something more than simply mediators or interpreters of text, but as "lifelike" entities. But the *how* is more complex than simply physical representation in the medium shift. Curtright suggests that it is not merely through embodiment that characters emerge as lifelike (though this also plays a part), but rather, it is by means of Shakespeare's use of rhetorical techniques embedded within the drama, and the actors' "personation" of them, that such character-effects on the stage are produced.

¹⁶¹ Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons*, 5.

¹⁶² Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons*, 10, n.23.

Curtright's argument that Shakespeare employs rhetorical techniques to create lifelike characters in performance is then supported by attempts to pinpoint specific "rhetorical genres, typological characterizations, artistic appeals from *ethos*, figures of speech, and oratorical techniques that could aid the actor in the performance of character as an early modern illusion of life."¹⁶³ Such rhetorical techniques include: *enargeia*¹⁶⁴ (Richard in *Richard III*), "audacity" and declamation (Kate, *Taming of the Shrew*), "personation" within the rhetorical tradition (as seen in *Much Ado about Nothing*), character-type and the overlap between natural and rhetorical acting styles in performance (Iago in *Othello*), and finally forensic speech and appeals from *ethos* in judicial oratory (Marina in *Pericles*). He concludes with a "practical" example of how direct speech operates and creates "character-effects" in modern restaging at the Globe (*Hamlet*).

Curtright's reorientation of the "lifelikeness" of characters, away from the dichotomy of formalism and naturalism, and his configuration of them in light of rhetorical techniques producing "character-effects" is appealing on many fronts. However, identifying such rhetorical techniques (and articulating their specific "effect" in performance) is far more complex than it first appears. For example, Curtright argues that the historian's use of *enargeia* not only reveals how "historical personages become literary characters,"¹⁶⁵ but it illuminates Shakespeare's "lifelike" presentation of the typological character Richard III.¹⁶⁶ In order to "identify" *enargeia*

¹⁶³ Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons*, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Curtright defines *enargeia* as "vivid description of words or events" (Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons*, 14, 17-18).

¹⁶⁵ Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons*, 18.

¹⁶⁶ Both More and Shakespeare's Richards "stem from the authors' shared assumptions about the close relationship between classical oratory and historiography and the importance of *enargeia*" (Curtright, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Persons*, 22). Referring to More's description of Richard, which served as a model for Shakespeare: "Such vivid *enargeia* or *evidentia* provides an embryonic model for dramatization upon actual stages" (26).

and discuss its potential, Curtright rereads the “tyrant types” from Tacitus’s depiction of Tiberias, through Terence, into More’s *Historia* of Richard III, and finally into Shakespeare’s characterization of him.¹⁶⁷ Ultimately Curtright makes a compelling case for the historian’s use of *enargeia* to create characters, that More’s *Historia* does appear to *imitate* Tacitus and Terence (both of whom he is aware), and he demonstrates well how Shakespeare’s Richard III *imitates* More’s. Such reconstructions, however, are extremely complex and depend heavily upon the recognition of *enargeia* among the historians as a textualized feature of these character types, not something that emerges in performance. More compelling, however, is the notion that the characteristics of *enargeia* do have “character-effects” on typological characters in performance, here Richard III, moving an audience to experience a “vivid” and “real” person by providing a sense of “interiority.” The proper recognition and implementation of this technique results not in actors simply being “mouthpieces” to the drama, but in actors recognizing the technique and using it to bring lifelikeness to characters on stage. Similarly, while the identification of Kate’s speech as “declamation” is helpful, the notion that this rhetorical feature results in a “character-effect” is significant. The actual effect created by the personation of such a technique might be debated, but the result is clear: in performance, Kate is not simply the product of the written words, but her words “mean more” in light of the rhetorical exercise.

Exploring classical rhetorical techniques and their impact in performance makes important strides in breaking down the dichotomy of formalism and naturalism within Shakespearean character criticism. If Shakespeare’s actors are indeed aware of and are able to identify these rhetorical techniques, even in a formalized mode of acting, the technique lends

¹⁶⁷ Curtright, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Persons*, 13-36.

itself to a realistic personation, thus transcending the “historically” problematic explanations for a pre-Enlightenment sense of self or interiority. There is less of a need to make the case historically that a type of “naturalism” emerges during the time of Shakespeare, as classical rhetoric can explain the appearance of the “real.” In his use of classical rhetorical techniques then, Shakespeare’s characters in performance give the appearance of real persons and as such they anticipate notions of a post-Enlightenment sense of self and interiority in their embodiment on stage.

2.3.4- A “Processural” Approach to Characters: Characters as “Becoming”

In a much more complex and theoretically dense approach, Nicholas Luke adopts the French philosopher Alain Badiou’s notions of the “event,” and the “subject”¹⁶⁸ (later termed the “evental subject”¹⁶⁹) as a way of articulating the “new” in Shakespearean characters; distinguishing between what is “there,” “what happens” to them, and what Shakespeare “does” with them.¹⁷⁰ In *Shakespearean Arrivals*, Luke challenges traditional literary concepts of character as pre-established, determined, and essentialist, and seeks to explore the variety of ways in which characters in these dramas become, emerge, and arrive. This is not true of all of Shakespeare’s characters, nor are these arrivals “final nor necessarily positive,”¹⁷¹ but those that do “arrive” represent the “something more” of Shakespearean characters. This emphasis on

¹⁶⁸ See full citation above, fn. 138. In addition to Badiou, who forms the basis of this approach, Luke appeals to a wide and impressive range of philosophers and thinkers, starting with Montaigne (whose essays serve as a primary and contemporary place to begin in understanding Shakespeare’s notion of character), then to Hegel, and finally Zizek and Agamben.

¹⁶⁹ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 13.

¹⁷⁰ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 1-12.

¹⁷¹ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 11.

becoming, the shift of attention from the character to “evental subject,” seeks to demonstrate how certain characters in Shakespeare are not “pre-existent” to the narrative “or determined” by its plot, but rather how they are capable of transformation within the drama itself.

One of the questions that launches Luke’s investigation concerns the “otherness” of Shakespeare’s characters: “What is it about the plays that made certain Shakespearean characters seem different: to seem as if they were *more* than characters? Something must happen to them...”¹⁷² The something *more* in this initial question is an attempt to articulate the “happening” that occurs within particular characters, something Luke later comes to identify with the “new.” The new is not an internal shift, a self-motivation, or an intentional decision made by the character to change, but rather something external, alien, radically intrusive to the character. This “rupturing newness,” an event, situation, or relationship originating outside of the character can present in many forms, but the key determining factor is that it leads to a transformation. Such transformations reveal “new” aspects of the character, something that did not exist within that character prior to the event. More significantly, this notion of the “arrival” problematizes, or at least represents a significant shift from more traditional notions of character(ization). That characters “become” something demonstrates that Shakespeare portrays characters which can develop, be altered, or change.

Luke’s notion of “arrival” and his identification of the “event” drives his investigation as he seeks to determine the ways in which characters become “subjects,” transformed by these

¹⁷² Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 2 (italics original).

“events.”¹⁷³ For Badiou, the event that occupies much of his concern is Paul’s encounter on the road to Damascus. The event, this radical rupture, ultimately brings about a “newness” in Paul, a new self, inconceivable prior to the event. Luke sees a similar scenario in some of Shakespeare’s major characters, where “events” bring about the “arrival” of the character as subject in ways previously unrecognizable and undeterminable. For instance, the characters Romeo and Juliet “arrive” in the event of “love” at first sight.¹⁷⁴ This event creates or establishes a “new,” something different from their previous selves, and brings about their “arrival” on the stage, a new characterization as “tragic lovers,” an identity that did not exist prior to the event of “love” within the play. For Hamlet, it is his encounter with the Ghost, together with his voyage to England, that culminates in a “divided subject;”¹⁷⁵ for Macbeth, it is the “evil” which arrives in his encounter with the Wicked Sisters.¹⁷⁶ These events in one way or another erupt through the narrative, acting upon the characters, and out of the event a “newness” emerges that was previously non-existent.

Luke’s notion of arrival is complex, but at risk of misreading him, I think it marks a helpful step toward conceptualizing how characters in performance may in some sense emerge within and more importantly beyond the drama. In his construction of the arrival, Luke spends a significant amount of time thinking with “critics and thinkers who develop ideas of becoming,

¹⁷³ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 30-37.

¹⁷⁴ “Their singularity is not pre-existing in voice or body, or Petrarchan parroting, but arises from the uniqueness of the obscure event and the changed language it triggered” (Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 55).

¹⁷⁵ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 111.

¹⁷⁶ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 143.

transformation, and creativity.”¹⁷⁷ In a similar fashion to Curtright above, Luke goes to great lengths to show the potential of certain Shakespearean characters, in performance, to transcend their literary verbal descriptors, to demonstrate and become real or life-like, and thus represent “real persons” in ways previously considered anachronistic to Shakespeare’s time. Whether one agrees with the terminology of the “event” as this agent of transformation, this notion of arrivals suggests that something does happen, something new appears, becomes, and transforms in Shakespeare’s characters, and this “becoming,” as a process, is what marks them as “something more” than the sum of the words.

It is important to note that Luke’s processural understanding of character, and his investigation of the “arrival,” is not specifically determined in performance, as the “event” exists in the text. There are times where it is clear that Luke is advocating for a particular “reading” of the plays, however, there are also multiple occasions where Luke references how Shakespeare’s characters depend on the stage for their appearances.¹⁷⁸ Also his attempt to articulate what “happens” to characters,¹⁷⁹ in the drama,¹⁸⁰ Shakespeare’s dramaturgy,¹⁸¹ Shakespeare’s “staging” of them,¹⁸² their “processural” nature,¹⁸³ and an expansion of the conception of character beyond the confines of traditional literary approaches, may each be extended to (and

¹⁷⁷ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 13.

¹⁷⁸ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 11, 136.

¹⁷⁹ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 2.

¹⁸⁰ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 2.

¹⁸¹ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 2.

¹⁸² Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 11, 15.

¹⁸³ Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, 20.

are arguably more persuasive for understanding) how performances inform our understanding of characters.¹⁸⁴ To take this a bit further, while it extends beyond the scope of Luke's investigation, his notion of the "event" and "subject" could very well extend to the performance situation itself, as the "event" of performance invades, and enacts upon the audience in ways that change them. Thus, not only are characters seen as "evental subjects" but so also are audiences.¹⁸⁵

2.3.5-Summary

In Curtright and Luke we find representatives of a broader shift in Shakespeare studies, toward a "reemergence" of character. While Curtright explicitly locates his analysis within performance, Luke's is certainly not antithetical to our task. Each have implications for our understanding of an ancient performance of Mark's disciples by way of analogy. Curtright and Luke both attempt to articulate how it is that Shakespeare's characters emerge as real-life characters in performance, though they do so in very different ways.

For Curtright, this realism occurs in Shakespeare's use of classical rhetorical techniques. Challenging the formalism/naturalism dichotomy that has long dominated the discussion of

¹⁸⁴ Luke utilizes the language of the "play" though it is not always clear whether he intends this as a genre or its place in performance. It is obvious that Luke is offering a "reading" of these plays (for example, mentioning the differences between the quarto and folio in his reading of *King Lear*, and his analysis of Cordelia, 197), and seems to be writing to readers of Shakespeare, yet he also extends the implications of his work to how we understand characters emerging through the drama in performance. For instance, in the Afterword, Luke mentions the enduring (dual) nature of Shakespeare's events, "both in the straightforward sense of being the most performed plays in this, the twenty-first century, and in the present action, energy and thought of those who perform and reinterpret them." (207) As an outsider to the field, I am less inclined to comment on the value of his interpretations of individual plays, but his argument for processural characters, and his demonstration of how characters "become," is certainly a feature of the dramatic works that is worthy of further consideration, in particular how these events are even more "affective" on stage. These arrivals, it seems, would become even more prominent on stage than in print, as the physical bodies are acted upon and respond to such "events."

¹⁸⁵ A similar takeaway is alluded to in Yu Jin Ko's review of this work. See "Review" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 70.4 (2021): 305.

Shakespeare's characters in performance, he concludes that classical rhetorical techniques in performance emerge as "life-like" representations. The mimetic effect is seen through "character-effect" or "person-effect" in performance. In terms of its implications for our study, Curtright's exploration of how classical rhetorical techniques enhance character life-likeness in performance is important for our understanding of Mark's disciples. While Shiner, Shiell, Iverson, and Whinton all utilize ancient rhetoric as an entry point into discussions of ancient performance, and approach rhetoric within the larger "text" in terms of its rhetorical function, further consideration of how classical rhetoric creates "character-effects" is an important step forward (even if only hypothetical). Again, Curtright's application will need significant alteration when analyzing the disciples in Mark, but his language of "character-effects" helps supplement the work of Whinton, particularly how character "types" are configured using classical rhetorical techniques. The most significant step, arguably, is the shift in considering rhetorical techniques as another way of bridging the supposed "anachronism" between a pre-Enlightenment sense of interiority and self, and the ways in which his work invites us to explore how classical rhetorical techniques create "lifelike" characters in performance.¹⁸⁶

In Luke's work we recognized an attempt to articulate what "happens" as characters "arrive" on stage. While using Badiou's specific terminology of "event" and "arrivals" is certainly open to critique, what is significant here is the way in which Luke theorizes characters in process, and how this "becoming" is present in performance. If we are able to find instances

¹⁸⁶ An additional point of connection here between the two fields: the investigation and re-evaluation of the historical periodization of interiority. See for example: Michal Beth Dinkler, "The Thoughts of Many Hearts Shall Be Revealed": Listening in on Lukan Interior Monologues," *JBL* 134.2 (2015): 379-399; Tyler Smith, *The Fourth Gospel and the Manufacture of Minds in Ancient Historiography, Biography, Romance, and Drama* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Hindy Najman, "Imitatio Dei and the Formation of the Subject in Ancient Judaism," *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 309-323; et al.

where characters “proceed” throughout a particular narrative, and in doing so identify events which create “new” aspects within a character, this “becoming” results in a far more complex notion of character(ization) than most literary models. It is not merely “in the minds” of audiences that characters “become,” a psychological and mental representation divorced from the performance itself, but this actually takes place before them on stage. In relation to Mark, if the disciples are in the process of “becoming” throughout the narrative, if we identify “events” which lead to “new” realizations and developments, perhaps this leads us to a different (or at least a more complex) perspective concerning them.

As for engaging Shakespearean studies on character(ization) in performance, this is but a first step. Both Curtright and Luke prioritize the role of the text in understanding character(ization), which in many ways coheres with most biblical performance critical approaches. Both authors complicate literary conceptions of character as fixed, determined, and essentialist, and both seek to explain how characters “emerge” in sympathetic and “real” ways in performance. Further consideration could be given here to how Shakespearean scholarship conceives of “performance” as something other than text. This was implied at the end of our discussion of Luke and will be alluded to once again in our discussion of “script” (see Chapter 3). That being said, Curtright’s investigation of how rhetorical techniques (at least potentially) create lifelike characters in performance and Luke’s conception of the “evental subject” are both insightful and will each contribute to our understanding of Mark’s disciples.

2.4- Summary/Conclusions:

Situated within an already broad and continuously expanding landscape of scholars utilizing performance as a critical lens, research focusing specifically on character(ization) in

performance has started to emerge from academic spaces traditionally dominated by historical and literary approaches, even if slowly. Perhaps one of the more subtle contributions of this chapter to the larger task of biblical performance criticism is simply to demonstrate that it is not alone in contemplating character(ization) in performance. The conversations selected here from Homeric and Shakespearean scholarship not only support the efforts of biblical performance critics, but also provide some theoretical credence to its task. While it is true that the views above do not represent the majority positions in any of their fields, their recent emergence demonstrates a developing and substantive shift in thinking about character(ization) in light of performance. The shift from understanding characters as primarily literary figures to subjects written for and experienced primarily in performance opens the door to a host of questions, not least of which is how to grapple with the elusive and yet distinct nature of character(ization) in performance. Few would deny that there is a difference in the way character(ization) functions in writing and performance, and yet the burden of demonstrating these differences remains almost solely on the performance critics. In particular, the question remains, how might we identify and articulate such difference?

As evidenced from the works above, several answers have been offered to this question, which may suggest either that the question is beyond any singular or simple answer or more caustically that we need to ask better questions. The truth is probably somewhere between. On the one hand, the question of character(ization) in performance is difficult (if not impossible) to address in a general sense. Both character(ization) and performance—inherently and independent of each other—resist attempts to be conceptualized in abstract terms. The diversity of views in this chapter alone further demonstrates the difficulty that comes from wrestling with the notion

of character(ization) in performance at the level of universals or abstraction. This difficulty is reflective of the limitations of much cross-disciplinary work. In some sense, any attempt to articulate the difference between conceptions of character(ization) in literature and performance must necessarily be limited to particular instances, even if our frameworks for conceptualizing these differences appeal to ideas which may appear more broadly.

Acknowledging these conceptual speed bumps and theoretical limitations, this does not necessarily mean that attempting to conceptualize character(ization) in performance in an abstract sense—nor the cross-disciplinary work undertaken toward such a task—is theoretically bankrupt. Opening the conversation to multiple conceptions of character(ization) in performance reveals a number of commonalities in spite of disciplinary particularity—even if such commonalities are only allowed to crossover such boundaries at the level of analogy. While I have no intention of synthesizing the above approaches for the purposes of constructing a permanent model, nor do I think one should, these commonalities perhaps get us closer to something that resembles an analogous (as opposed to universal) theory of character(ization) in performance, so far as one may be bold enough to posit such. More cautiously, the views expressed in this chapter give us some conceptual grounds upon which we might find firmer footing as we begin an investigation of Mark's disciples as characters in performance.

Commonalities are instructive in our task; however, it is equally important to note differences within these views. Such diversity reinforces the inherent particularity that comes with any attempt to analyze character(ization) in performance. While a general theory of character(ization) in performance is an essential and helpful starting point, it does not (nor can it) provide us with a definitive model through which we might filter all characters, in all

performance texts, throughout time. The particularity of such investigations must be weighed and measured against the potentiality of reimagined performance scenarios, an infinitely reconstructive and creative task, whose results are dependent upon the contexts in which we reimagine them. Here, the differences found in the views in this chapter help to demonstrate the necessity of upholding both a general and particular sense of character(ization) in performance.

As we shift our focus from more general notions of character(ization) and turn toward Mark's disciples, the conversations in this chapter give us some clues as to where we might begin thinking about them as characters written for and experienced in performance. While they will not each carry the same weight for our own analysis, they do provide us with starting points for our investigation. Features unique to performance such as embodiment, extralinguistic and paralinguistic communication, and the clarification of illocutionary force must be considered in any understanding of Mark's disciples as characters and their characterization in performance. Reimagining ways in which audiences may have constructed the disciples in performance will open the doors to our understanding of how empathy, sympathy, and judgement play a determinative role in any understanding of their rhetorical function in a performance of Mark. Considering the larger traditional-characterization of the disciples (so far as this is possible) will be necessary for our task, as there are instances in Mark where the performance text presumes audiences' familiarity with them as characters prior to the performance. Evaluating audiences' alignment and allegiance to characters in a performance of Mark, particularly in sequential order, how at different points within the story it invites audiences to further consider these characters in the story, may offer additional insights into the varied audience experiences of the disciples in a telling of Mark. Re-engaging the classical rhetorical tradition, specifically with questions of how

rhetorical constructions may have contributed to “character-effects” in performance, may illuminate particular characteristics of Mark’s disciples. Identifying potential instances of “arrival” and “becoming” in the story of Mark may also illuminate ways in which audiences see and experience changes within the disciples’ character(ization), contributing to the effect of “realness.”

Performance specific features, audiences’ mental construction of characters, the prior traditions from which these characters emerge and to which they contribute, audience alignment and allegiance—particularly within the temporal limitations of performance, classical rhetorical devices as insight into character-effects, and the changing nature of characters in performance, will all play some role in our construction of Mark’s disciples. By examining Mark’s disciples through these elements of performance, among others, a more complex picture of character(ization) in performance begins to emerge, leaving us with both a more appreciative, but also a more artificial or re-constructed sense of how first-century audiences may have understood Mark’s disciples in performance.

Such “happenings” may occur at various levels, such as the level of the performer (as interpreter and presenter), the audience (both individual and communal), the written script itself (object used for performance), or some combination of all three. It is important to recognize which level, or which combination of levels, we are discussing at any given point. This will be a challenge moving forward, as each of these levels will necessarily contribute to our general sense of character(ization) in a performance, but may not all be discussed explicitly in every particular scene where we look at Mark’s disciples.

A final clarifying word on the object of study. Each of the examples in this chapter pays specific attention to how textual clues lead to potential performance insights. These seemingly strange bedfellows were intentionally selected as conversation partners, as we know little about the actual performances of Mark and must rely on textual clues. In some sense, this focus on textual clues reflects the material limitation of such reconstructive work, and marks both the promise and shortcomings of any performance-oriented approach. A lack of performance materiality and a reliance upon texts for these insights, however, should not be confused with a textual analysis of a text, as text. An important caveat in these approaches is that the text offers clues for assessing a reconstructed (even if only hypothetical) object of study, an object that is both constructed by but also exists independent of the text. The text is but one of several factors that contribute to one's understanding of the work in performance. Thus, the writing, or the text, is one element of the performance itself. It is an enabling factor but not the only determining factor in the process of performance. It is this distinction, between text and the object of study for performance-oriented approaches, that we turn toward in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT'S IN A NAME? BETWEEN SCRIPT AND SCRIPTURE

Introduction

One of the most significant differences between biblical performance criticism and its predecessors is the object of study. Questions concerning the object of study in biblical studies are not new, though they have become more pronounced in recent research, emerging alongside a growing dissatisfaction with the ways in which modern readers conceive of the ancient textual landscape(s). Such dissatisfaction has led to a proliferation of metaphors, each seeking to grasp, by analogy, a better understanding of texts and textuality within an expansive and elusive ancient context. Such metaphors, however, are inherently limited, as metaphors often obscure as much as they reveal. Both a clearer sense of an object of study, and the root metaphors we use to better understand those objects, are essential to recognizing the importance and distinctiveness of a performance critical approach.

Biblical performance critics attempt to reimagine ancient performance events, where the biblical narratives would have been experienced as oral performances—whether as public readings, recitation from memory, or within a storytelling tradition. Attentiveness to the dynamics of various media illuminate the importance of recognizing and identifying a categorical distinctiveness between a text and its performance. For example, analyzing a performance event, as opposed to a text, redefines the mode of experience, forcing interpreters to

reimagine audiences as auditors and viewers rather than as readers navigating a text.¹ As such, the object of study in performance is not merely the text (in its currently constructed form), but rather the potential of texts as they might have been experienced within a multisensory and multifaceted event—an event which itself may be constructed and reimagined in a multitude of ways. Terms such as “reimagine,” “construction,” and similar creative concepts, may of course raise questions of historicity, legitimacy, and authority for some readers. Concerns such as these are indeed justified within a specific historical interpretive framework. However, as I will suggest below, reimagined performance events are theoretically and fundamentally no less hypothetical than the reconstructed text(s) utilized in literary treatments or the situations in which historians envision readers of these texts.² The content of a performance may resemble or reflect shared ideas within a text, but as an object of study, the performance event exists outside of and is at least theoretically independently from a text itself.³ We might say that the

¹ This is but one of the many ways in which a performance approach reorients our understanding of the audience and its relationship to the text. Because the focus of this project is on how Mark was (or might have been) received by early audiences in performance, the perspective of the audience has taken precedence in many of my examples. This, however, should be understood as the beginning and not be the end point of the distinctions. For instance, Grahme F. Thompson’s definition is perhaps a more helpful for performance in general, as he locates performance at the intersections of the text, actor, and audience: “performance is the mode of assessment of the ‘textual/character/actor’ interaction, Performance is interestingly placed at the intersection of the text, the actor/character and the audience” (“Approaches to Performance: An analysis of Terms” in Philip Auslander, ed. *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* vol. 1 [London: Routledge, 2003], 138). For more thorough and recent treatment on how our understanding of the audience in a performance event plays a key role in the task of biblical performance criticism, see: Kelly Iverson, *Performing Early Christian Literature: Audience Experience and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

² It goes without saying that we possess carefully reproduced biblical and extra-biblical texts due to such work, and that this work is essential to our field. However, this should not be confused with an original manuscript, nor even the idea that we gain access to original manuscripts. For recent and extended critiques of textual criticism and its claims to produce an “original” text see among others: Brennan Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Yii-Jan Lin, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts: New Testament Textual Criticism and the Biological Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³ This distinction, which is important for this project, is largely adapted from the work of Shakespearean scholars. My thinking here is driven primarily by my engagement with the work of performance studies and Shakespearean scholar W.M.B. Worthen. Several of his works implicitly inform my thinking throughout his chapter,

performance is *related to yet distinct from* the text. This is an important distinction that will receive additional consideration throughout this chapter.

It is not insignificant that biblical performance critics are limited in the material available for reimagining these reconstructed events, with virtually all the data about “what” is being performed emerging from biblical texts themselves.⁴ Due to this dependence upon a text for reconstructions of the performance event, it is natural to compare or conflate the insights of performance critics with literary approaches, and more specifically narrative-critical interpretations of character—or at least to raise questions of performance’s utility in light of other more widely accepted approaches. Such comparisons, however, often fail to retain, or at least elide, the distinctiveness of each medium—something that biblical performance critics are often keen to demonstrate. In short, the two approaches are studying different objects. In order to better distinguish the aims and sensitivities of a performance critical approach, therefore, greater clarity on what exactly is being studied ought to be explored before proceeding.

In this chapter, I will begin by briefly raising an ontological question: what constitutes the Gospel of Mark? By problematizing assumptions of a monolithic and primarily material or textual understanding of Mark, this suggests that a performance event and a text may be conceived of as two *related yet distinct* objects of study. Next, I will situate this study among a

but for a helpful exploration of the “conceptual crisis” which arises from a failure to distinguish the object see: “Drama, Performativity, Performance,” *PMLA* 113.5 (1998): 1093-1107.

⁴ The *how* of performance is where much of this imaginative and reconstructive work takes place, but the *what* of performance is necessarily limited by and to the texts themselves. This, however, should not be confused with the idea that the text contains all of the information necessary for performance (i.e. performance directions, like in some modern scripts), nor that performances must necessarily be limited by the constraints of a text (verbatim performances do not always *mean* the same thing). The *how* and *what* are intimately linked in the meaning making process, as the *how* informs *what* is being communicated. For some readers, this may seem like an overly pedantic or unnecessary distinction, but nevertheless it is an essential one for the performance critical approach.

growing number of attempts to reimagine the ancient textual landscape(s) and more specifically our relation to it as modern readers and thinkers. Biblical studies have long problematized the anachronistic and fraught categories and assumptions by which modern readers approach ancient texts. More recently—in an attempt to better conceptualize the dynamic nature of texts in antiquity and attend to the limitations of modern notions of textuality as an analogue to ancient textual landscape(s)—a series of metaphors has been proposed which attempt to illuminate *some* of these varying dynamics. Situated within this broader conversation, I will propose a supplementary set of metaphors—scripts and scriptures—as aids for conceptualizing *additional* ways in which texts were experienced and used in antiquity. These metaphors are by no means unique to this work, nor is their use here particularly novel. However, it is my contention that their implications as root metaphors for understanding ancient textuality, and in particular biblical texts, have remained relatively underutilized. As with all metaphors, there are necessarily limitations to how far the metaphor might carry us, and the final section of this chapter will highlight the usefulness of these metaphors for this present work, while also recognizing and attending to some of their limitations.

3.1- A Question of Ontology: What is the Gospel of Mark?

Before proposing a new metaphor, it is necessary to determine what exactly that metaphor attempts to illuminate. Despite the relatively widespread acceptance that literacy rates were low in antiquity—more specifically the notion that the majority of persons in antiquity presumably did not possess the literary capacity to engage with texts such as the gospels—this has led to little explicit consideration of how different strategies are employed to make meaning within

different media.⁵ Readers do not experience narratives in the same way as viewers or auditors and vice versa. Part of this confusion, then, stems from a conflation of “narrative” and content within the two media; or more pointedly, from an inability to disentangle various media as distinct objects of study.⁶

One of the more difficult questions to wrestle with here at the outset reveals the importance of identifying our object: what constitutes the Gospel of Mark? While this question might seem innocuous at first, how one answers it carries with it a host of assumptions, both consciously and subconsciously. Answers to this question will determine what metaphors may be applicable to our understanding of this object. In order to justify the introduction of a new metaphor, we must ascertain both what the metaphor aims to clarify (the object of study) and why a new metaphor is necessary in the first place (what, if any advantage does this carry over previous metaphors?).

This question of the nature of the Gospel of Mark is both empirically simple, yet theoretically complex. On the one hand, we might say that Mark is a text. More specifically, we could say that it is a biblical or—in a Christian theological context—a canonical text. As an object, this text is subject to analysis both as a text, and as a text within its particular canonical

⁵ Widespread illiteracy in and around the first-century seems to be gaining a wider acceptance among biblical scholars as the milieu in which the gospels were written. Much of the contention between performance critics and more historical approaches lies not in this historical situation but in the hermeneutical implications. Performance critics point to a disconnect between the presumed historical context and modern interpretive practices. Despite a general acceptance of widespread illiteracy as a social and historical reality in and around the first-century, such recognition has led to little substantive difference in the ways in which modern scholars think about the uses of texts in antiquity. For more on how insights into ancient literacy and the oral culture ought to be seen as a paradigm shift in biblical studies see: Rhoads and Dewey, “Performance Criticism: A Paradigm Shift,” 1-26.

⁶ For a discussion of the transmediality of narratives and the issues that arise when contemplating this shift, see the helpful collection of essays in, M.L. Ryan ed., *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), especially Marie-Laure Ryan, “Introduction,” 1-40.

context. But, when placed historically within a first-century environment of limited literacy, and prior to its placement in or recognition with a canon, we must ask the question of utility: What is the purpose of a text within a milieu of limited literacy? Or, how might one use this text absent its canonical framing? One could say that this text is written for those who can read, and thus, it is written for a select and elite group of persons in the first-century. We might also say that Mark's text is engaging with previous oral-traditions about Jesus, and while this oral tradition is materially absent from our literary canon, this text engages with a very real, yet non-literary canon of its own. As a written text, therefore, readers could weigh or compare Mark's written Gospel (a new material object) against the oral traditions (similar in content, yet a different object) which preceded it. Both of these notions are fair, and not without historical precedence. However, as many have argued, it seems unlikely that Mark is intended *only* for the elite readers in his society.⁷ Therefore, modern scholars of this object must determine what the text is for a non-elite, illiterate audience, within this rhetorical culture—a world in which texts and oral performances seem to exist side by side, and in service to one another.⁸ What then is the object of study, if Mark is a text but was unable to be—and therefore, most likely was not—read by the majority of the persons who experienced it? Similar questions—more specifically, questions about the use of a text that emerges from and exists within a mixed media environment—are by

⁷ This still seems to be the general view of Mark in New Testament studies, primarily based on analyses of Mark's grammatical simplicity, and reconstructions of Christian origins. More recently, however, the notion that the gospel authors are writing for a "more common" audience has been challenged. For an argument in favor of the Gospels as products by and for the literary for elite, see Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁸ For further discussion of "rhetorical culture" and the interplay of oral rhetoric and written text in the first-century milieu, see Vernon Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christianity: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

no means unique to biblical performance critics. Both classicists and Shakespearean scholars have wrestled with some version of these questions in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of success.

The importance of clearly identifying the object of study may be demonstrated in the following question: When referencing the Homeric epics, to what is a classicist referring? They may be referring to something “behind” the text(s), such as the performance traditions from which the text(s) emerges. They may refer to a particular version of the performance tradition, an early or perhaps “original” text(s), which may be understood as a version or one hypothetical instantiation—though perhaps representative— of that tradition within a series of performances. The object of study may be a hypothetical and admittedly reconstructed text, a text whose democratic reconstruction may be said to be the best representation of earlier versions. It may also refer to various manuscripts, or to a single, authoritative, compiled version. In some sense, we might say that as an object of study the Homeric epics are all of these things, and perhaps more. However, to refer to the Homeric epics without qualifiers, while necessary and helpful within a discipline of study, obscures the unique object in each of these designations. To speak of the Homeric epics as a general object, without the use of additional qualifiers, suggests that each modality in which it might be understood represents the same object. But do each of these conceptions of the object equate to the same object of study? Can methods of reading be used to study oral traditions and performances? While each of these distinct objects might in their own right be called *Homer*, *Illiad*, or *Odyssey*, they are not the same. Each mode and/or medium might be considered a distinct object of study that requires a specific approach.

Questions about the object of study are more contentious in Shakespearean studies, as Shakespeare's work is arguably still accessible as mixed media. Today, Shakespeare's writings are often taught and encountered within literate settings, yet performances of Shakespeare's works are still widely available in the present day. So, when a Shakespearean scholar writes of Hamlet, which Hamlet do they have in mind? They may be referring to Shakespeare's original script for his stage. Or they may refer to the version of the text which is found in the first folio—an "original" text but not "the" original script. They may refer to an authoritative version of the play—a text which contains the remnants of one iteration of something that once existed only on stage. They may have in mind a particular iteration of the play, for instance, a local theatre's rendition of Hamlet, or even a high school production.⁹ I am not suggesting that any single reference to Hamlet *does* imply all of these, but rather that an unqualified reference to Hamlet *may* have any of these objects in mind. Most likely the author has a definitive idea of what they mean when they reference Hamlet, but without the use of qualifiers, this definitive sense may not be shared by all readers. Context may help to distinguish an author's object, yet, without specifying which iteration or object they intend, a reader might posit each of these as the object of consideration. Confusion may abound without such clarity. Thus, each of these qualifiers, while they may seem simple enough, are necessary in determining the object being analyzed, questioned, and discussed.

⁹ Such distinctions are often rhetorical, as part of larger claims about the locus of authority. For a more thorough discussion of the implications and limitations of the various ways in which Shakespearean scholars have sought to (and many times have failed to) articulate the object of study and the relationship between the various media see, W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-44.

Now a case could be made that the Homeric epics and Shakespeare's texts are more obvious sites of contention, as these scripts and plays continue to be recast, produced, and performed. But are such distinctions helpful or even necessary in our investigation of the Gospel of Mark? Determining whether or not one *may* or *should* speak of such a varied object in reference to the Gospel of Mark is perhaps questionable, however, I wish to point out that this is something that already *does* happen within scholarship.

Within studies of Mark, there seems to be a variety of ways in which scholars conceive of Mark as an object of study. In much the same way as a scholar might assume a particular modality or medium for their study of the Homeric epics, or an author may have a definitive idea of Hamlet in mind when referencing the play, within studies of Mark a generalized reference can refer to several things. For instance, in a general reference to the Gospel of Mark an author may be referring to: 1) the remains of oral tradition (what the text contains or represents); 2) the story, or the contents of a text (what a text says/means); 3) an "original" text (what the text was); 4) the material remains of an earlier version of the text (what the text has been); 5) the material or physical re-presentation of the text (what we consider the text to be now); 6) the story as independent of the text; or 7) some combination of the above.

To these we might add others, and in some sense, none of these are mutually exclusive. An "original text" of Mark might arguably and hypothetically be reconstructed from later manuscripts, but such a reconstruction is part of an elaborate and complex process of textual criticism, and must not be confused for "the" original text of Mark. To complicate this further, earlier manuscripts may inform later textual editions, but not all earlier manuscripts are included nor are they given the same consideration in a democratic or authoritative reconstruction of a

text. Only select texts come to inform both the ancient editions and the modern re-presentation of the text.¹⁰ More abstractly, the story that is found within Mark may also be understood as something that exists both outside of the text and within it—for example, we may speak of one’s knowledge of the Gospel of Mark without that person ever having held or read a document by that title, or having read a digitized text. Or, more concretely, we may speak of the story as it is found within the text.¹¹ Experiences of the story—whether as readers, hearers, viewers, etc.—are at least in some sense derived from a story that is (even if eventually) written, but an important distinction here is that one’s ideation of the story need not be entirely dependent upon its textuality or its materiality.

More specific to the concerns of this project, additional assumptions and layers come by way of chronology and geography: When and where—and we might also add, for whom—does the “Gospel of Mark” become *the* Gospel of Mark?¹² While such questions are largely dependent upon how one defines this object above, chronology and geography are necessary frameworks in determining a particular object of study. In terms of chronology, it is possible to imagine that even after the text has been written, a person might “know” Mark without having read it. It is also possible that a given audience with knowledge of the story (not text) may eventually read it as text at a later date, and at that point it becomes for that audience a different object of study. In

¹⁰ For a thorough critique of the ways in which textual criticism prioritizes certain texts at the expense of others see Lin, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts*.

¹¹ Without narrative criticism, this idea is less feasible. While form and redaction critics spoke of the traditions behind these texts, and presumed some narrativization of the tradition, it was narrative criticism that sought to approach the “text” as a complete utterance. This further demonstrates the reliance of performance critics on the insights provided by narrative criticism, but also shows how performance in many ways is a development beyond narrative criticism.

¹² Scholars are debating this question anew, as text, but a performance critical framework reminds us that early audiences might have a notion of Mark as a story or performance before its later arrival or reception as written text.

terms of geography, simultaneously, the Gospel of Mark may refer to a story in one location (absent text), a text in others (absent public performance), and a performance either with a text present or not. That the status of Mark might change over time (chronologically), or that it might simultaneously be understood or conceived of as multiple objects in different media, and that this might vary among locations (geographically), are each important factors in differentiating an object of study.

Problematizing the object of study could continue *ad nauseam*. Rather than continue to muddy the waters, however, we might concede the following: all of these examples—each of which already appear within academic discourse on Mark—are simultaneously both Mark and not Mark. Each is distinct, as each represents an object—whether material or theoretical—which has been conceived of, studied, or identified as Mark, and yet, none of these distinct objects in and of themselves definitively or completely answer our question “what is Mark?” in a universal way.

Ultimately, while these questions and categorizations evade a *universal* or a simple solution, such questions are not insignificant to any *particular* investigation. If we conceive of the Gospel of Mark as existing in related yet distinct media and modes, it is important to articulate which media and which mode is under investigation. It is also important to identify why or how that object is distinct from others, and precisely where and when we locate the proposed object of study within this matrix of mixed reception. This is an especially important insight for the compatibility of multiple metaphors for understanding the object, as well as the historical validity of the dual metaphors proposed below.

Given all of these potential sites of investigation, is it possible to have productive discussion of an object with so many potential qualifiers? Surely, as the history of the field demonstrates, there is a way in which a group of persons might speak productively about a more general object that is the Gospel of Mark without the need for such excessive couching. Here, insight from aesthetics as to the ontological nature of art, music, and literature may be helpful in further clarifying our thinking in this regard.

In his monograph *The Performance of Reading*, Peter Kivy begins by wrestling with the ontological albatross that is “literature.”¹³ By literature Kivy has in mind the novel. As a way of highlighting the complexities of literature and as a means of providing analogous categories for consideration, he begins with less contentious—or at least more easily distinguishable—examples within art, which he terms autographic and allographic.¹⁴

According to Kivy, an autographic art is a piece of art that exists (or once existed) and may be regarded as a singular entity. The artistic medium which most closely follows this paradigm is that of a painting. Paintings are solitary works, easily defined as physical objects, capable of being located both in space and time. An autographic piece can be observed, held or touched, and is bound by its materiality. A painting can be present only in a single location at a particular time. It is material, and is thus capable of being destroyed or rendered obsolete. As an object of study, one can reference a painting without the need for additional qualifiers. One can speak about the artist as sole creator (authority/authorship), talk about its point of origin and

¹³ Peter Kivy, *The Performance of Reading: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

¹⁴ Kivy is drawing from the work of Nelson Goodman, *Language of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968).

locate that originating point within a specific reference to time (temporal), or pinpoint its particular location at this moment (geographical). For example, we might speak of the *Mona Lisa* as an object in very specific and defined ways—its creator (DiVinci), its material (oil paints, poplar wood), its date of production (contested, but limited to 1503-1519), and its current location (Louvre, Paris). All of these distinctive marks may be *presumed* in a general reference to the piece. While many copies of the *Mona Lisa* exist, there is only one object that might be referred to as “the” *Mona Lisa*. As a material object, the *Mona Lisa* is an example of a distinct object of study without the need for additional qualifiers.¹⁵

In contrast to autographic art, an allographic art is less easily defined, and is more fluid when determining it as an object of study. The category that most closely aligns with an allographic paradigm is that of music.¹⁶ A piece of music is not a solitary, easily identifiable, or even necessarily a physical object—though physical aspects might accompany it (i.e., a score, a record, etc.). A musical work is more difficult to locate in spatial and temporal dimensions. For example, we might consider Beethoven’s *Für Elise*. While it is composed by Beethoven, it has

¹⁵ It is worth noting that even with an autographic art, various methods could be employed for “interpreting” the object or discussing its significance. Historical, reception, composition, restoration, etc. The key distinctive factor is that regardless of one’s approach, each investigation can point to a single object of study. Information concerning the object may be contested or vary among its observers, but the object itself is not disputed. This, however, is not necessarily the case with allographic arts.

¹⁶ It is worth noting that several biblical performance critics cite the musical score as a potential analogue for understanding the role of texts in the ancient world. This may, at least in part, stem from the work of early performance critic J. L. Styan who uses the language of “text-as-score” as a parallel construction of the “the plays as blueprints for performance” (*The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 235). The musical score will also serve as a useful analogue for Alessandro Vatri, whose work is discussed further below (*Orality and Performance in Classical Attic Prose: A Linguistic Approach* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017]). More recently, Yii-Jan Lin has proposed music, more specifically jazz, as an analogue or metaphor for understanding the role of textual criticism. See Yii-Jan Lin, “Musical Performance Practice and New Testament Textual Criticism: A Proposal for Creative Philology,” *EC* 11.1 (2020): 71-93.

an uncertain and complicated history of production.¹⁷ It was not published during his lifetime but rather appears as a score 40 years after his death. There is no known performance of the piece by Beethoven, though it would not be illogical to imagine that he did in fact play (and change) this piece at some point in time. Copies of this score exist, but the original score is now lost.¹⁸ The score as it is currently constructed was produced from a score not found among Beethoven's archives, but rather a work found amongst the possessions of Therese Malfatti. It is debated whether Therese was the original recipient of the piece or not. Its title, by which it is currently known, is not necessarily the one given to it by its composer.¹⁹ Rather, the title derives from an interpretation of the inscription at the top of the page. Given the circumstances under which this score was discovered, in the possession of Therese's personal letters, the assigned title itself might be a misreading of the inscription, perhaps due to Beethoven's poor handwriting. The material boundaries of what constitutes Beethoven's *Für Elise* are contested and its autographic sense is unrecoverable.

But beyond its material history and the lack of an "original" score, and perhaps more importantly for our consideration, *Für Elise* as an object of study is not limited to a particular medium or by its materiality. As an object of study, it may be experienced and analyzed in multiple media, and in some cases these experiences may occur in events absent its presence as a material object. Different performances of the piece may alter the score and play with various

¹⁷ For a brief history, see: Barry Cooper, "Beethoven's Revisions to Für Elise," *The Musical Times* 125 (1984): 561-63.

¹⁸ The standardized "version" comes from an edition printed by Ludwig Nohl in 1867.

¹⁹ Its original title was "Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor," though references to its recipient have shaped its title in its reception.

components of it: they might experiment with tempo, alter keys, or add instruments, but it would still be recognizable, at least to some, as *Für Elise*. As a performed work, it may be ephemeral in a temporal sense, yet it cannot be destroyed. One could burn every copy of *Für Elise*, yet its contents would not necessarily be lost forever. It would not be “destroyed” so long as one audio recording exists or one musician is capable of reproducing it in performance. Additionally, several players may be able to reproduce a version of the work from memory of past performances, which suggests that despite its recognition as a particular musical work, it remains a living piece, which may be reconstructed in print. Similarly, it is something that may be said to exist in multiple places at a single point in time. For instance, we could envision a potential scenario in which at 7pm EST on a Tuesday, *Für Elise* can simultaneously be performed on stages in Atlanta, Boston, and New York. It can be performed in a rehearsal in Chicago, while also being practiced by a student in Los Angeles. No singular performance has authority over the others or takes precedence, though some may be more similar to the score (as traditionally rendered) than others. Not only could it be performed in multiple geographical locations simultaneously, but it also exists in various printed forms. Musicians could read or study the piece without actually performing it, analyzing particular features or reading notes. Once again, this hypothetical situation might be pursued *ad nauseum*, but this scenario illustrates the difficulty in grasping *Für Elise* as an object of study. Each qualifier is necessary in determining what object is being discussed. Yet, each performance we might recognize as being indebted to Beethoven, and we might generally refer to its title as *Für Elise*. So how do we account for such variability in determining what it is that is being considered as our object? Will the real *Für Elise* please stand up?

Despite these varying modalities and qualifiers, it would be extreme to say that we are unable to study or speak of *Für Elise* more generally as an object of study. Each performance of the piece is recognizable as *Für Elise*. Because they might all be referred to by this title, each performance is both related to and yet distinct from its past and concomitant performances. Performances are related to scores, and vice versa, but it is important to note that each performance does not equal the score. Each performance is a unique iteration, and must be understood in terms of its particularity. In a very real sense, we are dealing with Plato's notion of a token and type, or idea and form.

In conversation with these two paradigms, Kivy seeks to identify the end of this spectrum with which "literature" most closely aligns. Do we locate literature closer to the autographic side of the spectrum or to the allographic side? For Kivy, the answer is clearly the allographic, as this represents how multiple persons might experience a text in similar yet distinct ways. Reading is a performance of text, brought to life in the mind and thoughts of the individual. While Kivy's argument and binary approach is perhaps too broad a claim to be taken universally for all literature, perhaps we can shift the focus back to the object of study here. Does Mark fit closer to one end of this spectrum than the other?

One might argue that Mark is autographic in the sense that we might conceive of a scenario in which there was at one point in time a single, material, constructed text that we might call the Gospel of Mark. One limit to this, however, is that this object in its material form either no longer exists or at least it is not accessible at this point in time. We might theoretically suggest that the version of Mark we are utilizing is our object, but when and where do we locate

this object?²⁰ If we are asking the question of its “materiality” in the earliest reception, our reconstructed texts may be representative of but are not equal to a historical and material object. Thus, considerations of Mark as an autographic object are equally as fraught, or to state it more positively, equally hypothetical and contingent as the above imagined scenarios of *Für Elise*. Plausibility and imagination carry the weight.

Rather than trying to assess Mark within an autographic paradigm, an allographic paradigm seems to better represent the type of object Mark was (historical), might have been (potential), and has become (reception). As an object of study, it might be construed in terms of its materiality, but it is not bound by it. In light of an emerging consensus concerning ancient literacy rates, and the various evidence for public and aural experiences of “texts” in antiquity, it seems that an allographic paradigm is more suited to exploring the various modalities in which Mark might have been experienced.²¹ Due to this plurality, a more definitive or nuanced understanding of which modality we are studying is essential. The Gospel of Mark might be

²⁰ The “when” and “where” of our object of study is certainly not limited to our assessment of ancient materials, but also important when considering the role of modern critical editions. For instance, for this project I am reliant upon the NA28 in discussing Mark. A standard operating position in biblical studies is that this text—while not claiming to be the original text itself—is representative of *an* early version of Mark. From this starting point, and out of necessity for lack of a definitive object, scholars then reimagine the NA28 (as it is currently constructed) as representative of an actual text being read in a particular historical context (which is also reconstructed). While its contents may be similar, and indeed it may be almost word for word the same as *an* early version of Mark, should/can we say that this representative text is an “autographic” object, one that exists in the first-century? Can this object be transposed—even if only theoretically—into a first-century “autographic” object? My intention here is not to critique such a use or imagination of these texts. My point, rather, is to highlight the need for greater awareness of what precisely constitutes the object we are studying and “when” and “where” we are locating this object. Even if it is both logical and possible to theoretically posit an “autographic” object, which may be warranted in this case, we simply do not have access to it as such. This underscores the importance of clearly defining the object of our study.

²¹ For works which employ these categories of autographic and allographic as a way of thinking about the ontology of biblical texts, see: Ronald Hendel, “What is a Biblical Book?,” in *From Author to Copiest: Essays on the Composition, Redaction, and Transmission of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Zippi Talshir*, ed. C. Werman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 283-302; James Nati, *Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature in Early Judaism: An Analysis of the Serekh ha-Yahad*, SJSJ 198 (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

conceived of as both text and not text. It is written down, and exists as a text, yet the primary experience of Mark by its earliest audiences is probably not as text, but rather as aural and visual experience. Mark exists *in* and *as* performances, not only in antiquity but also into the modern era via liturgical use. This distinction is not without significance. If the object might be conceived of in various modalities or media, and not merely the written text, we must account for which object we are pursuing in any particular investigation, and how that distinct object affects interpretation. Thus, a metaphor for delineating the performed event as related to yet distinct from the written text is needed. Now that we have identified what this new metaphor seeks to clarify, it is worth considering whether such a new metaphor is even necessary.

3.2- Current Metaphors in Use for Understanding Ancient Textuality

Performance critics are but one voice among a chorus of those reevaluating the ways in which the modern reader reconstructs and thinks about ancient textuality. Eva Mroczek, in *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* invites us to think further about the “root” metaphors which both shape our understanding—but also restrict our imagination—of the textual landscape of antiquity.²² Mroczek notes that it is more than simply an anachronism when scholars speak of “books” in antiquity, rather the metaphor—here, to speak about one thing in terms of another—becomes determinative of our thinking.²³ She suggests that perhaps the metaphor of “book” has exhausted its power and usefulness as a descriptive term, as scholars simultaneously grow less satisfied with its results and increasingly weary of its limitations.²⁴ In light of this growing

²² Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²³ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 10.

²⁴ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 11.

dissatisfaction, Mroczek offers a way forward suggesting that the next step is to propose and test new metaphors by which we might reimagine and navigate this textual landscape.²⁵

Coupled with the growing sense of dissatisfaction or frustration with the use of modern bookish metaphors for understanding biblical and ancient texts, more recently, a host of metaphors have emerged.²⁶ Brennan Breed employs several metaphors for the purpose of providing a more complex understanding of textuality in both an ancient and modern sense, as well as toward a more robust theory of reception for reading Job.²⁷ Most prominently he proposes the metaphor of *nomads* and its co-term “nomadology” as a way of reorienting the ever elusive and constantly shifting “contexts” in which biblical texts are produced, altered, and interpreted.²⁸ Eva Mroczek proposes the metaphors of *databases* and *archives* for understanding collections like the Psalms; texts that were opened by later readers and open ended, handed down through generations, perceived neither as “original” nor “complete.”²⁹ Shem Miller, more broadly, has suggested the root metaphor of *media* for understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls. The

²⁵ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 11.

²⁶ I am not suggesting here that this uneasiness is unique or new. My intention is simply to point out that this uneasiness has more recently launched a multitude of new metaphors, problematizing specifically the usefulness of the metaphor “book” for approaching ancient textuality.

²⁷ Breed, *Nomadic Text*, *passim*.

²⁸ Like nomads, texts do not have a home. They do not come from any specific point, nor are they going to a specific place. Texts may reside in locations for a time and then move on, but no single place may be claimed as its home. Equally important, no place is any less home than another. Because of this, the contexts in which these texts find meaning are always changing—a process as opposed to a sedentary state (Breed, *Nomadic Texts*, 203).

²⁹ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 13. Mroczek mentions several additional metaphors throughout this work, including: textual clusters, mosaics of fragments, and expanding archives, (p.15); a heavenly archive and revelatory project, (p.22); digital texts, textual archipelagos (p. 40); projects (pp. 41, 88, 121); Milton’s metaphor of the book as a vial (pp. 19-20); “overflowing waters” (pp. 93-96), etc.

metaphor of media is an attempt to liberate “scrolls from typographic captivity.”³⁰ In each of these proposals, the metaphors employed seek to reject notions of a fixed, complete, and finite sense of a text. The textual landscape of ancient Judaism provides various metaphors and descriptions of the ways in which texts were thought of, altered, changed, used and experienced, by different groups, in different places, at different times. In particular these metaphors take seriously the textual and historical records while rejecting any finite sense of recovering or getting to an “original” text or “context.”³¹

Within New Testament studies, the textual landscape is equally contested and murky, with much of the focus on Mark’s role within it.³² Matthew Larsen has sought to elucidate the unauthored, unfinished, unpolished, raw nature of certain types of texts in antiquity.³³ He argues that the ancient categories of *hypomnemata* or *commentarii* provide analogous features for understanding Mark and the textual nature of the gospels.³⁴ Nicholas Elder suggests that the Gospel of Mark is a product of both orality and textuality. He offers the category of *performance-script* as a means of understanding Mark as a product of mixed media.³⁵ Chris

³⁰ Miller, *Dead Sea Media*, 9.

³¹ For a helpful critique of the claims of textual criticism for the Hebrew Bible, see: Breed, *Nomadic Text*, 15-51.

³² See for example Yii-Jan Lin, who has problematized the genealogical and biological metaphors employed within the language of NT textual criticism, primarily the mythological and seemingly unscientific nature of the enterprise. She suggests that the cyborg is a more fruitful metaphor for conceiving of the constructed sense of our modern editions (*The Erotic Life of Manuscripts*, 170-71).

³³ Matthew D.C. Larsen, “Accidental Publication, Unfinished Texts and the Traditional Goals of New Testament Textual Criticism,” *JSNT* 39.4 (2017): 362– 87; idem. *Gospels Before the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³⁴ Larsen, *Gospels Before the Book*.

³⁵ Nicholas A. Elder, “The Synoptic Gospels as Mixed Media,” *Biblical Research* 64 (2019): 42-66; idem, *The Media Matrix of Early Jewish and Christian Narrative*, LNTS 612 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

Keith recognizes that the metaphor of *book* is problematic, but the idea of the book (in particular, notions of textuality) is not as desiccated as others have proposed.³⁶ Recognizing the problems and limitations of modern bookish concepts, Keith warns that in correctly “exorcizing the field of an inappropriate ancient category of textuality, [biblical scholars have] overlooked an appropriate ancient category.”³⁷ By moving away from the conceptual metaphors of books, we might instead focus on the material aspects—thus, “the concept of the book-as-manuscript as cultural artifact that tradents could hold in their hands, plays the leading role”³⁸ in his investigation. In each of these, the root metaphor or category plays a key role in identifying the characteristics of Mark.

While metaphors are inherently analogous—and as such are problematic if pushed beyond their contextual use—they are helpful and indeed necessary for contemplating complex concepts. The above examples do not represent an exhaustive list of the metaphors currently in use, though they are reflective of a growing number of works grappling with ancient textuality, and more specifically the ways in which ancient textuality differs from modern textual assumptions. Each of the above metaphors has merit in its own right, as each in its own way problematizes anachronistic assumptions and recognizes the limits of any single analytical category for reconciling the various ways texts functioned in the ancient world. Additionally, each seeks to further emphasize the complexities of the ancient literary landscape, to broaden our understanding of these texts and not necessarily to restrict it. Because of this, there is still room

³⁶ Keith, *The Gospel as Manuscript*, 44-64.

³⁷ Keith, *The Gospel as Manuscript*, 45.

³⁸ Keith, *The Gospel as Manuscript*, 64.

for additional contemplation and consideration. With the exception of Miller and Elder, the above metaphors highlight the textualization and textual nature of these objects. As such, they fail to attend to the aural and performative aspects of ancient texts, emphasizing rather the role of readers as readers, while obscuring the use and operation of texts in a world with limited literacy.³⁹

Therefore, what I propose here is intended as a supplement to the aforementioned metaphors. When added to this broader conversation, the metaphors I propose below provide a more nuanced sense of *some* of the ways texts were produced and the media in which they were subsequently experienced. Because of the various modalities through which we might conceive of Mark as an object of study, and due to the fact that no single metaphor exhausts the complexity of writing or the number of uses of texts in antiquity—nor can it—there is room for additional, or at least supplemental, metaphors that attempt to attend to this lacuna.

³⁹ I do not mean to suggest that these issues go unaddressed in the above works. Rather, the metaphors employed tend to emphasize the role of the texts produced for *readers*. For example, Mroczek recognizes the implications of orality for understanding the production and use of ancient texts, and recognizes the excellent work done in this area. However, her work specifically focuses “on writing, on the role of written text and writing figures in ancient imagination.” She suggests that a turn to orality does not solve the problem of anachronism, but rather understanding early Jewish culture as “self-consciously textual, but shaped different from our own” (*Literary Imagination*, 5). Similarly, Chris Keith says that “we need to separate two kinds of assertions. The assertion that the ancient world was ‘predominantly oral’ in the sense that most people were illiterate is demonstrable and one with which I agree. But the further assertion, often made on the basis of or related to the assertion of majority illiteracy, that manuscripts were ‘not central’ or ‘secondary’ specifically to ‘the experience of first century churches’ or ‘the communication of the gospels’ is vexed. The full breadth of experiences in Christ assemblies, and the full breadth of the transmission of the Jesus tradition among these communities, included a whole host of transmission practices and contexts beyond those that can be characterized as ‘oral’” (*The Gospel as Manuscript*, 7). Despite their focus on the practices of “textualization” in antiquity, both authors recognize the oral/aural and performative aspects of the culture. However, the limitation of those metaphors is that they necessarily obscure these dynamics.

3.3- A Proposal of Alternative Metaphors: Script and Scripture

In his 2017 volume, *Orality and Performance in Classical Attic Prose*, Alessandro Vatri delineates between two types or uses of texts in classical Athens: scripts and scriptures.⁴⁰

According to Vatri's distinction, a script is something composed for, and subsequently actualized in, oral performance; a scripture is a text, that despite its original or intended function, is actualized in individual readings.⁴¹ The distinction between scripts and scriptures then is not related to the "performability" of the written text (which, arguably, is a property inherent in all texts) but rather on the intended reception (or use) of which the text or its contents are the object.⁴² Vatri's categories of script and scripture seek to distinguish between two completely different types of uses, and as such, result in two completely different areas of study. While the text (materially) might be the same, the naming of it changes everything.

While Vatri seeks to ground his categorizations of scripts and scriptures in the intent of a text, as determined by its grammatical structure, my aim here is less technical and more theoretical. Rather than attempt to demonstrate authorial or textual intent of their reception, I seek to extend these metaphors a bit further and ask whether or not these distinctions might not serve a different purpose, as metaphors for the different types of reception regardless of intent.⁴³

In other words, I suggest that a script is a script, so long as it is used as a script. We might think

⁴⁰ Vatri, *Orality and Performance*, 37-46. The terms "script" and "scripture" are not unique to Vatri, but rather are borrowed from Gregory Nagy (*Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]) and expanded upon here.

⁴¹ Vatri, *Orality and Performance*, 37-8.

⁴² Vatri, *Orality and Performance*, 38.

⁴³ For helpful examples of how scholars have sought to identify "oral" or "performance" features within Mark's text, see: Antoinette Wire, *The Case for Mark*; Elder, *The Media Matrix of Early Jewish and Christian Narrative*.

of a script in terms of literary genre (so far as its structure, production, etc.), but it is also more importantly a category of use (which might also be called genre, but without the necessity of demonstrating formalized literary features). Once a script is published, disseminated, and engaged with as a text, it may become something more than simply a script for its reader. In the same way, a scripture, despite its intended medium of experience, might be engaged with as a script. This variety of uses, specifically the challenge of controlling their stability as texts, as well as controlling the modes of reception, may be seen in the ancient playwrights, but also, in a more obvious and easily demonstrable way, the battle over Shakespeare's texts.

3.3.1- Sophocles' Reception

Let us begin by considering the earliest receptions of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. The play is one of three Theban plays of Sophocles, and one of only a handful of his plays that remain today.⁴⁴ This play was performed in a specific location—the city of Dionysia—and classicists have a general idea of both when and why it was performed.⁴⁵ Answers posed to the questions of where, when, and why, seem possible to determine, but there is less certainty of providing a sufficient answer to the how, and more importantly the *when* of the *how*. This construct may be confusing upon a first reading, but it is an important distinction.

In the case of Sophocles, we find two rather helpful points of contact that may shed some light on *how* this text was experienced and thought of a century after its original performance.

⁴⁴ There are conflicting reports on the number of Sophocles's plays. Aristophanes claims that it was 123, whereas Suidas claims 113. Regardless, only seven of his reported plays remain. For more on the complexities of textual transmission for Sophocles's plays see the helpful essay by P.J. Finglass, "The Textual Transmission of Sophocles' Dramas" in Kirk Ormand, ed. *A Companion to Sophocles*, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 9-24.

⁴⁵ It was performed in Dionysia, ca. 425 or 429 BCE for the purposes of competition.

The first is Aristotle. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle sees *Oedipus Rex* as the quintessential drama, a seismic development from the epic poetry of Homer, both in terms of its value for entertainment and narrative mimesis. Aristotle calls this shift in genre “drama,” or more specifically tragedy, and he sees within *Oedipus Rex* several features that affect an audience.⁴⁶

Jumping ahead slightly to the conclusion of *Poetics*, Aristotle suggests that tragedy clearly conveys its effects in both its reading and in its performance.⁴⁷ In and of itself, this passage may suggest that the cultural understanding of texts in antiquity was that performance and text are equal, that texts somehow retain and indeed capture the elements of speech. Such a reading of the *Poetics*, however, and somewhat ironically, is misleading given the matter at hand. In this unit, Aristotle is discussing which genre is superior, epic or drama.⁴⁸ Previously, Aristotle has compared the performative nature of both genres, and in particular, he stresses the importance of mimesis in order for both genres to work on their audiences.⁴⁹ Mimesis is what makes plausible the various elements within the narratives, both functionally (in terms of meter) and rhetorically (in terms of the audience’s ability to relate to characters, situation, plausibility, etc.). As such, the text of the drama itself—and here, Aristotle appears to presume an ideal text—provides a complete interpretive picture. Due to its concise nature, as well as the development of characteristics of the narrative (plot, characterization, diction, thought or spectacle, and lyric

⁴⁶ *Poet.* 1462a.

⁴⁷ *Poet.* 1462b, 2-12.

⁴⁸ *Poet.* 1461b.

⁴⁹ *Poet.* 1459a.

poetry) from its predecessor, the plot of drama can be understood just as easily as poetry in reading the text. It is the simplicity of the plot which makes drama accessible as text.

If Aristotle were to finish his thought here, it would appear as though he equates reading with one's understanding of the drama, at least theoretically. Not a few lines after this, however, Aristotle speaks to the "vividness" (ἐναργῆς) of both reading and performance.⁵⁰ What makes drama superior to epic are the very features of performance that the genre allows. While Aristotle seems to suggest that a drama communicates the same, whether in an individual reading event or in the drama's public performance, what makes drama superior to epic are the very features of performance which he recognizes and attempts to identify in Sophocles's *Oedipus*.

To complicate this matter further, Ps. Plutarch provides an analogous account of the dual nature of the play at around the same time in Athens.⁵¹ Lycurgus, an Athenian logographer and lawmaker, is remembered as commemorating statues to the three great playwrights (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides), but also commissioning authoritative versions of these plays to be written.⁵² The plays were to be preserved in the public archives, but also, and this is more interesting for our purposes, Lycurgus makes it illegal to depart from the authorized text in

⁵⁰ *Poet.* 1462b. There is some debate here as to what type of reading Aristotle has in mind. If he has in mind reading aloud, such a statement perhaps carries less weight than if he were juxtaposing silent reading with performance.

⁵¹ Ps. Plutarch, *Moralia, Lives of the Ten Orators*.

⁵² Ps. Plutarch, *Moralia, Lives of the Ten Orators*, 841F. According to Plutarch, Lycurgus is responsible for shaping much of Greek knowledge about texts. In addition to this claim about the Greek playwrights, Plutarch also suggests that Lycurgus is responsible for the Greeks knowledge of Homer, bringing copies of the poets work back with him from his journey through Asia. Plutarch suggests that some of the people were aware of the poem, and some even "chanced" upon portions of the text, due to trade, but Plutarch suggests that "their fame is due above all to Lycurgus, who was the first to make them known here" (*Life of Lycurgus*, 4).

public performances.⁵³ Ps. Plutarch states that the plays were to be read to the performers to ensure the authentic representation. This decree, if it is indeed historical, is useful for two reasons. 1) Theoretically, it presupposes the role of text as determinative of performance—i.e. that reading an “authoritative” text reveals and/or concretizes certain performance characteristics. 2) Practically, however, it suggests the exact opposite. Apparently, various actors/performers were not performing the plays in the same way. Whether it was because they had different texts—which explains Lycurgus’s commissioning of an authoritative text—or whether it was due to interpretive decisions, the performances varied. While Aristotle suggests that the “actions” of the drama are attainable through reading the text, the edict of Lycurgus suggests that in practice, this is not always the case. There is a disconnect between the words in text and the ways in which the actions implied by those words are performed on the stages.

What might be said about the state of Sophocles’s play, nearly a century after its original staging, and how it is being used? It appears to function in the same time period as both script and scripture.⁵⁴ For its original use, the text was a script, something from which the actors and orators took their cues to engage in public performance. Once it was removed from its original performance context (here, the performance at Dionysia), its use is subject to multiple receptions. Aristotle seems to treat the work of Sophocles as scripture, a text that can be studied and is

⁵³ Ps. Plutarch, *Moralia, Lives of the Ten Orators*, 841F. For more on the potential political significance of Lycurgus “canonizing” act see, Anne Duncan and Vayos Liapis, “Theatre Performance After the Fifth Century,” in *Greek Tragedy After the Fifth Century: A Survey from ca. 400BC to ca. AD 400*, eds. Vayos Liapis and Antonis K. Petrides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 180-203, esp. 188-90.

⁵⁴ For the continued use of Sophocles plays in the theater during this time see: P.J. Finglass, “The Textual Transmission of Sophocles’ Dramas,” 10-11. John P.A. Gould, says “Successful in his lifetime, Sophocles continued to be a powerful presence in the Greek tragic theatre in the following century. His plays seem to have been frequently revived, and the leading parts in them were taken by great actors of the period, such as Polus and Theodorus (Dem. *De fals. leg.* 246–7; Epictetus *Diss. fr.* 11[])” (“Sophocles,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed., eds., Simon Hornblower, et al. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012]).

intended for readers, and Plutarch's account of Lycurgus wants to make it so by rendering an authoritative version. While the predominant experience of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, even at the time of Aristotle and Lycurgus, is probably still as script (with audiences experiencing it via performance), both Aristotle and Lycurgus have sought to use it, and indeed in some senses have used it, as a scripture.

3.3.2- Shakespeare's Reception

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the reception and use of Shakespearean literature. To say that the publication and textual history of Shakespearean literature is complex is an understatement. However, despite this well-trodden path, alas there is much that is worthy of our consideration in thinking about the relationship between the dual natures of Shakespeare's texts, as performance pieces (scripts) and as literature (scripture).

During Shakespeare's lifetime, about half of his plays appeared in print, in quartos (8 pages) or octavos (16 pages).⁵⁵ In 1623, seven years after his death, 18 of his plays first appeared in published form, in the "first folio."⁵⁶ Of interest to our questions of reception and ontology, the folio claims in its dedication and preface both to have "original copies" as well as the texts "when they were acted, as before they were published." The compilers of the folio go so far as to

⁵⁵ For a helpful overview of how Shakespeare's texts shifted from plays written for particular purposes to their eventual publication for readers see: David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁶ The importance of the folio as a material object is difficult to overstate. Comprised of 36 plays in total, with 750 copies believed to have been originally published, the folio collects, canonizes, and in many places "corrects" the works of Shakespeare. Not only does the folio provide modern scholars with the earliest extant editions of Shakespeare's plays in their complete form, but materially the folio marks the significance of Shakespeare's works as they were viewed in their historical context. Due to cost, size, and functionality, folios were historically reserved for weightier subjects such as history or religion. Unlike quartos and octavos, which are smaller and more expendable publication materials, the folio is large, expensive, sturdy, and more robust publication.

say that their work cures the “diverse, stolen, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious imposters, that expos’d them.”⁵⁷

Interestingly, the compilers/authors of the first folio present us with two competing ideas, both vying for authority. They claim to have the “original copies” of the scripts as Shakespeare composed them. They also claim to have the authoritative versions of the plays as “they were acted” and “before they were published.” So, what is it that they actually have? They claim to have the scripts, the bases for the staged productions, but also the publications of the performances, what equates to transcripts; they have the transcripts of performed texts, but they present them as scriptures, works intended to be read. The compilers of Shakespeare’s texts have made the shift from a script, to transcript, to scripture without any elaboration on or explanation of the competing ideas.

It would not be illogical to suggest that Shakespeare originally wrote his plays for performance, with the intention that the characters would be embodied by actors on a stage, but it is important to note the “use” of Shakespeare’s scripts changes after his death and more specifically after the publication of the folio.⁵⁸ While his scripts continued to be used for stage productions, his role as author changed in a new mode as literature, no longer the playwright for a particular “age,” but now a universal poet and writer “for all time.”⁵⁹ The publication of these

⁵⁷ “Preface to the First Folio” (1623). Addressed to the “Great Variety of Readers.” Original spelling retained.

⁵⁸ This claim is no longer uncontested, as recent studies have argued that rather than writing only for the stage, Shakespeare indeed wrote his works for a reading audience. See for instance, Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ Ben Johnson’s eulogy to Shakespeare, includes the famous line: “He was not of an age, but for all time!” This eulogy appears in the first folio, immediately following a preface and the catalogue of texts. Such a statement, in the context of this printed folio, and what we may today still consider “front material” is not inconsequential to the reader. For more on how such materials have the potential (and indeed do) shape, transform, and impact

works as literature, and their use no longer primarily as scripts, as something more akin to a scripture, allows for a different access and locus of authority. The scripts of Shakespeare shift from the temporality, flexibility, and particularity of the 16th century Elizabethan stage, for which they were written, and become scripture, texts by which all subsequent performances are now subject to scrutiny. No longer are the works considered as products of a particular environment, but now they possess a universal message. No longer is the script one element of the meaning making process, the thing which lies behind the embodied performances of the theater, but rather, now, as scripture it becomes the locus of the meaning itself. Whereas in the earliest uses, the script resided “behind” the performed experience, after the publication of Shakespeare’s text as scripture, it becomes something that exists “alongside” or “beside” the performance, or for many modern readers it comes to hold a position of priority and authority “over” its predecessors in performance.

3.3.3- A Proposal for Mark’s Reception

Acknowledging the limitations of such comparisons—observations concerning the process of Greek playwrights and Shakespearean canon do not provide us a *direct* parallel with the biblical texts—I would however like to suggest that such progressions offer us an analogous process for texts written for performance. Over time and after moving to different locations with different audiences, performance texts might in terms of use transform into something other than their original use or implied purpose. It is plausible that within this silent period, between Mark’s composition and Matthew and Luke’s reception of it, that the Gospel of Mark undergoes a

knowledge, and the ways in which they direct/affect readers see: Jeremiah Coogan, “Transforming Textuality: Porphyry, Eusebius, and Late Ancient Tables of Contents,” *Studies in Late Antiquity* 5.1 (2022): 6-27.

similar shift, from its use as script to something other. After Mark is written, and as it is disseminated to various locations, its modes of experience and reception change in a similar way as Sophocles's and Shakespeare's texts.

This reconstruction of the reception of Mark is by no means the definitive one, nor one that is entirely demonstratable. However, in light of both analogous receptions of performance texts, together with the information we have about the first-century audiences reading capabilities, I suggest that it is *plausible* that a similar process occurred with Mark. Analogous to the texts of Sophocles and Shakespeare, there is some difficulty in pinpointing exactly when, where, and for whom this shift occurs, but what is clear is that this did happen. As we think about the "earliest" reception of Mark, it is important to note "when" and "where" we are identifying this audience in terms of its reception. In its earliest reception, the Gospel of Mark was most likely and primarily experienced as oral event, heard by the majority as opposed to being read, performed by a public reader for the community. As such, the "textual" object of Mark was not the locus of authority, but rather, as script, the text served the purposes of the performer. The medium of Mark for many early audiences was not as text, but rather as performance. As the text was copied, disseminated, and moved beyond its originating location, the text operates differently in its reception. No longer is it seen as a script, which is only part of the meaning making process, but rather the text becomes the primary means of generating meaning. At this later point the text achieves a place of prominence and is both experienced and regarded as a scripture.

Assuming it is plausible that such a process occurred with Mark, we ought to identify where within this continuum of uses, between script and scripture, we should focus our

investigation. Both might be considered “early” receptions of Mark, but when we refer to the “earliest,” it is important to note which one we assume. On the one hand, we might conceive of Mark being written for an illiterate audience, with an intention of an aural reception. Given the oral milieu in which it was written, and assuming the literacy rates are as low as have been suggested, it is *plausible* that the majority of Mark’s audience experienced the contents of Mark through some means other than a written and material object. Conversely, the earliest *demonstratable* evidence we have of Mark’s reception is its use as scripture. Matthew and Luke both appear to use Mark as a written source for their own works.⁶⁰ When we talk about Mark’s earliest audience and reception, both of these uses are potential sites of investigation.

This is where the value of comparative processes might be most helpful. If both options are plausible, and if we may compare these dual receptions of Mark with the similar receptions of Sophocles’s and Shakespeare’s text, a pattern emerges (at least theoretically). For Mark, when placed in the oral milieu of the first-century, we might infer that the text was produced for and at least potentially used as a script for performances. While the earliest extant reception of Mark is its use as scripture, by Matthew and Luke, both the chronological and geographical particularities of their use leave room for further speculation. Mark exists for several years prior to its first demonstratable reception as “text” by Matthew and Luke.⁶¹ It is possible that the use

⁶⁰ Of course, it is possible that this construction in itself is anachronistic. It is plausible that within an oral milieu Matthew or Luke also knew Mark—or oral traditions similar to Mark—as performance and not *only* as text (see for example Rhoads, “Performance as Research,” 166; Rhoads and Dewey, “Performance Criticism: A Paradigm Shift,” 18; and Swanson, “This is My...,” 182-84, who raise questions about certain textual assumptions in discussions of the Synoptics relationship to each other). A much more substantive and detailed investigation of the Synoptic relationship by means of performance is needed before such a view could be adopted here, and therefore stands outside the bounds of this particular project. For the sake of this argument, I will assume that Matthew and Luke are treating Mark as “scripture” and that this is the earliest “reception” of Mark that we have as such.

⁶¹ The *precise* dating of Matthew and Luke is not as important to my argument as is the *relative* dating of them to Mark. Whether one follows a Two-Document model, a Farrer-Goulder-Goodacre model (my own

of Mark as scripture is not something we should assume from the beginning, but rather is something that progresses over time. Also, Matthew and Luke are generally understood to be “readers” of Mark in a location distant from where Mark was written.⁶² It is possible that as Mark’s Gospel moves outside of its originating location, it is subject to different types of usage. In the same way that a gap exists between Sophocles’s and Shakespeare’s production of their script and its eventual use as scripture, we might also conceptualize a similar gap or process in Mark’s reception between these two distinct uses.⁶³

Identifying these two different types of reception reveals certain limitations of the current metaphors in use in NT studies. While the current metaphors are useful for the second of these receptions—as scripture—they obscure the first—as script. For Larsen, the Gospel of Mark might be considered an example of *hypomnemata* or *commentarii* because its “earliest users,” Matthew and Luke, attempt to complete Mark’s notes. For Keith, the textualizing of the gospel

preference) or a Matthean Posteriority model for approaching the Synoptic Problem, each of these uphold Markan priority. Additionally, whether one assumes an early dating of the gospels, a second-century dating of them, or a more generally accepted and moderate position (my own preference) each model includes some length of time between Mark and the writing of Matthew/Luke. In terms of a *relative* dating of these texts, the gap proposed between Mark and Matthew/Luke appears to be no less than 5 years, with most suggesting something closer to 10-15 years. My own view in this project is to accept a “middle” (and consensus) dating for Mark, and that the order of the gospels was Mark first, then Matthew, and finally Luke. For a more recent treatment on the dating of the gospels with reference to their early composition dates see: Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament*.

⁶² Similar to dating the gospels, the *precise* geographic location of Matthew’s and Luke’s writing is of little importance to this project. What is significant for my argument are the *relative* locations which have been suggested. To my knowledge, I am not aware of any proposals which argue for the same originating location for any of the Synoptic gospels. Even in cases of overlap between arguments more generally, the specific arguments make a distinction between the geographic locations of each author. For example, Rome (loosely defined) has been suggested as a location for each of the Synoptic gospels. However, I am not aware of any single argument that makes the case for Rome as the *same* location for any two of these gospels, let alone all three. It is this *relative* evaluation of the location of production which is more important to my argument than any *specific* argument concerning geographic locations.

⁶³ Note, I am not implying here that the works of Matthew and Luke denote the “end” of Mark’s reception as script, or that there is a clearly identifiable break between these two types of reception. Such a view reinforces a divide between “orality” and “literacy” that is more problematic than helpful. I merely concede here that the works of Matthew and Luke *may* indicate a point in which Mark appears to be used as scripture.

tradition itself is significant, and rightfully so, as Mark launches an “explosion” of texts about Jesus. But this “completion” of Mark’s notes or this “competitive textualization” of the Jesus tradition which leads to an explosion of texts occurs a decade or so after its production.

Assuming Mark composed his text around 70CE, and that Matthew and Luke were writing in the late 70’s at the earliest, though most likely in the 80’s, we have a considerable gap between the writing of Mark and its reception as scripture. While both of these metaphors are helpful in emphasizing *an* early mode of reception of Mark—as scripture—neither attend to the gap and what is potentially Mark’s earliest reception—as script.

Thus, the metaphors of script and scripture seek to clarify our object of study and aid us in thinking about the variety of ways Mark may have been experienced. While the metaphors in current use are helpful for conceptualizing Mark’s reception as *written text*, they fail to account for the decade of use before that. Our object, then, is a reimagined performance event, sometime after Mark was written, and while it was potentially still used as a script, but before it was more widely copied, disseminated, and used as scripture.

Mark’s reception as scripture might be grasped in light of the metaphors already present within the field, but how might the metaphor of script help us to make sense of Mark? The metaphor of scripts helps us think of Mark’s production and reception in an oral milieu in the following ways:

1) Scripts Represent an Interface between Orality and Textuality

Perhaps the most unique feature of a script is the idea that scripts are an interface between orality and textuality. They are written, yet they are intended to be heard. Classicists have identified several ancient text types that interface orality and textuality, including dialogues,

speeches, plays, and ancient novels. While the first three are more easily conceived of as scripts, the latter also contains such resonances.⁶⁴ In Shakespearean studies, a script can be both what precedes the performance, and/or what is produced following a performance—something composed after a staged event. Shakespeare wrote scripts for performance, but bootlegged copies of scripts also exist, written by audience members who reproduced the lines from memory and attempted to sell them off as scripts.⁶⁵ In contemporary theatre studies, scripts are seen as both prior and subsequent to performance. Thus, in a script, we find the remains of past performances, as well as the potential for future ones; yet neither of these amount to the performed event itself. Once the script is removed from the stage, and moves beyond its production company, into print, it is subjected to analyses in a medium for which it may not have originally been intended.

⁶⁴ See for example the introduction to Apuleius, *Metamorphosis* where the author hopes that his work “stroke[s] your approving ears with some elegant whispers” (1.1).

⁶⁵ I use “bootlegged” here as a way of describing the “non-authorized” versions of plays which appear within the material remains (primarily quartos) of Shakespeare’s plays. In the preface to the first folio, the compilers state that their work is an attempt to correct a certain group of persons who “stole” ideas and published versions of the play apart from Shakespeare’s own writing. In modern Shakespearean studies, this language is used to refer to a collection of forty-one quartos, which constitute the “bad” versions of the plays and present problems for text critics seeking to reproduce “original” and “authentic” scripts. More technically, these are referred to as the “bad quartos” (coined by textual critic and bibliographer A.W. Pollard), though some more recently have sought to recategorize them as “memorial reconstructions.” These “bad” quartos contain far shorter and/or more crude versions of the plays, and in the estimation of the early text critics are incompatible with the longer and more polished editions in the “authoritative” sources. Employing the language of “piracy” or “bootlegging” helped the text critics to explain away the discrepancies between the “authentic” plays and these “other” versions. By explaining these as stolen versions, these “bad” texts cannot be said to be the work of Shakespeare, but rather they are “reproductions” produced by actors or audience members, trying to recapture and transfer Shakespeare’s ideas from the stage to page. More recently, these texts have been reassessed by scholars who seek to justify Shakespeare’s works primarily as products for reading audiences. Instead of viewing these as aberrations of some performed version, they may be understood as early drafts and essential materials for understanding the development of Shakespeare’s thoughts as he sought to rewrite his material from stage to page. This line of argumentation suggests that these quartos are indicative of the type of revision and progression that is necessary for these works to develop from scripts for the stage to the eventual literature for readers. The language of piracy and the reappropriation of these quartos as early drafts of Shakespeare’s progression as a writer (rather than a playwright), however, are problematic for several reasons and may be viewed as the continued “disparaging” of the theater as a site of meaning for Shakespeare’s texts.

Scripts are neither strictly oral nor strictly textual, but rather, they represent the interface between two distinct media.

In the same way, the production, transmission, and earliest reception of the Gospel of Mark reflects this interface. It was produced in a rhetorical culture that utilized both oral and written means. We find traces of orality present within it,⁶⁶ yet all that remains are the remnants or fossils of performance, and most often only in a heavily edited form.⁶⁷ Similarly, the origins of Mark's story might begin in performance, in the preaching of the early Jesus followers, but it was also subsequently written down in a systematically narrativized form. Once it was removed from its originating location and separated from its production community, it becomes subject to a different type of use as scriptures.

2) Scripts are Products of Communities, Worked out in Performances

While the concept for a story or script may be primarily the work of a single author, scripts are almost always the product of a community. There is some debate in classics as to whether ancient plays were written out before being performed, or whether they are post-scripts of performances.⁶⁸ Whether ancient plays existed as pre-scripts or post, the final form of the text was a dynamic process between what was written and how it worked out on the stages of the

⁶⁶ For the various ways in which Mark seems to “capture” the oral storytelling, see among others: Wire, *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance*; Elder, *The Media Matrix of Early Jewish and Christian Narrative*.

⁶⁷ The metaphor of “fossils” appears often in discussions of biblical performance criticism outside of print. For examples of this in print, however, see David Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: Part I,” 123; idem, “Performance Criticism: Part II,” 165; idem, “Performance as Research,” 161, 178-79; cf. also Richard Swanson, ““This is My...” 184; Kelly Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 5.

⁶⁸ For a helpful explanation of how scripts were written for and then edited after performance, and some of the implications of these changes for our understanding of these plays see David Kovacs, “Text and Transmission” in *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World, ed. Justina Gregory (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 379-94.

festivals and games. Similarly, there is some debate about Shakespearean plays—whether and for what purpose exactly Shakespeare wrote. In Elizabethan theater, the drama was worked out in conjunction with the performers, in production, with real audiences, and it was refined and redeveloped in its (re-)performances.⁶⁹ Only after its production as play was the (trans-)script published for wider use as script, or even if eventually as a scripture. The script itself, even if conceived of by a single author, is the product of multiple people, working in community.

In terms of the gospels, we find texts that are likely products of communities, or at the very least, written within and for social networks of Jesus followers in the first century.⁷⁰ The Gospel of Mark, while attributed to a single author in its reception, might very well have been produced in a similar way. This portion of the metaphor begins to break down slightly with biblical texts that directly refer whether implicitly or explicitly to a single author, for instance, Revelation, the Gospel of Luke, or some of the Pauline letters; yet in their final forms, throughout their complex textual histories, these may also be understood as products of and for a community. Even if the text of the Gospel of Mark itself is the product of a single author, it perhaps implies the work of lectors and orators to convey meaning absent the text (cf. 13:14).⁷¹ This, more directly, is related to a third aspect of scripts.

⁶⁹ For an example of how collaboration might be seen within Shakespeare's works see among others: Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁰ The idea that the gospel texts were products of communities has more recently been challenged: see for example the works of Stanley Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *MTSR* 23 (2011): 238-56; Sarah Rollens, "The Anachronism of 'Early Christian Communities,'" in *Theorizing "Religion" in Antiquity* ed. Nicholas Roubekas (London: Equinox, 2018), 307-24; Hugo Mendez, "Did the Johannine Community Exist?" *JSNT* 43 (2020): 350-74; Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature*.

⁷¹ Adella Yarbro Collins reads this cue to the reader as directed "to the individual who reads the Gospel aloud to a group of assembled followers (*Mark: A Commentary*, Hermenia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007], 608).

3) Scripts are Simultaneously and Paradoxically both “Finished” and “Incomplete”

Products

Scripts are finished in the sense that they are publishable. A script generally can be conceived of as a complete story. It is finished in the sense that certain formal elements are present, and it exists in written medium. It’s “finishedness” might also be temporal, presuming that one can experience it in a single reading/viewing, from a beginning to a stopping point. However, scripts are by their very nature incomplete. The finished product is not the sum of its component parts, as is a text, but rather is subject to both embodiment and variability in performance. This paradox of finished yet incomplete leaves room for contemplation as to what constitutes a completed script. A script may be conceived of as finished, because it has been published, has a beginning, middle, and end, etc., but the question remains, who or what determines its completion? While a script has aesthetic value as written and material object, its expressive force is best realized in performance. For a script, then, its *telos* is found not in its publication, but in its performance.

For the Gospel of Mark, we have a similar paradox of finished yet incomplete. As narrative-critical readers have observed, Mark is a complete story. It has a beginning (even if only *in media res*, following its opening line), middle, and an end. While some readers may disagree as to whether 16:8 is a proper ending or not, it cannot be denied that 1:1—16:8 constitutes a complete story.⁷² Yet, as the textual history of Mark suggests—as well as perhaps

⁷² For narrative critics this is an essential feature. It is beyond the scope of this study to attend fully to the multitude of approaches and potential solutions to the issue of Mark’s ending. For a recent treatment of this issue, one which provides a helpful overview of the debate and offers a solution in favor of 16:8 being the original closing of the narrative see: Kelly Iverson, “A Postmodern Riddle?” 337-67.

Matthew's and Luke's use and elaboration of Mark—later audiences did not think it complete. Many of the previous metaphors for biblical texts have sought to capture the “incompleteness” and “openness” of biblical texts in the ancient literary landscape.⁷³ The metaphor of a script, as both a finished and incomplete product, accomplishes this task at both the performance and textual levels.

3.4- The Limits of Script and Scripture as Metaphors for Determining our Object of Study

While the dual metaphors of script and scripture have the advantage of distinguishing between different objects of study, or at the very least highlighting the different ways in which the Gospel of Mark may have been received in its first-century context, there are certainly limitations to both. As suggested earlier, all metaphors are necessarily analogous, and as such, they are partial, contextual, and when extended beyond their initial use reveal shortcomings. They have the potential to obscure more than they reveal, and their value is contingent upon what is illuminated *and* what is lost. Despite such limitations, metaphors are necessary to make sense of complex concepts and are useful in teasing out the differences.

A more obvious limitation to our reconstructed object of study here is the hypothetical nature of it. While the metaphors of script and scripture help us to understand distinct views of the text, and the role of the text within the meaning making process, they are unable to get us back to the actual event we wish to reconstruct. In fact, the object we are seeking to identify is something between these two metaphors. To be clear, I am not suggesting that reconstructions of a performance event get us back to an “actual” performance of Mark. They are hypothetical, yet not without merit. Performance criticism does not claim to get us back to an “original”

⁷³ For more on the language of “openness” in texts see further: Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*. Trans. Anna Cancogni. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

performance any more than notions of an “original” text get us back to a first-century text or reading of the text of Mark. That said, our inability to establish any of these “originals” should not undermine attempts to reimagine these scenarios in light of plausibility and possibility.

An additional drawback in using these metaphors more broadly is the perception of further perpetuating the orality/literacy divide. This is certainly not my intention here, but a limit of the use of metaphors. Throughout, I have suggested that both types of reception are available among the early recipients of Mark. I have suggested that perhaps the “earliest” reception of Mark is as script and that its medium of experience for most was performance, but this reconstruction is chronological and not hierarchical; a difference of kind rather than degree. To prioritize one medium of reception over the other as the “definitive” or “historical” reality is to fail to attend to the complexities of ancient textuality and the dynamics of each medium. The variety of ways in which communication, information, and knowledge were disseminated and consumed in antiquity must be kept in play. While this project focuses on one type of reception, and asks how this reception might illuminate a particular problem within the text of Mark, it need not come at the exclusion or expense of the other.

3.5- Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored some of the differences in the object of study between a performance critical approach and more traditional interpretive methods. I began with an extended discussion of the ontology of the Gospel of Mark, and the various ways in which Mark might be conceived of as an object of study. I argued that Mark should be approached through an allographic rather than an autographic paradigm. Such a distinction emphasizes the fluid nature of discussing Mark as *an* object of study, illuminating the difficulty of envisioning it as a single,

non-qualified object, while also allowing us to consider the variety of ways in which it was (or might have been) experienced in the ancient world. More importantly, this discussion has sought to distinguish between different objects of study (even if only implicitly) in analysis of Mark among modern studies. If Mark might be conceived of as an object that is neither bound by its materiality nor its textuality, the door is open to further analyses in a variety of ways. More specifically, it demonstrates how performance criticism might conceive of its object of study as something *related to yet distinct* from the “text” of Mark. Next, I briefly discussed some of the metaphors currently employed in biblical studies, each of which seek to problematize modern assumptions of books when dealing with ancient texts, and to illuminate various aspects of textuality in the ancient landscape. I suggested that these metaphors, while indeed helpful for illuminating the “textual” side of these objects, have obscured or minimized their oral/aural and performance implications. This is the nature of metaphors, that as analogues they necessarily highlight certain things and obscure others. Thus, in light of this gap, I have sought to provide complementary metaphors to balance this overemphasis on textuality and to provide a new way for us to understand Mark as an object of study. Here, I have argued that the dual metaphors of scripts and scriptures may be helpful for distinguishing modern approaches to Mark, but more importantly for conceptualizing the various ways in which we might talk about Mark’s reception by its earliest audience.

CHAPTER FOUR

TO BE OR NOT TO BE? MARK'S DISCIPLES IN PERFORMANCE

Introduction

Utilizing a performance approach, this chapter will consider the performability of the disciples within a hypothetical, reimagined, yet plausible first-century performance of Mark's Gospel.¹ Less concerned with "who" the disciples were, as historical figures, we will attempt to demonstrate how traditional characterization and the performance event invite audiences to think about who they are.² Our performance is related to, yet distinct from the script of Mark. The script is a source for performance, yet our consideration of the disciples' character(ization) will not be determined solely by the text; rather we will consider the script's potential within a particular performance event.³ Considerations of the performability of the disciples will be governed by cues appearing directly within the script (i.e. descriptive commentary, metalinguistic commentary, rhetorical configurations, etc.), but also considering performance elements not explicit in the script (i.e. illocutionary force, paralinguistic features, linearity in performance, emotions, etc.).

¹ Drawn from Slater's notion of performance criticism as "the recovery of performable meaning" ("From Ancient Performance to New Historicism," 8).

² A parallel to Kozak's description of her work: it "is not to determine who Hektor is, but rather to demonstrate where the epic invites its audience to think on who he is." See a more detailed discussion of Kozak's work and its importance to character(ization) in performance see Chapter 2.

³ See a more detailed discussion of the metaphor of Script in Chapter 3.

As stated in the introduction of this project, this performance event is reimagined and generated from a host of potential performance scenarios. While the performance event considered here is historically plausible, I am not suggesting that this is the definitive or only scenario in which first-century audiences may have experienced Mark in performance. Such a distinction is important and necessary for the purposes of this project, as different events—whether real or hypothetical—will invariably render different results. In many ways, this performance event functions as a framework for this investigation alone, inviting further performance scenarios to be explored.⁴

To revisit briefly the performance event as described in the introduction, this project envisions a group of Jesus followers, gathered, and seated at a Christian meal. At this meal a lector or storyteller performs a version of Mark’s narrative in its entirety.⁵ Whether read aloud or reproduced from memory, the performance is dynamic. The performer utilizes a variety of communicative techniques available to them—fashioning the performance for the specific audience in attendance.⁶ More specific to this investigation, the performer will necessarily make a series of decisions to interpret the script, and those choices directly influence an audience’s

⁴ Cf. Whitenton’s careful note when situating the performance event for his own investigation: “while many performance settings are plausible...it seems a mistake to rule any out from the historical record” (*Hearing Kyriotic Sonship*, 22).

⁵ Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will restrict this terminology primarily to the word “performer” in place of more specific titles such as lector, orator, or storyteller. In short, by performer I mean the person who: 1) engages with the script/story (either by reading or memory), 2) makes decisions for and in performance, 3) conveys a message to an audience. This person may have various titles such as lector, orator, actor, or less formally storyteller, but for simplicity and consistency I have chosen to use performer throughout as it notes the task of each of these more specific titles.

⁶ Here I mean performance techniques explicitly discussed in and around the first-century. This is not to suggest that we know all available performance features in the first century, nor that some variations of certain modern performance practices were unavailable (in some form) to first-century performers. Rather, it serves as a way of safeguarding the claim to “plausibility” for the purposes of argumentation.

understanding of the characters within the narrative. Audience experience of this narrative will be via the performance *alone*, having limited or no access to the script themselves. The performance is based on a script of Mark, which for the purposes of this project is something resembling the modern critical edition NA28.⁷ This performance takes place in the late first century, within the Roman Empire. At this meal, some in attendance would have been familiar with at least one version of the Jesus tradition—whether via performance or texts—and thus, more importantly for our purposes here, the audience possesses some familiarity with those associated with Jesus. While the audience is familiar with certain pieces of the Jesus tradition, this is their first hearing of Mark’s version in its entirety.⁸ Given these parameters, the following will consider how Mark’s disciples *could have been* performed for first-century audiences and how particular audiences may have experienced and configured their character(ization) in a performance.

4.1- Performance Criticism and Mark’s Disciples

As demonstrated in the Introduction, scholarship on the disciples’ character(ization) in Mark is both vast and diverse.⁹ Assessments of the disciples’ character(ization) range from definitively negative to primarily positive, with a myriad of nuance and variance between.¹⁰ In the midst of such variance, even crossing methodological boundaries, it is noteworthy that advocates of an

⁷ There are a few instances below where I will include portions of the text which the NA28 retains in the body yet leaves bracketed. For example, in this performance I will presume the inclusion [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] in Mark 1:1.

⁸ See Introduction.

⁹ See Introduction.

¹⁰ For a more thorough treatment of the history of scholarship on the disciples in Mark see Black, *The Disciples According to Mark*; Skinner, “The Study of Character(s) in the Gospel of Mark,” 3-34.

oral hermeneutic and performance criticism appear to be less divided on this issue than do those who utilize other approaches.

In a series of essays from the late 1980s and early 1990s, Joanna Dewey highlights the need for a comprehensive exploration of Markan disciples in an oral/aural context.¹¹ She suggests that the disciples would more than likely *not* be considered negative characters in a first-century telling of Mark. In both essays, Dewey highlights the need for a more detailed analysis of the disciples as characters in performance, as they have often been maligned (perhaps unfairly) within literary approaches. Boomershine has argued that the disciples' configuration within modern interpretations is representative of the failure of modern literary approaches to distinguish between "epistemological worlds" of orality and reading. A reading of Mark which focuses only on the disciples' failures is reflective of the "psychological distance" that arises from silent reading, ignoring the oral environment in which this story would have been experienced in the first-century.¹² More recently, Kelly Iverson has argued that emotions in performance allow audiences to create connections with characters that withstand occasionally unfavorable depictions. Thus, in a performance of Mark, the emotional connection between an audience and the disciples remains intact despite moments of dim-wittedness. As a result, for Iverson, the audience identifies with the disciples as sympathetic characters.¹³ Others working in

¹¹ Dewey, "Oral Methods," 42-43; "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry," 235-36.

¹² Boomershine, "Peter's Denial," 47-68.

¹³ Iverson, *Performing Early Christian Literature*, esp. 81-88.

the areas of orality and performance have suggested similar responses to the disciples for both modern and ancient audiences.¹⁴

This chapter is thus situated between Dewey's call for a more substantive examination of the disciples as characters in performance, and Boomershine's desire for modern audiences to distinguish between literary and performance dynamics specifically in relation to the disciples' characterization, while also providing additional support to Iverson's consideration of an audience's emotional alignment with the disciples. This project pursues in greater depth the suggestions of others concerning the potential of a more positive characterization of the disciples in ancient performances of Mark. More simply this chapter seeks to demonstrate how a performance approach may help provide some answers to this divisive question in Markan studies.

The theoretical foundations of performance criticism, together with the metaphor of script—as one use of texts within the ancient textual landscape—suggests that our consideration of character(ization) in performance is a difference in kind (not merely degree) from the approaches of narrative criticism. As such, while indebted to narrative criticism—and perhaps rendering similar end results—an analysis of character(ization) in performance is fundamentally distinct from the assessment of character(ization) within literary approaches. The following analysis of Mark's disciples will seek to affirm such a distinction. Ultimately, the question of *what* difference performance makes will be demonstrated in this chapter as we explore the

¹⁴ Cf. David Rhoads, who suggests that one could perform the disciples either way and could test how each approach works within a modern performance event ("Performance as Research," 170).

potential performability of the disciples and consider their rhetorical function within a first-century performance of Mark.

4.2- Traditional characterization and Mark's Disciples in Performance

As one feature of this performance event, I have suggested that some in attendance were already familiar with at least a portion of the Jesus tradition, though Mark's particular version would be novel.¹⁵ This suggestion is not without merit, nor is it entirely distinct from assumptions of other approaches to biblical texts, in particular the gospels. Before proceeding, however, further discussion is necessary to demonstrate its importance to this project.

A performer and/or audience's familiarity with the content of a performance is an essential point of consideration for (re-)configuring any performance event. Familiarity with a story or tradition will consciously and/or subconsciously shape the performer's presentation and the audience's (re-)experiences of this content in performance.¹⁶ This feature is arguably most determinative when it comes to conceptualizing characters.¹⁷ Thus, before considering the

¹⁵ Cf. Whitenton, *Hearing Kyriotoc Sonship*, 30-31; 61-65. For a comparative discussion of the importance in identifying what an implied audience knows see: Christopher W. Skinner, "The Good Shepherd *παροικία* (John 10:1-21) and John's Implied Audience: A Thought Experiment in Reading the Fourth Gospel," *HBT* 40 (2018): 183-202, esp. 189-92. Skinner suggests that "the implied audience already knows the story of Jesus—as evidenced by a number of proleptic statements that appear throughout the Gospel—but is being exposed to the *Johannine version* of this story for the first time" (189).

¹⁶ For an analogous sense of this in modern performance, see Marvin Carlson's discussion of how all theater is *ghost* theater, haunted by past iterations in performance. A helpful description of the process, he suggests that "The present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the present process of recycling and recollection" (*The Haunted Stage: The Theater as Memory Machine* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001], 2).

¹⁷ This of course also extends to experiences within storytelling more generally. In narrative terms, this could be something like a "stock" or "prototypical" character. Similar stories which do not share the same exact content can inform the way in which a character is shaped in the narrative and how an audience is "supposed" to respond to the actions of a given character. See Whitenton's helpful discussion of how prototypical characters in antiquity and how schemas (or "frame") and scripts developed from these characters shape how audiences may understand specific biblical characters (*Configuring Nicodemus*, esp. 55-78).

potentiality of the disciples' character(ization), it is necessary to consider what an audience may or may not know about them prior to a performance event. Speculation as to what first-century performers and audiences "know" about the disciples may seem farfetched, as there is limited textual and material evidence for determining the extent of this knowledge one way or another. However, despite the precarity of the task, it is worth noting that scholars make assumptions about an audiences' knowledge, and that of the ideal reader, by means of antecedent textual attestation.¹⁸ Performance, as I will argue, complicates the typical evidence we consider as constituting an audience's familiarity with characters. After speculating on what may or may not constitute an audience's contextual knowledge, more concretely, I will consider a few instances in Mark where the script appears to require—or at least presume—a performer and/or an audience's familiarity with the disciples' broader traditional characterization. Traditional characterization does not necessarily need a textual antecedent, as the author of Mark, absent a known textual antecedent, appears to presume such awareness from their audience to fill-in-the gaps in the narrative.

4.2.1- Traditional Characterization

As we consider some of the ways in which character(ization) in performance differs from that of literary approaches, the audience's familiarity with the tradition—and more specifically, what we may consider as prior knowledge for that audience—is essential to interpretation. In

¹⁸ In other words, the imagined first-century audience (usually a reader) comes to resemble something like a well-read, educated person, seated alone at a desk, with unlimited access to texts written within a given range—a scenario which is arguably more precarious than what will be suggested here. This is by no means a critique of the historical approach, but rather an attempt to demonstrate that similar assumptions about an audience (more specifically, in most cases referring a reader) are shared by other approaches. Performance criticism's concern for (re-)considering the ancient media landscape, and more importantly (re-)defining the audience as hearers as opposed to readers, reveals how potentially problematic such reconstructions might be when constructing ancient audiences.

narrative criticism, character(ization) is determined primarily within the boundaries and particularities of the text—at least theoretically. For example, consider Elizabeth Struthers Malbon’s well-known description of characters in narrative: “characters are known by what they say and by what they do and by what others (the narrator and other characters) say and do, to, about, or in relation to them.”¹⁹ In other words, as readers, we know characters and configure them by means of sayings, deeds, comparisons with and evaluations by the narrator or other characters—information located solely within a text.²⁰ Such an understanding of characters, however, becomes more complicated by the historical setting in which the reader locates a text, and/or where they locate their reading of a text.²¹

¹⁹ Malbon, *Mark’s Jesus*, 14.

²⁰ Note I am not saying that “meaning” is located in the text, but rather that the common data (i.e. shared by all readers) used to produce an assessment of the characters arises primarily from the text. Limitations aside, the intention behind such a distinction is helpful, as it highlights how different questions are at the heart of different approaches. One of the strengths of narrative criticism is that it does not uncritically mistake the representation of characters in narratives with their historical persons. While modern readers know historical characters through their representation in narratives, this does not mean that the characters in those narratives are portrayed in historically reliable ways. Thus, the question of character is not “who” the character is (a historical question), but rather, “how” a particular character is portrayed (a narrative question).

²¹ As stated in the previous footnote, the intention behind such a distinction is necessary and helpful. Rather than a critique, this is more simply a question of application and the sources available to a reader for configuring character(ization). The limitations of a firm line of demarcation between how character(ization) is configured from “what is in the text” vs. “what is not” are important to consider. To interpret any narrative, the historical context from which a narrative emerges is a necessary consideration. While this may be said to exist outside of the text, it has a direct impact on what is within a text. As such, situating a text historically aids the reader in making sense of certain parts of the narrative which may otherwise go unnoticed or overlooked. While the contents remain unchanged, how we understand that content necessarily does change. Once a reader chooses to import *some* information from the historical context to make sense of *something* in the narrative, however, what distinguishes the historical context (i.e., that which is outside the text) from the content of the narrative (i.e., what is in the text)?

For example, dating Mark ca.70 CE is something that may be hinted at in the text, but is something that comes primarily from outside of the text. This “fact” does not change the *what* (i.e. the contents) of Mark, but it necessarily shapes *how* that content is perceived, directly or indirectly changing the *what*. For our purposes here, we can say that the disciples are historical figures, yet in Mark they are constructions of a narrative. This distinction is important and necessary, as it protects us from conflating the two questions (i.e., “who” were the historical disciples? and “how” does Mark portray them in the narrative?). More importantly, it prevents us from giving Mark undue credit or critique for his representation of these historical figures. Yet, this narrative emerges at a particular time and location. Going back to the previous example of dating Mark, if we think of Mark as a text emerging ca.70 CE, after the death of most if not all of the characters within the narrative, this dating necessarily affects our understanding of the contents (i.e., the *what*), as it colors *how* we see the narrative. If we date Mark to 40CE, this too

Texts do not emerge in a vacuum, but rather they are composed within specific literary and cultural contexts. Thus, there is a necessity to locate a text within its particular literary milieu. If something appears in a text (text A) that precedes the production of the text under consideration (text B), the contents of text A are often considered as prior knowledge for the implied audience's interpretation of text B. Regardless of actual dependency between the two texts—something that is at times indeterminable—there is the presumption that text B is in conversation with or is a development of an idea found in text A. This has two practical functions for modern interpreters: First, it generates a larger canon of comparative literature which helps to filter ideas in text B. Such considerations are of course necessary for modern purposes, but as I will suggest below this may not be an accurate or complete depiction of an ancient audience's knowledge. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it permits modern interpreters to excavate earlier text(s) (text A) for clues to better understand the one under consideration (text B), regardless of whether there is a direct or determinable relationship between those texts or not. Based on certain echoes or clues within a text—whether linguistic, intertextual, thematic, or otherwise—this “knowledge” is often presumed to be held by the implied audience, supplying them with a means to fill in gaps in the narrative.

necessarily affects our understanding of *how* the content (i.e., the *what*) makes meaning. The *what* of the text does not change, but it is necessarily reconfigured in light of our understanding of situations outside of the narrative. Once this occurs, *how* the text makes meaning also changes and the *what* is no longer distinguishable as something existing apart from its historical context. Historical-critical insights necessarily inform narrative-critical investigations and vice-versa and upholding a distinction between the two are necessary for assessing texts. What I wish to highlight here, however, is that a firm line of demarcation between narrative character(ization) and a character's historical characterization are difficult to maintain at the level of application. See for example my discussion below of the disciples in Mark 14:1-11. Elements outside the text *always* shape what we see inside the text. Distinguishing between the two is far more complicated in practice than in theory.

When it comes to performance, however, antecedent textual attestation is not always a sufficient metric for explaining certain features of a script, especially in relation to character(ization).²² As Porter has argued in relation to Homeric characterization, the audience's familiarity with a character(ization), within a performance tradition and a broader narrative arc, will inform the way(s) in which that audience will align and respond to that character.²³ Porter demonstrates how an audience must know something of the traditional characterization of Agamemnon to make sense of specific features within the Homeric corpus. If a performer and/or audience do not know the larger Agamemnon cycle, his character(ization) within the *Iliad* makes little sense. Thus, antecedent *textual* attestation is not always an accurate indicator or a complete reflection of the knowledge an author assumes their audience may have of a tradition that has been circulated orally. In the case of Agamemnon, later textual attestation confirms his role within a broader narrative cycle and clarifies his character(ization) within the performance tradition, from which and within which his character emerges.

Thus, a script may presume an audience's familiarity with the character in their performance tradition, a knowledge that extends beyond the confines of a prior written script.²⁴ Orally derived traditions of characters may further develop the narrative and be configured in multitudinous ways—both in later scripts and in performances—yet, as Porter has argued,

²² This is more narrowly connected to performance. The assurances that textual precedence provides—whether warranted or providing a false sense of security—certainly make for more compelling arguments and more demonstrable relationships between materials. The uphill battle of a suggestion such as the one I am making here is justifying its value for understanding character(ization), which I hope to demonstrate further below. For more on how this helps think through the complex processes of characterization in a Homeric context of performance see: Porter, *Agamemnon*.

²³ See a more complete discussion of Porter in Chapter 2.

²⁴ This perhaps has larger implications for the way in which we think about the “development” and “progression” of ideas. In particular, the fixity and finality of stories, and the ways in which texts are “rewritten.”

characters generally remain consistent within their larger narrative arc.²⁵ Consistency is key within various performance traditions, as traditional characterization often governs the way/s in which a performer conveys and how an audience engages with a particular character.

As it relates to the disciples in Mark, it is probable that parts of the Jesus tradition circulated as performance and perhaps also as text prior to the composition of Mark's script. Furthermore, it is not farfetched to suggest that the traditions of the disciples—some of which the author of Mark drew upon—circulated in performance prior to this composition. Traditional characterization of the disciples was likely developing or perhaps even established—having been performed and reshaped over several decades—sometime between the life of Jesus and the composition of Mark. Given the many and varied traditions about the disciples which emerge after Mark, it is plausible that audiences knew of *a* larger narrative arc for these characters.

Notice, I am not suggesting that the audience knows *particular* narratives about a character(s) which are conveyed in later texts (i.e., the disciples' portrayal in Matthew's narrative or the Gospel of Peter). Rather, I am more simply suggesting that texts written after Mark may contain or reflect elements of the disciples' traditional characterization within them. Later textual representations of the disciples may thus be understood not only as a development from direct engagement with Mark, but these texts might retain—or at least provide glimpses of—elements of the disciples' traditional characterization absent in Mark. A first-century audience may have

²⁵ Consistency, of course, is subjective and exists on a spectrum. As Porter discusses elsewhere, the freedom to change characters from their traditional characterization is ultimately something that is negotiated in performance between a singer and their audience. If the singer changes the character too much, the audience will not accept it as a viable addition. However, each singer attempts to place their own stamp on the tradition, and thus variance is a necessary part of the process. When it comes to configuring the disciples in Mark, consistency in traditional characterization may be key to understanding the finer points of the narrative, yet how consistent such characterization “must be” is negotiated between the script, performer, and audience.

knowledge of the disciples as characters within their traditional-characterization, and the ways in which Mark's particular portrayal coheres with or undermines a character's larger narrative arc is significant. In short, an audience's knowledge of a character or characters can stem from both earlier performances and/or textual iterations, and thus it is not solely dependent upon an antecedent textual attestation.

While historically speculative, such considerations are necessary for conceptualizing the "performability" of the disciples in Mark. A performer's and/or audience's familiarity with the disciples and their traditional characterization prior to a particular performance—whether by means of a text(s) or previous performances—will necessarily shape and determine the ways in which they portray, assess, and align with the characters in a performance. When audiences notice a character betraying their traditional-characterization, this signals to them that what just occurred is important to the script/performer. In the case of Mark, if/when the disciples do not cohere to their traditional characterization within the script, this might suggest the same to its performer and/or audience.

4.2.2- Assumptions of an Audience's Familiarity with the Disciples' Traditional Characterization in Mark

The above suggestions of a performer and/or audience's prior knowledge of the disciples' traditional characterization may seem like mere conjecture. However, such speculation is warranted not only as it relates to our conceptualizing of character(ization) in performance, but also as it is demanded by moments within the script of Mark. Arguably the three most obvious examples of the script assuming an audience's prior knowledge of the tradition can be seen in 1) Jesus's comments on the destruction of the temple (13:2), 2) the imperative "let the reader

understand” (13:14) and 3) the unnarrated ending, specifically the appearance to the disciples in Galilee (16:7-8). Of course, the first two examples are not specific to the disciples’ traditional-characterization, yet each of these examples represent moments within the script where the author appears to assume the audience’s familiarity with the Jesus tradition.

Examples more specific to the disciples’ character(ization) include: 1) Mark 10:38-39: Jesus speaks enigmatically to James and John of drinking the cup he drinks and being baptized with his baptism. While not explicit, this appears to be related to a larger tradition of James and John, in which they do indeed share in sufferings like Jesus, and in the case of James shares a violent and political death.²⁶ 2) Similarly, Mark 13:9-11: Jesus references a series of events that the disciples will experience following his death. They will be handed over, beaten, brought before authorities, preach the gospel, etc. While these events do not occur in Mark’s script, traditions written after Mark reflect a similar understanding of the disciples’ experiences.²⁷ 3) More generally, we could look at something like the roles of Peter, James, and John: Mark does not explain why these three get special attention within this narrative, yet they are constantly set apart from the remainder of the Twelve. This may point to their characters’ “knowability” within a larger tradition. 4) The selection (3:13-19) and commissioning (6:6b-13, 30) of the “apostles” may also be considered an instance where the author presumes an audience’s familiarity.²⁸ Aside

²⁶ Traditions of James’s violent death can be found in canonical tradition (Acts 12:2), though John’s death, both within scholarship and within early Christian tradition, is certainly much more complex.

²⁷ Both canonical and non-canonical traditions attest to these. While the historical reliability of such stories may be questioned, and rightfully so, it is notable that within the Book of Acts the disciples are in fact beaten, brought before authorities, and they preach the Gospel (see for example 5:17-42 where they do each of these things). Again, the historical validity of Acts account is not the point here—one could argue that the author of Acts develops his account in Acts 5 from a reading of Mark—rather, that there are written traditions which confirm these things, and *may* represent a tradition Mark’s audience knows about absent textual attestation.

²⁸ See for example Francis J. Moloney’s discussion of the subordinate verbs in 3:13-19, describing the “future” mission of the twelve. While this mission is at least partially fulfilled in 6:7-13, 30, this may also point to a

from matters of the disciples' characterization, Jesus's commissioning of them plays little importance to the plot of Mark beyond this moment. However, these scenes suggest that the author assumes that the performer and/or audience will recognize aspects of these disciples' traditional characterization within these scenes.

Each of these examples might be explained otherwise, without necessitating an audience's knowledge of the traditional characterization of the disciples. Yet they may also represent moments where the script presumes the audience's knowledge of larger traditions concerning the disciples. What does the script assume an audience knows about the disciples? None of the instances considered above independently confirm an audience's knowledge of the traditional characterization of the disciples, nor do they demand that an audience possess such knowledge to understand Mark's story at a general level. However, they suggest that there are moments where the script may assume the performer and/or an audience already knows something about the disciples and their traditional characterization. If we can say that the script presumes that a performer and/or audience knows something about the disciples, this prior knowledge will both frame and determine the ways in which they think of them as characters in this narrative.

4.3- A Linear Experience of Mark's Disciples in Performance

Not only does traditional characterization inform the performer's decisions and audience's experience, but perhaps more importantly, the linearity and rapidity of a performance (as

continued mission beyond the ending of the story. The audience's familiarity with those traditions of the disciples may be in play here (*The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 76-80). See also Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* 2 vols. Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 2 (Zürich/Neukirchen/Vluyn: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchener Verlag, 1998) 1:139-40. ("Die Sendung liegt in der Zukunft, nicht bloss der irdischen Geschichte Jesu, sondern der Kirche" trans. The sending lies in the future, not simply the earthly story of Jesus, but [in the story of] the church [139]).

opposed to silent and individual reading) governs how an audience processes character(ization). This is not to suggest that an audience is incapable of reflecting on the preceding narrative during performance and thus altering their perspectives of an earlier event, but rather, the speed at which a listening audience must process such information is expedited due to the condensed time domain.²⁹ Because of the necessary limitations of time and space in performance, audience's decisions on character(ization) are often made quickly and subconsciously, guided primarily by the performer's decisions and the audience's previous knowledge—whether informed by similar character types,³⁰ prior knowledge of the narrative, the traditional characterization of the character, etc.³¹

In what follows then, I will consider the potential performability of the disciples with special attention to their linear representation. I will do so by paying attention to how each beat and/or episode,³² coupled with the time allotted to an audience for configuring the character(ization), build into a composite picture.³³ This picture progresses forward first—though, again, it may be informed by traditional characterization. Then, only as new information

²⁹ For more on the condensed time domain of performance and how quickly audiences must assess things like character(ization) see among others: Iverson, “Present Tense of Performance,” 131-157; Michael R. Whinton, “Feeling the Silence: A Moment by-Moment Account of Emotions at the End of Mark (16:1–8),” *CBQ* 78.2 (2016): 278–80.

³⁰ Whinton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, esp. 55-78.

³¹ Porter, *Agamemnon*, esp. 23-31.

³² See Chapter 2 for further discussion of beats, episode, and arc.

³³ For the purposes of comparative timing, I have chosen to use Max McLean's performance of Mark available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVFQfPTJPq8>. This, of course, is not determinative of a performance of Mark, but it allows for a comparable assessment of the time domain allotted to an audience. McLean's performance is around 94 minutes, though it includes a brief video introduction (ca. 30 seconds) and he finishes his performance with the “longer ending of Mark” which adds some time as well. For a performance of Mark that is envisioned here, using McLean's performance as comparison, a performance of Mark could be between 90 minutes to 150 minutes.

is provided within a chronological sequence, does it progress into a composite image. Linearity and time constraints in performance differ from a narrative critical approach to characterization in multiple ways. Specifically, narrative approaches to character(ization) have the capacity to build backwards, taking the entire narrative into consideration from the start, as if a second reading.³⁴ If the audience experiences the narrative linearly, and/or if they are informed by the traditional characterization of the disciples, the linear restrictions of the performance event might affect the ways in which the audience evaluates character(ization) throughout the performance.

I have two additional points of clarification before turning to the script of Mark. First, a note on terminology. When it comes to discussing the character(ization) of the disciples in Mark, who is included in and excluded by that term is important. The term μαθητής appears 46 times in Mark. In a few instances, the term refers to a group outside of Jesus's followers (e.g. 2:18; 6:29). In other cases, it appears to refer to a large group of followers—specifically of Jesus (e.g. 2:15). On still other occasions, the context makes it apparent that the term refers to small and more select group—presumably the Twelve or a smaller group of select disciples within the twelve (e.g. 14:12-13). Mark also uses the terms δώδεκα (e.g. 3:14, 16; 14:17)³⁵ and ἀπόστολος (e.g.

³⁴ See for example, Gregg S. Morrison who argues that Mark 8:27-9:13 has a “Janus effect” for readers, allowing readers to look both backward and forward in the narrative. For Morrison, this backwards and forward reading illuminates Mark's Christology which appears within in the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative. (*The Turning Point in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in Markan Christology* [Eugene: Pickwick, 2014]). It is worth noting here that the performer must also take the entirety of the story into account for performance. As they build their understanding of the character and determine the ways in which they will portray them in performance, the end of the story might frame their presentation at the beginning. Ultimately, the decisions of the performer will shape the audience's experience of the character one way or another.

³⁵ Other instances of this term: 3:14, 16; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43.

6:30)³⁶ as designations for a select group of disciples. While μαθητής may refer to a larger group of disciples of Jesus, and in certain cases I will try to make a distinction between groups, the primary concern here is with how an audience configures the Twelve.³⁷ Thus, our investigation will *not* be limited to only instances where the terms μαθητής, δώδεκα, and ἀπόστολος appear, but will also include in the character(ization) of the disciples instances where a named disciple (e.g. Peter, Judas, James and John, etc.) is referenced. Concerns over the presentation of the Twelve, the disciples closest to Jesus, appear to be at the heart of scholarly discussions of the characterization of the disciples in Mark, as this is the most problematic historically.³⁸ Second, the idea that the disciples demand a negative characterization in Mark has a place of prominence within Markan scholarship. Due to the prevalence of this idea, and for the sake of framing the following analysis, I will give special attention to the primary evidence marshalled in favor of those arguments. While this may seem counterintuitive, it will serve to demonstrate some of the

³⁶ See also the variant at 3:14. For a thorough discussion of this variant [οὗς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὀνόμασεν] and an argument in favor of its authenticity see: Christopher W. Skinner, “Whom He Also Named Apostles”: A Textual Problem in Mark 3:14,” *BSac* 161 (2004): 322-29.

³⁷ This is not to suggest that scholarship on this question has limited itself only to the Twelve. The more general idea of discipleship within Mark has been explored in detail, and distinctions between the Twelve and the more general group of μαθηταὶ could be upheld to a greater extent than in this discussion here. My concern in this investigation is more restricted to the ways in which performance asks the audience to think about the prominent members of the Jesus tradition, both their more general traditional characterization as well as their characterization in this *particular* performance. Thus, while the following will include certain instances where a more general use of the term μαθητής appears (cf. 2:13-28), the primary concern will be how the scene affects the characterization of the Twelve within the entire performance of Mark’s narrative. Of course, the character(ization) of the Twelve is not fully divorced from the portrayal of a more general group of μαθηταὶ in all instances. This larger group of μαθηταὶ too will play a role in our understanding of the rhetorical function of the Twelve in performance.

³⁸ For example, see discussions of Weeden (“Heresy”) in the Introduction and Kelber, (*Oral and Written Gospel*) in Chapter 1, where the characterization of the disciples in Mark is representative of early Christian disputes. Kelber suggests that their characterization in Mark represents a rejection the oral tradition handed down by certain disciples in positions of prominence in the early church—most especially Peter.

ways in which a performance and linear approach to characterization differ from a narrative and/or non-linear approach.³⁹

4.3.1- Mark 1:1-3:35: An Overwhelmingly Positive Portrayal

Mark 1:1 (Time: 0:41-0:45):⁴⁰

The importance of the opening line of Mark cannot be overstated.⁴¹ Audiences in a performance, much like the experiences of a reader, are primed by the description of Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah, and in this *particular* performance he is also the Son of God.⁴² This designation of Jesus at the beginning of the performance is not only essential to understanding the characterization of Jesus, but it is also important framing for the disciples. An audience's

³⁹ Because of the need to attend to specific scenes in greater detail, gaps may be noticeable in my treatment of chapters 5 and 7, and later in chapters 11-13, particularly the teaching material. However, many instances not dealt with specifically will be cited with other passages thematically. The longest sections will be chapters 4-8 and chapter 14 since they contribute the most cited evidence against a positive characterization, and thus require more extended discussion.

⁴⁰ Corresponding time-stamps to McLean's performance will be placed beside texts to give the comparable time domain for performance. This should not be understood as determinative, only comparative. In this instance, the opening line of Mark follows a brief video introduction to the performance, thus the time stamp is a little later than we might traditionally consider the "start" of a performance. However, for consistency with later time stamps, I have retained the time of the video used. See fn. 33 above.

⁴¹ Most narrative critical treatments recognize this privileged position of the reader. It is often used as a means of further criticizing the disciples, rather than absolving them. Even at an oral level, this is used as a means of criticizing the disciples. Cf. Whitney Shiner who argues for a two-level reading of Mark and the hearer navigates between both levels: "Mark provides his listeners with an authoritative identification of Jesus as Son of God in the prologue (1.11 [*sic*]), and much of the plot hangs on the ironic distance between the listeners who know that identity and the characters in the narrative who do not...The incomprehension of the disciples represent the inability of the world to penetrate the mask of the mundane to comprehend the reality of Jesus" (*Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric*, SBLDS 145 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 291-92).

⁴² This is the infamous question: whether υἱοῦ θεοῦ is original or not. Many scholars treat it as original, though interestingly enough, a major witness, Sinaiticus \aleph , does not include this here (though Sinaiticus \aleph does include ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in 8:29, which causes some issues for narrative readings that highlight the importance of the two-fold recognition of Jesus as it progresses throughout Mark's narrative). For a brief but useful summary, see Moloney, *Mark*, 29, fn 11. For a comprehensive treatment of the arguments related to 1:1, and an argument in favor of the longer reading see: Tommy Wasserman, "The 'Son of God' Was in the Beginning (Mark 1:1)," *JTS* 62.1 (2011): 20-50. For an argument in favor of the shorter reading see: Peter M. Head, "A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1.1 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,'" *NTS* 37.4 (1991): 621-29.

assumed allegiance to Jesus, and Jesus's assessment of certain characters therein, will guide a performer's decisions. The performance audience has special knowledge of Jesus that the characters do not—and in terms of linearity, cannot—yet possess. Knowing that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God, something no one within the story yet knows, places the audience in a privileged position to the characters in the story.⁴³ While the progressive revelation of these two titles and what they mean unfolds and develops throughout a performance of Mark, it is important to recognize this imbalance of power and how “knowing” functions rhetorically in the relationship between audience and characters. Recognizing the “placement” of the audience at the start, in a position “above” characters, also allows us to consider moments when the performer might relocate the audience later in the performance. Considerations of the audience's position relative to the characters in a performance event will become an important feature in our assessment of how audiences configure character(ization).

Mark 1:16-20 (Time: 2:44-3:07)

Initial appearances of the disciples in the script suggest an overwhelmingly positive characterization.⁴⁴ In the disciples' first scene, Jesus walks alongside the Sea of Galilee and sees

⁴³ This, of course, is limited to human characters in the story. Demons know who Jesus is (1:24, 34; 3:11; 5:7), a voice calls from heaven claiming Jesus as son twice (1:11, 9:7), etc. There are a few instances where characters in the story get close. For instance, Peter's confession of Jesus as “Messiah” in 8:29 could be seen as “correct” answer, as we will discuss below. Similarly, blind Bartimaeus refers to Jesus as “Son of David” in 10:47, which may be partially correct as well. The Roman centurion at the cross calls Jesus “Son of God” in 15:39, which might arguably be the ultimate recognition of Jesus in Mark. But from the start of the performance the audience knows Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, something most characters do not yet realize in the story.

⁴⁴ See Tannehill (“The Disciples in Mark” 386-405, esp. 392-93), Malbon (“Fallible Followers,” 29-48), and Suzanne Watts Henderson (“Concerning the Loaves’: Comprehending Incomprehension in Mark 6.45-52,” *JSNT* 83 (2001): 3-26), among others, who for different reasons suggest that this early representation of the disciples in Mark allows the reader to recognize and/or align themselves in the disciple. This beings with their initial positive responses to Jesus. I think this works also in a performance, if not better than as text, as the evaluation of the hearer can only be positive at this point.

Simon and Andrew—named disciples with only brief details as to their person. After inviting these fishermen to follow, they “immediately” (εὐθὺς) leave their nets and “follow” (ἠκολούθησαν) Jesus.⁴⁵ They do the very thing that Jesus asks, and in this case the script describes how they do so without hesitation. Similarly, James and John leave their nets, as well as their father and his workers, and they go up (ἀπῆλθον) after Jesus. These four disciples respond accordingly to Jesus’ invitation to follow.

Abbreviated as it may be this scene is important within a performance context. This initial impression will not only shape how an audience will configure the disciples’ character(ization) moving forward, but also how they understand the disciples’ role within this story.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, this is Jesus’s story, yet he has invited these characters to play a role in his mission.

The audience’s allegiance is ultimately reserved for Jesus in a performance of Mark, yet throughout the performance there will be a continuous (re-)negotiation of an audience’s alignment with and assessment of the other characters. Jesus’s own assessments and words

⁴⁵ Cf.. Mark 2:13-14 where Levi responds similarly.

⁴⁶ The initial representation of a character goes a long way in the overall evaluation of the audience. That being said, and despite my own argument that these early depictions of the disciples shape the audience’s perspective later in the narrative, these scenes should not in fact be considered as constitutive of their overall characterization. Mary Ann Tolbert is somewhat representative in her observation of the discrepancy between a modern and ancient literary sense of characterization: “In ancient literature, characters were more illustrative than representational...the illustrative characters of ancient literature are static, monolithic figures who do not grow or develop psychologically. They have fundamentally the same characteristics at the end as the beginning. They may, of course, change state, from good fortune to bad, from unknown to known, or from insider to outsider, for example, but such shifts are always implicit in the actions or principles the characters are illustrating.” *Sowing the Gospel*, 76-77. (For literature reviews suggesting this as a representative view see among others: Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 4-27; Gill, “The Question of Character-Development” 469–87). More recently, however, this more dominant view of character(ization) has been challenged (Cf. Whitenton, *Configuring Nicodemus*, 40-44). That the disciples do not cohere with this sense of ancient characterization will hopefully become clear throughout this chapter, and this project will attempt to underscore how a more simplistic notion of character simply does not work from the perspective of audiences in performance.

within specific interactions will often clarify the position an audience should take within the scene.⁴⁷ An audience may be sympathetic to certain characters for any number of reasons, and yet their allegiance is ultimately to Jesus. Allegiance to Jesus will govern the ways in which a performer conveys a given scene or interaction, and this will necessarily limit the ways an audience generates meaning from it. In the same way that the opening lines of Mark frame how an audience ought to understand Jesus, so too this initial characterization of the disciples plays an essential, and arguably, a determinative role in an audience's assessment of the disciples. Even if the audience knows nothing of these four named characters in their traditional characterization, these disciples initial interaction with and response to Jesus is undoubtedly positive. Silent yet active participants, these disciples will play a larger role as the narrative progresses. For now, they are doing the things Jesus asks of them—and they are doing it quickly. As will be seen, this initial portrayal will be tested throughout Mark—and may ultimately challenge the audience's alignment with the disciples—but it is essential to highlight the overtly positive portrayal of these initial followers as their role in the story begins to take shape.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For the importance of point of view to an audience's understanding of Mark see among others: David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 44-46.

⁴⁸ I have omitted here a discussion of the disciples' actions (specifically, Simon, Andrew, James, and John) in 1:29-39, which has been understood by some readers to evoke negative connotations of them. In particular, the decision by Simon and "his companions" to "pursue" Jesus has been flagged. This term, *καταδιώκω* has the potential to refer to pursuit with hostile and/or negative intentions (Gen 31:36). This may suggest that even early in the narrative Mark is demonstrating the disciples are not (yet) in-line with Jesus. While the term may carry hostile intentions at times, it also has connotations of a kindly intention (cf. e.g. Ps 23:6, 1 Kgs 30:22, cf. Sir 27:17). In context, it seems difficult to deem their actions as condemnatory considering Jesus's positive interactions with them in the preceding narrative and his response to their statement.

Mark 2:13-28 (Time: 7:39-10:08)

In a series of three episodes, each in some way related to Jesus’s engagement with the Pharisees, we once again find the disciples as silent yet active participants in the script. While the disciples’ actions in these scenes are often relegated in treatments of 2:13-28 (and perhaps rightly so),⁴⁹ little consideration has been given to the ways in which these stories play a more substantive role in an audience’s overall assessment of the disciples in linear terms. In each scene, the disciples are doing the things that Jesus does and/or their actions are defended by Jesus. They “do” something correct—in the assessment of Jesus—even if the action may initially appear to be incorrect.

In the first scene (2:13-17), the disciples are at table with Jesus, eating with “sinners and tax-collectors.”⁵⁰ The Pharisees appear baffled by this interaction, but the disciples do what Jesus is doing. In their own way, the disciples contribute to Jesus’s mission of “call[ing] not the righteous but sinners.” Especially in these early scenes, the performance demonstrates how the disciples’ actions are clearly aligned with the views of Jesus. By participating in table fellowship with sinners and tax-collectors, they enact and perpetuate Jesus’s mission. This does not mean that the disciples fully understand Jesus’ mission—a necessary distinction, as the script will allude to their ignorance of this mission multiple times in later portions of the narrative—but it does indicate that they are willing and loyal participants. Supposing the audience maintains their

⁴⁹ These are omitted from certain discussions of the disciples because μαθηται and its variants likely refer to a more general group and not the Twelve specifically.

⁵⁰ We find here another instance of a named character close to Jesus. Jesus invites Levi to follow, and he does. However, because Levi is (arguably) not among the disciples listed in 3:13-19a, we will not include his calling as that of the “disciples” (i.e. the Twelve) though this story suggests that he will continue to follow Jesus.

allegiance to Jesus and his worldview, as well as his assessment of characters, in this early portrayal the disciples are worthy of imitation.

In the second scene (2:18-22), the disciples are indicted for eating while others fast. Here, they are described as celebrating “while the bridegroom is with them.” While a charge against fasting might be weighed differently by various audiences in terms of the valuation of one’s character, the words of Jesus certainly have an affirming effect in performance. Jesus’s words confirm that his disciples’ decision to eat while others fast is “correct,” but only in recognition of Jesus’s nature. It is only in the recognition of the bridegroom’s presence—even if the disciples do not fully understand the implications of such a recognition—that their actions of eating rather than fasting are justified. The disciples’ recognition of Jesus’s nature is merely implicit in this scene, and at later points in the narrative the disciples will be found wanting in this area. However, Jesus’s approval of their actions and their alignment with him in the early stages of the narrative continues to build a substantive base for a positive reception of their characterization.

In this third scene (2:23-28), the disciples are accused of breaking Sabbath law. Walking through the fields, they pick grains and eat them on the Sabbath. Jesus is not precisely the one under scrutiny here, as the Pharisees’ question is directed to him concerning his disciple’s actions. Yet the disciples’ association with Jesus makes him culpable. If character(ization) is determined solely by one’s actions, the disciples may appear to be in the wrong to certain audiences.⁵¹ However, like the previous story and others we will see in Mark, the rhetorical

⁵¹ Whether or not the actions of the disciples are in fact a breach of Sabbath law is disputed. Exod 20:10 forbids work on the Sabbath, while Deut 23:35 more specifically forbids reaping with a sickle on the Sabbath. Neither of these appear to be what the disciples are doing in Mark. Additionally, the setting of this story is also suspicious, as the Pharisees presence in the fields on the Sabbath make the entire narrative confusing. For helpful discussions of the many questions raised by this pericope see Joel Marcus, *Mark 1—8: A New Translation with*

effect of this scene is exactly the opposite.⁵² Jesus again defends the actions of the disciples against the views of his present accusers and eventual opponents.⁵³ Once again, the mental representation is that of silent yet active participants, associated closely with Jesus.

The gist of these three short scenes has little to do explicitly with the disciples' character(ization)—as the foci of each scene is on Jesus's interaction with the Pharisees—and yet, their rhetorical effect suggests otherwise. Rapid narration of Jesus's repeated defense of his disciples' actions (3 stories in the span of 150 seconds) has a cumulative effect on the audience's configuration of them. In linear terms, these scenes continue to establish the disciples' alignment and association with Jesus, confirming the audience's initial impressions. Throughout the script, the performer, whether through narration or through the words and voice of Jesus, is afforded several opportunities to defend the actions of Jesus's disciples. This does not mean that a particular performer *must* do so, but simply that the script allows opportunities for such in a performance. As will be demonstrated further below, the performer's assessment and portrayal of the words of Jesus, coupled with the performer's choices in conveying the descriptive commentary within the script, are determinative features for the audience's configuration of the disciples' character(ization). While readers might note the disciples as failing at times—and

Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Bible 27 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 240; Moloney, *Mark*, 68.

⁵² Even if an audience did understand the disciples' actions as breaking the Sabbath law, and agree with the Pharisees in this story, the rhetorical effect is the opposite, revealing Jesus's approval of the disciples' actions. See for example Marcus who states, Jesus expresses "approval of his disciples' choice to meet their need for food in a way that, in the Pharisaic view at least, violates the Sabbath code" (*Mark*, 243).

⁵³ This is the first active scene with the Pharisees in Mark, though it will not be their last. Previously, Jesus's opponents were the scribes (2:6), the scribes of the Pharisees (2:16), and an unnamed group discussing the actions of the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees (v. 18). In 3:6 the Pharisees will engage in discussions with the Herodians, solidifying their role as a primary opponent to Jesus.

Jesus himself will acknowledge and identify their failures—the script supplies the performer with multiple opportunities to generate sympathy for them by explaining the circumstances in greater detail or offering a potential explanation for their actions.

Mark 3:7,9, 13-19 (Time: approximately 11:01-12:23)

As the narrative progresses, the script provides continued affirmation that the disciples are indeed positive characters within the early stages of this story.⁵⁴ They travel with Jesus (3:7);⁵⁵ they do what Jesus asks of them (v.9—despite the fact that the script never narrates Jesus getting into the boat); Jesus calls them to himself and designates them to be with him, to be sent, to preach, and to have authority to drive out demons (vv.13-15). This summary statement and calling event will reverberate throughout the performance, not only solidifying the disciples' association with Jesus, but also serving as something like a paradigm for them. They will travel with Jesus, while others will not; they will do the things Jesus asks, while others do not; they will be sent (ἀποστέλλειν), preach (ἐκήρυξαν), and cast out (ἐξέβαλλον) many demons (6:7-13, 29; exception 9:28; see below)—the very things Jesus will do throughout his own ministry in Mark. Each of these features, in one way or another, contributes to a positive initial impression of the disciples for an audience. It is not an overstatement to assert that within the initial beats of the performance there is little room for a performer's negative portrayal and little explicit evidence

⁵⁴ One exception here is that the audience is introduced to Judas (v.19) and his eventual betrayal of Jesus. Linearly, this foreshadowing may have an important performative function, as it removes some of the surprise of this action in the later parts of the narrative (14:10-12). It may also suggest an audience's familiarity with the tradition, noting that this character is the one they have heard about. While it may complicate the composite picture of the Twelve throughout Mark, introducing a negative valuation in an overwhelmingly positive section has the opposite effect in performance, as it distinguishes Judas from the Twelve (at least temporarily), and may help contribute to a more positive valuation of the group later in the narrative.

⁵⁵ For a narrative approach to the importance of μετ' αὐτοῦ within Mark see Moloney, *Mark*, esp. 76-80.

that an audience's response will or necessarily must be a negative evaluation of the disciples.

Such an assertion will be challenged more significantly as the script continues into chapters 4-8.

4.3.2- Mark 4:1–9:1:⁵⁶ Challenges to the Disciples' Imitability?⁵⁷

Mark 4:1-34 (Time: 14:37-19:06)

The disciples not only command a positive impression to this point by means of their actions, but also, and perhaps more importantly, they are implicitly depicted as members of Jesus's inner group. In chapter 4, between the parable of the Sower (vv.2-9) and its explanation (vv.13-20) the script makes this relationship explicit. After Jesus tells the parable to an excessively large crowd (ὄχλος πλεῖστος), the Twelve, together with others who are around Jesus—a key that is often omitted in discussions of this passage—are provided an explanation of the parable.⁵⁸ In vv.10-12 (cf. also vv.33-34), the script provides an explanation for how parables operate, between insiders and outsiders, and who is privy to their interpretation. The disciples are identified as insiders, distinct from a large collection of others, designated to be special recipients of Jesus's message about the mystery of the kingdom of God. Throughout the entire narrative, the disciples retain

⁵⁶ This subdivision differs intentionally from Weeden's three-fold schema by extending this section past Peter's confession. This is intentional, as I will read Peter's confession and the following scenes together.

⁵⁷ There have been several literary and thematic treatments of this section of Mark, cf. Norman R. Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," *HTR* 73 (1980): 185–217, who reads this section as being about discipleship; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4–8: Reading and Rereading," *JBL* 112.2 (1993): 211–30, who argues for a Christological emphasis. Within most treatments of this section of Mark, the question of the disciples' character(ization) plays an important role for understanding its purpose.

⁵⁸ For Weeden and others, Jesus's need to explain his parable contributes to the "unbelievable imperceptivity" as the disciples, who are given a privileged position with Jesus as "insiders" (cf. esp. vv.33-34 where Jesus explains everything to the disciples) and yet are still incapable of understanding ("Heresy," 145-147). This may be true of a narrative reading, however, in a linear performance it seems difficult to make such an assessment of them to this point in the narrative.

this distinction, as Jesus will explain his teachings in private and only to them (cf. 4:11-20; 7:18-23; 9:28-29, 31-32; 10:23-31, 32-34; etc.).

In performance, 4:1-20 not only solidifies the disciples' special association with Jesus, but it also contributes to the audiences' continued allegiance to Jesus. Redefining the audience's privileged position through direct speech, the performer uses Jesus's words to address the audience as "others with" the Twelve. As Boomershine has suggested, direct discourse allows the performer to break the fourth wall and speak directly to an audience.⁵⁹ This scene is a natural opportunity for such a break. Jesus's extended discourse in Mark 4 is the first of its kind in the script and in performance it plays an even greater role. At the level of the narrative, it solidifies Jesus's relationship with those closest to him, explaining that only a select few will be granted access to his teachings while many others will not understand. More importantly, it allows the performer to speak directly with the audience. Jesus's words invite an audience to become an "insider," repositioning them from distant viewer to silent yet active participant, situating them side-by-side with the disciples. Before this extended discourse, the audience was conceptually superior to characters in the performance, yet they were "outsiders," distant and distinct from Jesus's inner group. Now, however, this relationship has changed.

⁵⁹ Boomershine suggests that the rhetorical impact upon the audience correlates with the length of the speech. The longer the speech, the more time and more likely the audience will identify with the character. Cf. Thomas M. Boomershine, "Audience Address" 124. For more on the complexities of the storyteller and audience relationship, and how speeches in the story function as speeches to an audience see: Phil Ruge-Jones, "Those Sitting Around Jesus," 27-52; idem, 'Omnipresent, Not Omniscient: How Literary Interpretation Confuses the Storyteller's Narrating', *Between Author and Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation*. ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 35-36; Giles and Doan, *Twice Used Songs*, 21-22. See also Lee and Scott who define a period as any segment with two or more sentences, and who suggest that a period is enough time for the audience to adapt the role of the characters within the story (*Sound Mapping in the New Testament*, 108-10).

A significant result of this invitation is that audience participation throughout the remainder of the performance is now heightened. The effect of this repositioning at the immediate level is that the audience—together with the disciples—becomes the primary recipients of Jesus’s explanation of the parable. While the outsiders will hear only in parables, the disciples receive their explanation from Jesus (4:10-12). The audience gains access to these teachings and mysteries reserved for those closest to Jesus (v.34). Repositioning the audience from distant to near, from viewer to participant, necessarily amplifies the audience’s evaluation of the disciples—whether positively or negatively. While the audience retains its distinct advantage of knowing the true identity of Jesus (1:1) and holding special knowledge that the characters within the narrative do not yet have, they also find themselves positioned alongside the disciples—shifting their viewpoint. No longer are the disciples distant and two-dimensional figures, characters in a story being told to an audience, but through the embodiment of the performer and this rhetorical repositioning of the audience, the audience enters the story and shares in the disciples’ experiences in a more intimate way. In light of this measure, an audience’s astonishment towards the disciples for misunderstanding Jesus’s parable seems unwarranted—not only because the audience is now part of the group receiving the explanation of the parable, but especially given the one-sidedness of the disciples’ presentation up to this point.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Here it is important to note a hermeneutical distinction between our analysis and that of a reader like Weeden, who begins with the assumption that the original audience of Mark would have no prior knowledge of the story. With the development of orality studies, memory, performance, etc. it is no longer tenable, at least not without sufficient argument, to hold such a view. As argued in this chapter above, it is quite likely that the audience is familiar with the Jesus tradition, at least some portions of it, and that Mark may constitute one performance of that tradition. The following quote helps to illuminate Weeden’s position: “One cannot assume that the first readers of Mark had the benefit of the full breadth of the Christian tradition which the non-Markan material of Matthew, Luke, and John offers contemporary scholarship...more accurate interpretation, less subject to error, occurs when Mark is approached as far as possible, in the way the first reader approached it: without preconceived knowledge of its

Mark 4:35-41 (Time: 19:07-20:22)

Misunderstanding Jesus's parable is an unlikely point in the performance for an audience to turn on the disciples. It is probable that in performance an audience shares the same desire for clarity from Jesus's words. However, despite the audience's invitation to be insiders and this shared experience with the disciples as special recipients of Jesus' teaching, an audience's alignment with them has the potential to become more strained in the scene immediately following this parabolic discourse.⁶¹ In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus and his disciples depart with other boats (καὶ ἄλλα πλοῖα ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ)—a detail that is often undeveloped in assessments of the disciples' character—and they are caught in a storm at sea (vv. 36-37). Narrative analyses of this passage tend to focus on Jesus's apparently shocking statement concerning the disciples' fear (δειλός) and not yet (οὐπω) having faith (v. 40).⁶² Details in the script, however, and the audience's newfound position as insiders journeying alongside the disciples, both serve to

contents and without the prejudicial knowledge of the other gospels" "Heresy", 148. While he is correct that Mark's earliest audience does not have Matthew, Luke, or John (a chronological argument), it is probably not true that they do not know anything about the Jesus tradition. Equally as important to this discussion, the audience may know something of the disciples "traditional-characterization," including parts of that tradition which might have (even if eventually) found their way into Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, or non-canonical texts which recount traditions about the disciples. One of the challenging factors in performance and orality studies is identifying what exactly the first-century audience may or may not have known. Here, I am working mostly within the "textual" and individual "performance" framework, but this could also be expanded to suggest that even without Mark 1:1 the audience probably already knows concepts about Jesus (Son of God, Christ, etc.) that the characters within the story may or may not know.

⁶¹ Cf. William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Translation, Exposition, and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 177-78; Gnlika, *Markus*, 1.193-194; Marcus, *Mark*, 339-40; Maloney, *Mark*, 100-1.

⁶² See for example: Lane, *Mark*, 174-78; R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 221-25; John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 160-62; Moloney, *Mark*, 98-101. For a more balanced treatment see Marcus, who recognizes the "potential" for faith to come for the disciples in οὐπω, and the appropriate response of φόβος to the divine in v. 41. This appropriate response to Jesus's act, however, is contrasted to the inappropriate cowardice [δειλός] in v. 40 (*Mark*, 334). For a more positive reading of this scene see Yarbrow Collins who understands this as a teaching moment between Jesus and the disciples (*Mark*, 262).

illustrate how in performance the indictment against the disciples may have a different rhetorical function. In particular, the scripts' use of descriptive commentary has a strong rhetorical effect as it stokes the listening audience's emotions and forces them to reflect on the disciples' actions from a nearer vantage point.⁶³

First, notice two things about the characters in this scene: 1) the disciples are not explicitly mentioned in v. 35 (αὐτοῖς). 2) More importantly, assuming they are there, the disciples are not alone (v. 36, καὶ ἄλλα πλοῖα ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ).⁶⁴ The lack of an explicit set of characters provides the performer an opportunity to place the audience among those in the boat. Rather than viewing this scene from afar, an engaged and receptive audience experiences this storm from a vantage point alongside the disciples. While the audience might reject this invitation by the performer, as is their right, the experience is still one that evokes empathy even from afar.

Second, given the ambiguity of the script as to who is present, it is possible to conceive of these statements being made by disciples other than the Twelve. While the author most likely has this select group of disciples in mind, the Twelve may not bear the sole or even primary

⁶³ Curtwright has suggested that in the works of Shakespeare certain rhetorical devices are responsible for characters' "realistic" appearance, as opposed to a particular style of acting. In Mark, this might be one example of where a rhetorical device (such as ekphrasis) promotes a more natural—and relatable—style of character(ization) in performance. For further discussion of Curtwright see Chapter 2.

⁶⁴ To be clear, I am not suggesting that this is an incorrect assumption, to identify the disciples as the characters Mark is referencing in this scene (cf. v.34 where μαθηταῖς is the last noun mentioned, and thus it can certainly be the subject of the verbs in v.35). I do, however, think it is important to consider how the lack of clear distinguishing marker should/does contribute (or does not contribute) to our perspective of the disciples as characters. More importantly, a performer must decide how to portray the script's potential ambiguity here.

“brunt” of any blame which might arise from this story.⁶⁵ Even if the performer decides that this story is about the Twelve and tells it in such a way that it becomes clear to the audience who is in the boat, the performer may also choose to emphasize the disciples’ experience at sea. Given the vivid details of the scene, their response to this crisis is not unexpected. The disciples’ great fear is something the audience too would experience, whether they see their position as in the boat with the disciples or viewing the story from afar.

Third, notice the descriptive language employed, and the varied potential of this commentary within a performance. Strong descriptive terms include: “[And] a great windstorm arose” (γίνεται λαίλαψ μεγάλη άνέμου),⁶⁶ and the waves “beat against the boat” (έπέβαλλεν εις τὸ πλοῖον), and the boat was already being “filled” (γεμίζεσθαι) with water. This is a truly terrifying scene as described within the script, and it is demonstrated in the disciples’/others’ response to Jesus’s actions (έφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν). In a performance context, these features might be emphasized even further to provide a more immersive experience of the scene to the audience, giving a vivid depiction of the dangers the disciples would be facing.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Yarbro Collins (*Mark*, 262-63) suggests that the disciples’ rhetorical question of “who then is this? Both the wind and the sea obey him” is a kind of acclamation, similar to the construction found in 1:27 (What is this? He commands unclean spirits and they obey him).

⁶⁶ Modern interpretations retain the terror of this scene in a number of ways. NSRVue and ESV translate this as “great windstorm;” the NIV “a furious squall;” CEB “gale-force winds;” KJV “great storm of wind.”

⁶⁷ Cf. Cicero, *On the Making of An Orator*, 3.53.202: “great effect may be produced...by setting forth our facts in such a striking manner that they seem to be placed before the eyes as vividly as if they were taking place in our actual presence.” See also Leucippe and Clitophon 3.15.6.2, where one feels grief through hearing the story of another. These notions of the performer transplanting an audience into a scene or feeling the emotions of those we hear in stories is not merely a modern phenomenon or concept but is a highly respected and highly regarded trait of the orator in antiquity.

In each of the potential options available above, performance emphasizes for an audience *why* the disciples' respond as they do. Rather than taking their statement at face value, the performance context heightens the emotions of the scene and underscores the reasons for the disciples' expressions (as well as whoever else may be present in the boat). Jesus's actions and response, demonstrating complete calm in the situation, are juxtaposed with the response of others who are in the boats. Such a juxtaposition from a narrative perspective reinforces Jesus's actions, comparing them to the inaction of the disciples. In performance, however, given the great detail and vivid imagery of this situation, the response of Jesus would seem illegitimate to an audience while the responses of those in the boats is completely legitimate. Thus, the potentially shocking feature in 4:35-41 is not the response of others in the boat, but rather the uncharacteristic manner in which Jesus performs his actions. In this scene, while the audience maintains its allegiance to Jesus, its alignment is clearly intended to be with the disciples. Notice also, that to this point in the performance, Jesus' miracles over nature have yet to display anything close to this level of control. The only miracles Jesus has done to this point are healings and exorcism, something the disciples too are commissioned to do.⁶⁸

Given the portrayal of the disciples to this point in the performance, this scene suggests little to tip the scales and alter the audience's initial impressions of them. The script's descriptive commentary—coupled with the potential and varied performability of the script—reinforces the disciples' response as being a “realistic” and acceptable one. The audience's shock is not at the disciples, but rather they share the disciples “fear” as they seek to understand Jesus's response to

⁶⁸ The disciples are commissioned to drive out demons in 3:15, but not specifically to heal. Yet, according to 6:13, they are capable of doing so.

the crisis and his actions to resolve it. Jesus's questioning of the disciples' faith, and the disciples' response of misunderstanding could both convey a slight to the disciples. However, the effect of the scene on an audience in performance is the opposite. Both Jesus's critique of the disciples and the suggestion of lacking faith appear out of character to this point. Without a retrojection of the later "misunderstandings" of the disciples into this story, and a disruption of the chronological characterization of the disciples, such an understanding of this scene betrays the performance, at least to this point. In other words, it is not representative of a linear assessment of the disciples in performance, but rather by a non-linear narrative reading.

The audience/characters (v. 36), the descriptive language (vv. 37-38), the preceding character(ization) of the disciples, Jesus's statement (v. 40) and the disciple's reaction to Jesus (v. 41) are examples of how the script *describes* scenes but does not always *prescribe* a particular performance of it. Such descriptive commentary and the heightened emotions that might arise from its telling opens the door to multiple performative options for the performer. *How* a performer chooses to portray each of these features is far more determinative to an audience's evaluation of the disciples than *what* the text says. Scenes such as Mark 4:35-41 are key to recognizing the importance of reading these texts from a performance approach. Questions of performance not only help us to wrestle with difficult points in this and other biblical narratives, but perhaps more importantly they aid us in conceiving of a more complex understanding of character(ization).

Mark 6:7-13 (Time: 27:18-27:54)

After a brief reprieve,⁶⁹ Mark returns to the disciples in chapter 6. The disciples begin by following (ἀκολουθοῦσιν) Jesus to his hometown (v.1). After leaving,⁷⁰ Jesus calls the twelve to him and he begins to send (ἀποστέλλειν, cf. 3:14) them out two by two, with authority over unclean spirits (vv.7-8). They go out (ἐξελθόντες), preach (ἐκήρυξαν), exorcise many demons (δαιμόνια πολλὰ ἐξέβαλλον), and heal (ἐθεράπευον) many sick persons (vv.12-13). Each of these are things that Jesus will do throughout Mark.⁷¹ Jesus' selection and approval of these disciples reinforces the audience's understanding of Jesus' assessment of them, and the disciples' continued allegiance to Jesus and his mission. These silent yet active participants continue to do everything Jesus's asks of them and the very things Jesus himself does.

⁶⁹ The disciples appear twice in chapter 5: first as a group (v. 31), second as a smaller group of individuals (vv. 37-43). For the sake of transparency, these instances are not “necessarily” positive evaluations of the disciples. However, they are not “necessarily” negative either. The disciples' question in 5:31 is not definitively a critique of Jesus (though it may be performed as such). Given the descriptive commentary concerning the size of the crowd in 5:24, that it was a large crowd (ὄχλος πολὺς) and they were pressing around (συνέθλιβον) Jesus, in performance it is equally possible that the disciples question in 5:31 is an innocent one, and not something revealing the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus's power. The script narrates their question to Jesus, but to an audience who has been provided this image of the crowd it is not unrealistic given the circumstances. In a performative context, the description of the scene nullifies the ambiguity of the statement, and this is reinforced by how the performer has decided to present the disciples throughout. Given their portrayal up until this point in the narrative, nothing in the script suggests the disciples are critiquing Jesus with this question. Also, neither Jesus's restriction of access to follow him to Jairus's house, nor his decision to allow Peter, James, and John to follow (v. 37) demand a negative portrayal of the disciples. If anything, Jesus's invitation to these named disciples shows his continued positive evaluation of them.

⁷⁰ In performance, the juxtaposition of those who reject Jesus in his hometown and the disciples being sent by Jesus might further bolster the “positive” portrayal of the disciples. This continues what the audience has already witnessed, concerning Jesus's choosing of the disciples as his new family and community (cf. 3:31-35). In a reading of Mark, this juxtaposition carries some weight, though in performance, it may be even further pronounced for a listening audience.

⁷¹ Κηρύσσω: 1:14, 39; ἐκβάλλω (in relation to demons): 1:34, 39; 7:26; 9:28; θεραπεύω: 1:34; 3:10; 6:5.

Mark 6:30-44 (Time: 30:47-33:26)

After a narrative aside concerning John's death (6:14-29),⁷² providing within a performance the impression of a passing of time between these two scenes,⁷³ the narrative returns to the disciples' success stories from their mission (v.30).⁷⁴ Notice the continued rhetorical effect of such a description of the disciples: followers of Jesus, sent by Jesus, doing the things Jesus instructs them to do, with power given to them by Jesus.⁷⁵ An audience aligned with Jesus's views must also necessarily be aligned with the Twelve.

Upon their return, Jesus suggests that the disciples rest and reset by going off alone (v. 31). Jesus' intentions appear to be for their benefit, as perhaps a reward for—or at least a

⁷² Another potential slight against the disciples in Mark is the response of John's disciples at the death of John. John's disciples come and take his body and bury it, where Jesus' disciples are nowhere to be seen at Jesus death. This is not "detrimental" to my case here, though it certainly does not help once we get to the later parts of Mark's story.

⁷³ This seems like a generally accepted reason for why this story fits here in the narrative. The narrative of John the Baptist's death is the only story in Mark where Jesus is not the center. Morna Hooker and Ernest Best see a similar practicality for its placement here, as they view this narrative quite as simply an interlude while the disciples are gone (Morna Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentaries 2 [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991], 158; Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1981], 192). Another explanation for this passages inclusion here is that it forms an intercalation. Thus, Moloney reads this extended intercalation as a juxtaposition between John's selfless death to the disciples self-proclaimed success (*Mark*, 128-29; Cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 397).

⁷⁴ Many have noted the "failure" of the disciples here following their "successful" mission (e.g., Francis J. Moloney "Mark 6:6b-30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure," *CBQ* 63.4 [2001]: 647–663). Additionally, some have argued that this is the last time the disciples are "successful" in Mark. This seems to overstate the case a bit, and perhaps also overstates the author's characterization of the disciples. More specifically, it seems to downplay or neglect Jesus's intention for the disciples once they return. He encourages them to come and rest, to go to a deserted place alone, with him.

⁷⁵ This may constitute within the performance a "becoming" moment for the Twelve (for more on the rhetorical effect of such scenes for character(ization) in performance see Luke, *Shakespearean Arrivals*, and our discussion of this work in Chapter 2 above). To this point, the Twelve have done the things Jesus asks of them, yet they have done so in his proximity. Here, presumably for the first time, they have now acted as part of Jesus's mission, with his authority and absent his presence. No longer are the Twelve the fishermen who agreed to follow, now they are the fishers of men who have gone out and performed. While such a view becomes more complicated to maintain as the narrative progresses, it is a moment where the disciples have changed their state, from what they began and what they "are." The moment of their becoming is in Jesus's sending of them.

recognition of—the “good” things they were able to accomplish on their mission. Seeking rest, their path is disrupted as they are converged upon by a large crowd. Jesus’s compassion for the crowd halts their movement (v. 34). Potentially, while not explicit in the script, the disciples share his compassion for the crowd as well (vv. 35-36).⁷⁶ Such potential from this script is rarely noted, yet the disciples concern for the people’s well-being could be what drives their questions.⁷⁷ Despite the lack of explicit motive in the script,⁷⁸ such compassion could be conveyed in performance through the performer’s tone and/or gestures.

This is yet another instance in which a performer’s decision on how the disciples should be portrayed will necessarily affect the ways in which an audience understands the remainder of the scene. On the one hand, the disciples’ rest is warranted, as Jesus also does in other parts of the narrative (cf. 1:35; 6:46, 14:35);⁷⁹ however, due to this disruption of their rest, one could

⁷⁶ Contra Moloney, who suggests that the disciples’ desire to dismiss the crowd stands in contrast to Jesus’s compassion (*Mark*, 130).

⁷⁷ Given the openness of the potential illocutionary force of this statement, and the disciples’ response to Jesus’s answer here, it is somewhat surprising that commentators have supplied it quite one-sidedly. For example, Lane states that the apostles were “unprepared” for Jesus’s command to provide, which is “evident from the astonishment” in their question, “disrespectful in tone” as it points out the “impossibility of complying with Jesus’ order” (*Mark*, 228); France reads the disciples question in v. 37 as “ironical” (*Mark*, 266); Yarbrow Collins suggests a failure of the disciples (contrasted with their recent missionary success) for not expecting a miracle in their initial request, and that their response to Jesus is at the level of “mundane” (*Mark*, 324); Marcus recognizes the potential for two alternative understandings of the disciples’ suggestion in vv. 35-36, but that at the “deeper” level it reflects the Twelve’s ignorance. Their response in v. 37 is “disbelief and even sarcasm” (*Mark*, 418).

⁷⁸ Donahue and Harrington read the imperative ἀπόλυσσον in v. 36 as an indicator of the “peremptory character” of the disciples’ request (*Mark*, 205). While certainly plausible, and arguably the best evidence in the script for indicating the tone of this discussion, the imperative may also carry far less force than Donahue and Harrington suggest.

⁷⁹ Cf. Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 210) who suggest that Jesus’ compassion is “somewhat surprising” in this scene, given the crowds disruption of the solitude he and the disciples were seeking. If Jesus compassion is surprising, then if one reads the disciples tone as dismissive, this is the “expected” response and perhaps demands a less negative assessment from an audience towards the disciples.

portray their “dismissiveness” of the crowd to the detriment of their character.⁸⁰ On the other hand, they might share in Jesus’s compassion for the crowd, and express concern for their well-being in finding food (cf. Jesus’s concern for the crowd’s well-being in 8:2-3). *How* one performs this statement is more determinative than *what* the script says, and the performer’s decision directly influences an audience’s perception of the disciples in this scene. Potentially problematic to a “positive” portrayal of the disciples is how they respond to Jesus’ request to give the crowd food (v.37), though the illocutionary force of their statement is again left underspecified within the script.⁸¹

Before considering the illocutionary force of the disciples’ statement in v. 37, it is worth noting the script’s descriptions of the disciples in this episode. In the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples do everything that Jesus asks them to do. When Jesus asks how many loaves there are in v. 38, the disciples find out (γνόντες). When Jesus commands (ἐπέταξεν) them to have the people sit down, it is assumed that they carry out this task in an ordered manner (vv. 39-40). When Jesus breaks the loaves and gives them to them, they distribute the food (v. 41). The disciples pick up the leftovers into baskets (though Jesus does not ask them to do so explicitly- v. 43). None of the disciples’ actions in this scene appear negative. Absent a retrojection of later failures of the disciples back onto their question at v. 37, there is little to suggest that their question is ill-willed or challenging to Jesus’s decision. In a linear experience, while the script leaves room for the disciples’ statement to be performed more caustically, it seems unlikely that in this scene the disciples’ statement would *require* a negative portrayal by a performer. If the

⁸⁰ If a performer does intend to highlight their dismissiveness as a negative trait, however, they must also wrestle with Jesus’ similar treatment of crowds in Mark: Cf. 1:42, 7:27.

⁸¹ See fn. 78.

performer has chosen throughout the performance thus far to portray the disciples positively and sympathetically, choosing to do so now would be at odds with the consistency of their portrayal—especially regarding their continued alignment to Jesus through their actions and Jesus’s repeated defense of them. Absent a decision by the performer to portray the disciples otherwise, there has yet to be an occasion where the disciples *must* be portrayed in an overtly negative way.

Mark 6:45-52 (Time: 33:27-34:23)

In the following scene, where Jesus walks on the water (vv. 45-52), the script once again provides additional descriptors and commentary which increase audience sympathy for the disciples, complicating a definitively negative portrayal by the performer or a negative assessment by the audience. The disciples begin by doing the very thing Jesus asks, getting into a boat and going ahead (v. 45). Jesus receives the solitude and time of prayer that eluded the disciples in the previous story (v. 46). The scene describes in detail the conditions: the disciples are in the midst of the sea, struggling to steer for an extended time, with adverse winds (*ἄνεμος ἐναντίος*) beating against the boat, late at night (vv. 47-48). The disciples mistake Jesus as a ghost (*φάντασμα*).⁸² As the script reiterates Jesus’s distance from the disciples, they become

⁸² On the literary “absurdity” of this scene, see Jason Robert Combs “A Ghost on the Water? Understanding an Absurdity in Mark 6:49-50,” *JBL* 127.2 (2008): 345-358. Combs argues that gods and divine men are known for walking on water, not ghosts. Thus, the disciples’ belief in a ghost, rather than the recognition of Jesus as a divine man walking on the water, heightens the audience’s awareness of the disciples’ gullibility, ultimately underscoring their misunderstanding of who Jesus is within Mark. Combs’s argument is persuasive. This is certainly a plausible “reading” and given the “ghost story” type, it could certainly extend its way into a first-century performance of Mark. However, the take-away could be different in performance. Combs suggests that this represents a continuation of the disciples’ characterization in Mark. If the disciples are not portrayed as negatively as Combs assumes, perhaps this is “not another” case, but rather a “unique” instance of their gullibility. Thus, in keeping with the understanding of “traditional characterization” in this chapter, it would not be the disciples’ characterization that would keep the focus of the audience. Rather, the disciples’ depiction would signal to the audience that something important is happening in the narrative. Jesus’ divine traits would be the thing that stands out to the audience.

afraid (vv. 49-50).⁸³ Jesus reveals himself to the disciples as I am (ἐγώ εἰμι), imploring them to take courage and not be afraid (v. 50).⁸⁴ Finally, the disciples, are incredibly (perhaps doubly) amazed (καὶ λίαν [ἐκ περισσοῦ] ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐξίσταντο) at his appearance on the sea (v.51).⁸⁵ This amazement (ἐξίστημι) is not always negative in Mark's script (cf. 2:12, 5:42), though here it might be understood as such given its relationship to v.52.⁸⁶

⁸³ Marcus (*Mark*, 443) suggests that the disciples are not yet ready to see Jesus, and this is why they think he is a ghost. This sort of hyper-spiritualizing, while illuminating and interesting at the literary level, has the potential to take away from the excessive "realism" within Mark's story here. In performance, due to the condensed time domain and the audience's need to filter information more quickly, the "presentness" and "realism" of this scene have a more immediate effect than the hyper-spiritualized, at least in terms of an audience's initial impressions.

⁸⁴ The theophanic function of ἐγώ εἰμι has garnered considerable discussion with a variety of opinions. For example, Gnlika emphasizes the "storm" in this story and claims that while the pre-Markan story may have been an "epiphany" story, it has been transformed into a "rescue" story in Mark (*Markus*, 1:267-69). Marcus, on the other hand, suggests that implicitly this is one of the highest claims to Jesus's divinity in Mark: "Although, therefore, Mark never explicitly says that Jesus is divine, he comes very close to doing so here, and this high evaluation of Jesus is constant with indicators elsewhere in the Gospel" (*Mark*, 432). Elsewhere and more forcefully, Marcus writes "with the sovereign self-identification formula 'I am he'...he is speaking in and acting out the language of Old Testament divine warrior theophanies..." (*The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992], 144-45). A more median position can be found in Moloney, who suggests that while thematic elements in this story "indicate that Jesus's self-identification approximates a revelation of his oneness with YHWH," he also warns that one should not make too much of the use of ἐγώ εἰμι in Mark: "It is not to be compared to the wide-spread use of ἐγώ εἰμι in the Fourth Gospel, although it may indicate the beginnings of a theological tradition which reached its New Testament zenith in the Fourth Gospel" (*Mark*, 134-35, esp. n. 94). In relation to how this passage might be best understood within performance, Yarbrow Collins is perhaps closest when she suggests: "Those in the audience who had grasped the assimilation of Jesus to God in this passage and who were familiar with the passages cited here from Deuteronomy and Isaiah in which 'It is I' or 'I am' (ἐγώ εἰμι) functions as a divine name or quality may have understood the expression of Jesus in similar terms. In any case, awareness of these intertextual connections is not necessary for the audience to realize that Jesus is being portrayed here as divine in a function, not necessarily in a metaphysical, sense" (*Mark*, 335).

⁸⁵ I have retained both terms used in the manuscript tradition to display how "great" or exceeding their amazement was. This, perhaps, also offers us a glimpse into the reception of this text from scribes, as it suggests that they too saw within this scene an emphasis on amazement.

⁸⁶ Yarbrow Collins states that this amazement "signifies the extraordinary character of the phenomenon that has just been witnessed, including the walking on the sea." Reading this story as a "test" for the disciples, she suggests that Mark's inclusion of v. 52 is not a redactional comment on this scene in particular, thus indicating that Mark thinks of the disciples' "amazement" as a negative account. Rather, she suggests that the inclusion of v. 52 accounts for the "disciples' behavior in the account as a whole" (*Mark*, 335-36).

Somewhat curiously, the script underscores the disciples' misperception (συνήμι) of the previous story and the loaves (not Jesus's actions here), as the cause (γάρ) for their amazement.⁸⁷ The script uses a passive construction to describe their (plural) heart (singular) being hardened (πεπωρωμένη). Problems with the final clause in v. 52, particularly its uncharacteristic and unexpected association with this story, will be considered in more detail when it occurs a second time in the script at 8:17.⁸⁸ Aside from this description of a heart being hardened in v. 52, which appears to evoke a negative evaluation, the script includes several descriptors that in performance carry the potential to evoke to a more sympathetic view of Jesus's disciples. This is not the first miraculous event that Jesus has performed on the water (4:35-41), yet the script once again goes to great lengths to explain the reasons for the disciples' amazement here. Rather than highlight their lack of belief in the previous account on water, the script links the disciples' amazement to a misunderstanding about the miraculous feeding. In performance, a performer might emphasize the appearance of a ghost (φάντασμα), the time of day (ὄψια), the disciples' struggle at the oars, and/or Jesus's distance from them, each of which create a vivid and sympathetic depiction of the crisis. The description also creates such a vivid image in the minds of the hearer (*ekphrasis*), that it is as if they are in the boat with the disciples, even if only in mind. The result is that despite the audience's established knowledge of who Jesus is, the scene still evokes the same amazement from the audience as the disciples.

⁸⁷ See Watts-Henderson, "Concerning the Loaves," for a narrative reading on how the disciples' role in the feeding of the 5,000 shapes this scene which follows.

⁸⁸ It is worth noting here that Yarbrow Collins also recognizes that this comment is a "radical intensification of the theme of the misunderstanding of the disciples" and that this "language is shocking" given their portrayal to this point (*Mark*, 336).

Mark 8:1-21 (Time: 39:45-42:36)

After a few minor appearances in chapter 7, we find some of the more problematic scenes to a positive performability of the disciples; scenes which strain the listening audience's relation to them. The stories we find in Mark 8 are crucial starting points to arguments marshalled against the disciples.⁸⁹ Again, it is not my intention to completely absolve the disciples of blame, nor to suggest that the script allows for endless re-construction (though, arguably it may). Rather, my intention here is to explore the potential performance of this script, and whether a primarily positive representation of the disciples can be maintained from such a perspective. My hope is that the following considerations do not come across as forced or manufactured, but rather that they uncover the *potential* of Mark's script. Aside from one potentially negative comment in 6:52, there have been no moments to this point in the performance that demand a negative portrayal of the disciples from a performer. If this section does contain a polemic against the disciples, it is miniature and unique to this point in the script. Incongruity with the character(ization) thus far poses considerable problems from the perspective of a performer and risks alienating an audience from their previously established alignment with and alongside the disciples.

⁸⁹ For example, Peter's confession is a vital point of emphasis for Weeden. Not only does his reading of this scene play a generative role in his reading of the next several chapters of Mark, but perhaps more importantly it serves as a central piece for his reconstruction and shaping of the *Sitz im Leben* for Mark's composition. Weeden argues that the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus's suffering Son of Man Christology is indicative of a larger controversy involving Mark's opponents. Mark is thus arguing against those holding to a *theios-aner* Christology, which he argues is the Christology represented by the disciples in Mark. See Weeden, *Mark: Traditions*, esp. 32-38; 64-69.

Mark 8:1-13 (Time: 39:46-41:12)

In this opening scene, Jesus feeds the 4,000. In a performance, I have suggested above that the disciples may be absolved of certain reactions to Jesus because of the “lack of precedent” within the script. This argument, however, cannot be maintained in this second miraculous feeding story. Jesus has provided in a similar circumstance, and the narrator has explicitly highlighted the disciples lack of understanding of the first story (6:52). Therefore, it seems as though the disciple’s ignorance is on full display.⁹⁰

At the beginning of this scene, we find a similar sentiment as before: Jesus looks upon the crowd and he has compassion (*σπλαγγνίζομαι*) on them (cf. 6:34; 8:1).⁹¹ Unlike the previous feeding story, Jesus is the one to initiate discussions concerning the crowd’s need for food. In Mark 6, Jesus is teaching, and it was the disciples who were concerned with the well-being of the crowd. Here, Jesus has taught for three days, and at the end of this period he now shares his concerns for the crowd’s well-being. The disciples, who this time appear to have focused themselves on Jesus’s teaching at the expense of the well-being of the crowd, once again respond in a very practical manner. Notice, unlike in chapter 6, Jesus does not explicitly ask the disciples

⁹⁰ I wonder, too, whether a bit of Johannine reading is sneaking into certain modern interpretations here, since Jesus uses the feeding to “test” Phillip in John 6:6. Some presume that this second story in Mark is a testing of the disciples (with similarities to John’s feeding story), whether they have learned anything from the first feeding. On the one hand, this line of reasoning makes sense. On the other hand, Mark 6:5 suggests that despite Jesus’s ability to perform a given miracle, if the occasion was not right, he would not do so. So perhaps these two possibilities must be held in tension, especially within Mark.

⁹¹ There are a few changes here as well: 1) Jesus’s compassion on the crowd in 6:34 was because they were like sheep without a shepherd, here in 8:2 it is because they have followed him without food. 2) Jesus is now the one who is concerned with their well-being (as opposed to the disciples before in 6:35-36), but similarly Jesus does not want them to depart hungry (6:37; 8:3). 3) The time of day is not the issue, but rather the length of time they have been listening to Jesus (in 6:35, late in the day and a remote place; in 8:2, the crowd has followed Jesus for three days). 4) In the previous episode, the disciples could go into town to buy bread (6:36-37), here, there seems to be no such outlet (8:4).

to feed the crowd. The disciples' question to Jesus, rather, demonstrates their desire to attend to his concerns. Despite the humorous potential of this scene in performance,⁹² a rhetorical effect that will also likely occur in the performance of the following scene (8:14-21), the disciples' concerns are justifiable. Logistical and financial limitations prohibit the disciples from attending to this particular concern of Jesus. Jesus asks how many loaves they have, and they report to him. Like the previous feeding miracle, the disciples do everything Jesus asks of them. Jesus does not respond negatively to their question concerning where to get food, rather he asks what is available to them. An audience's memory of the previous feeding story (6:30-44), as well as the narrator's following critique concerning their misunderstanding of that scene (6:52), may certainly color the disciples' portrayal here as obtuse—perhaps humorously—the script does not necessitate that the question posed to Jesus in this scene reflects their obtuseness.⁹³ While questions concerning the remoteness of the location and the sparsity of options available to the crowd *may* color the character(ization) of the disciples, rhetorically it *does* heighten the necessity for Jesus' to supply, and thus, the audience's appreciation for Jesus's miracle.

⁹² See for example Mclean's performance where he expresses the disciples' attempt (perhaps frustration) to do what Jesus has asked, and Jesus's frustrated though humorous response. Mclean's lowering of his head, holding his sinuses at his nose, closed eyes, looking up to the audience and his slow pacing of "How...Many...Loaves...do you have" have a humorous effect. The audience laughs, and Mclean continues reporting this story at a rather quick pace (indicative of Mark's narrative) as this is yet another one of the miraculous things Jesus does in Mark. The quick pacing and "matter of fact" style of McLean's delivery also reveals the disciples quickly doing what Jesus asks.

⁹³ Commentators tend to emphasize the fact that this second time only heightens the disciples' ignorance. Cf. for instance Marcus's statement: "This question, which we have noted is illogical in view of the disciples' knowledge of the previous miraculous feeding, serves a number of purposes...But the disciples' question is also important precisely because its incredible obtuseness fits into a developing Marcan theme" *Mark*, 495-96.

Mark 8:14-21 (Time: 41:13—42:36)

Following the second feeding miracle, and a brief episode with the Pharisees (vv. 11-13), we find Jesus once again in a boat. This is the third sea crossing in Mark, and it plays a pivotal role in configurations of the disciples' character(ization). The script opens with the line that they forgot to bring bread. The mentioning of bread, and the location upon the water, open the door for Jesus to issue a warning about the dangers of his opponents' views (v. 15). From a narrative perspective, this warning coheres with the brief yet important note in the immediately preceding episode concerning Jesus' frustration with the Pharisees request for a sign (vv. 11-13). Testing leads to Jesus's statement about the Pharisees' yeast and his continued frustration with those asking for a sign. Confused by this warning and its implications for them, those in the boat thought Jesus was speaking about their failure to bring bread (v. 16). Correcting them once again, Jesus reminds them that he is not actually talking about physical bread, using their confusion at his metaphor as an opportunity to demonstrate their misunderstanding of things that have already occurred (vv. 17-21).

Before considering the "harshness" of this scene, and its implications on the disciples' character(ization), it is important to think about the rhetorical function of vv.14-16 and its relation to vv.17-21 in a performance. Interestingly, in a case where the script could solidify its critique of the disciples, the disciples are never explicitly mentioned in 8:14-21.⁹⁴ This is

⁹⁴ As above, I am not suggesting that the characters in this story are not the disciples, nor that Mark did not intend for the disciples to be the characters here. Narratively, the disciples were with Jesus in the boat to Dalmantha (8:10). After a brief interaction with Pharisees at an undisclosed location, he gets back into the boat, presumably, with the same persons with him. I am not questioning the "logic" of this, but merely pointing out that from the script, the disciples are not named. This means that the performance need not focus Jesus' "critique" on the Twelve alone, but could refer to a larger group of those traveling with him. More specifically, I am raising the question of whether this "definitively" adds to a "negative" evaluation of the Twelve. In this instance, it is perhaps a more difficult textual argument to maintain that this is in fact the Twelve, than the ambiguity in 4:35-41, where the noun μαθητής (4:34) immediately preceded the verbs in v. 35. Here in chapter 8, the disciples are mentioned getting into

significant for two reasons: 1) it challenges the assumption that this is definitely related to the character(ization) of the Twelve in Mark; 2) it leaves open the possibility that more than just the Twelve are present, and as such, that this select group of disciples should not bear the entire brunt of the blame within this scene (cf. 4:35-41, 14:1-9, etc.). This second option is especially important in performance.

If not the disciples, then who is the recipient of Jesus' critique here? Iverson has argued that this first part of the scene carries the potential to be a humorous moment, and that recognizing its humor is a key to understanding the rhetorical force behind the entirety of the scene (8:14-21).⁹⁵ “[F]unctioning as a bridge between vv. 14-16 and vv. 17-21,” Iverson argues that humor facilitates the storyteller’s sharp emotional shift, between forgotten bread and “a barrage of stern, rhetorical questions.”⁹⁶ In vv. 14-16 the audience recognizes the absurdity of the situation, and they “enjoy the depiction by engaging in laughter at the expense of the Twelve.”⁹⁷ Rather than the effect of distinguishing the disciples from the audience, however, this laughter actually prepares the storyteller to address the audience directly.⁹⁸ Key to this understanding is the idea that vv.17-21 provide the performer with a natural opportunity for audience address, and that this is one, among a number of opportunities within a performance of Mark (cf. our

the boat with Jesus in 8:10, yet there is a scene with the Pharisees between these two accounts, and a second embarkment (vv. 11-13). A similar peculiarity will occur again in 14:4, where most readers presume that the disciples are the ones in view, yet Mark leaves this group underspecified in the script. See the discussion of this below.

⁹⁵ Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 2-19.

⁹⁶ Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 14.

⁹⁷ Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 16.

⁹⁸ “[L]aughter is the mechanism that at once places the audience in a position beyond the disciples yet simultaneously prepares for the direct address in the following verses” (Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 16).

discussion at 4:13-20), where the storyteller “speaks directly to the audience, as the disciples.”⁹⁹ The rhetorical effect, however, is one of importance to the disciples’ characterization, as it places the audience once again side-by-side with the disciples. Iverson suggests that while this “episode begins by targeting the disciples...the scene concludes *by fully associating the audience with the disciples.*”¹⁰⁰ This association is facilitated by humor. Rhetorically this is extremely powerful, as “at the very moment when the audience might be prone to exalt themselves over and against the disciples,” the performer, taking up the cues of the script, “orchestrates a reversal that forces the audience to recognize their fidelity with the Twelve.”¹⁰¹ Jesus’s rebuke is not merely levied at the disciples, but rather in a flurry of rhetorical questions aimed at the audience, it is the audience who is provoked to thought and response. The effect is that once again in performance an audience, rather than sitting in judgment on the disciples, sympathizes with them.¹⁰²

Not only does this scene function as a means of aligning the audience with the disciples as characters, but it also has an important summarizing function for the entirety of the performance. Notice how vv. 14-21 are littered with summaries of the performance thus far. It begins with two words for perception (voέw and συνίημι) both of which have been used previously in the script and could suggest the audience’s “experience” in performance.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 16.

¹⁰⁰ Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 15 (emphasis original).

¹⁰¹ Iverson, “Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 17.

¹⁰² Iverson concludes his article with an important idea: “If the Second Gospel is any indication, the earliest followers of Jesus were comfortable with the humorous incongruities and paradoxes of life, and—for the sake of a greater purpose—were even willing to poke fun at those who were pillars in the church.” (“Incongruity, Humor, and Mark,” 19). Implicit within this claim is the idea that the author (and presumably the audience) of Mark’s Gospel recognized the disciples as “pillars” in the church.

¹⁰³ These two terms only appear in a few places Mark: συνίημι only appears in 4:12; 6:52; 7:14; and here in this scene. voέw occurs in similar in 7:18; 8:17; 13:14.

Similarly, echoes to the scene between parables in 4:10-12 are discernible, where the disciples and others are supposed to hear and perceive (συνίημι) what others cannot. It recounts the two feeding miracles, one where the disciples do not understand, the second of which is followed by the Pharisees request for a sign. Each of these resonances go back to scenes where it was not just the disciples who were present, but also crowds. Jesus's words in vv. 17-21, when spoken at the audience summarize and reiterate in brief (some of) the signs that the disciples (but rhetorically, the audience) were to see and hear to this point.

Because of this, in performance, this scene potentially functions as an intermission. Not only does it summarize, but it also points forward, to a new and/or different perception of Jesus for the remainder of the story. If this scene in vv. 14-21 might be experienced as the “middle” of a performance of Mark, then what follows is something like a second act.¹⁰⁴ Several scholars point to the middle of the Gospel of Mark as Peter's confession (v. 29), and there are many good literary reasons why that is the stronger literary argument.¹⁰⁵ In a performance, however, this scene through Peter's confession may function like an intermission. If this summary prepares the audience for Jesus two-part healing of the blind man, and Peter's declaration in 8:27-30, it recasts both scenes in a new light. Strengthened by the connection of these scenes by the two-part healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (vv. 22-26), Jesus's initial attempt to reveal himself may only provide a hazy vision to the disciples and/or audience, but in this second attempt—the remainder of the narrative—perceptions of Jesus should become immediately clear.

¹⁰⁴ Iverson notes how LaVerdiere and W.J. Harrington also make note of the strategic location of this scene (“Incongruity, Humor, and Mark” 13).

¹⁰⁵ For a commentary that takes a narrative approach and uses this framework see: Moloney, *Mark*, 30-32, 165-68, 328-31.

Mark 8:27–9:1 (43:07-45:13)

Following the two-part healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (vv. 22-26), we approach what many readers identify as the central part of Mark’s narrative: Peter’s confession. As stated above, this scene could function as an extended intermission in performance. Jesus’s lecture on the water reminds the disciples and recasts for the audience the series of events that have led to this confession, and how Jesus will be portrayed in the second half of the performance. *How* a performer chooses to perform this scene carries significant weight as to the character(ization) of the disciples.

Mark 8:27-33 (43:07-44:21)

Most commentators take Peter’s confession in v. 29 as ironic. Peter gives the “correct” answer to Jesus’s identity, yet he may not fully understand what that means.¹⁰⁶ Peter is often read as representative of the Twelve, as Peter’s incomplete understanding of Jesus continues throughout the remainder of the narrative and is expressed in the disciples repeated failures to understand Jesus. More specifically, this is evident in their inability to conceptualize a suffering messiah.¹⁰⁷

My intention is not to refute the notion that Peter does not fully understand who Jesus is at this point in Mark—the second half of the narrative would be somewhat unnecessary if Jesus’s characterization were completely developed here—nor is it my intention to absolve Peter from his rebuke of Jesus. Rather, I am interested in whether this “(mis)understanding” of Jesus’s

¹⁰⁶ Cf. “[Peter] recognized that Jesus was the appointed agent of God...Of the deeper and more costly dimensions of messiahship, however, he had no intimation.” (Lane, *Mark*, 291); “partially correct” (Moloney, *Mark*, 167); “ambiguous...in need of clarification” (Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 402) This is an essential point to Weeden’s argument in “Heresy,” and developed further in *Mark: Traditions*.

¹⁰⁷ Weeden, “Heresy,” 146-47.

identity necessitates a negative evaluation in a performance of Mark, and if so, for whom. How might a performance approach to this scene aid us in considering an audience's thoughts on who the disciples are, and the weight this scene has (or should have) in terms of their overall characterization? The following will explore how performance problematizes an overtly negative response by the audience to Peter's confession, and subsequently his rebuke of Jesus. Such considerations have the potential to disrupt the substantial weight which this scene carries in arguments for a negative portrayal of Peter and the disciples.

Looking at the confession itself, there is nothing incorrect about the disciples' answers to Jesus's initial question in v. 27, nor Peter's answer to Jesus's more specific question in v. 29. The disciples' accurately report what others are saying about Jesus (cf. 6:14-16). Peter answers the question of Jesus' identity with the "correct" answer, the Messiah. While Jesus does not explicitly confirm their assessment, the audience knows that Peter's answer is correct (cf. 1:1). Jesus's rebuke (*ἐπετίμησεν*) to secrecy also appears to confirm this, as Jesus has told other characters within Mark to be silent on such matters (cf. 1:24). Despite Peter's answer being "correct," many readers note that Peter's answer is only partially correct. As such, this confession underscores his misunderstanding of Jesus's nature. While this is certainly possible from a literary perspective, it raises the question of how one might convey such "misunderstanding" in performance. While a performer is certainly capable of conveying the ironic sense of a given saying in performance—using various paralinguistic features, including tone, or facial and hand gestures—for this scene such considerations are more complex. It is not the performability of a single line that is at issue, but rather delivering this line in the context of a

performance of Mark in its entirety that creates problems for the performer.¹⁰⁸ Given what the audience already knows about Jesus, Peter's answer may indeed be perceived as being only partially correct; yet, considering Peter's characterization to this point in the performance it comes across as a sincere and genuine confession.

Peter's rebuke of Jesus in 8:32 is perceived as the proof of his failure to understand—or to accept—Jesus's mission as a suffering messiah. Jesus is clearly upset by Peter's actions, a point that seems beyond dispute. Within a performance, however, the details of the script make it completely plausible to portray Peter's rebuke of Jesus as not only warranted but justified. In v. 32, Peter rebukes Jesus for the very thing Jesus just rebuked Peter for in v. 30. Jesus tells Peter and the disciples not to tell anyone who he is. They comply, yet now Jesus is “speaking openly” (παρησίᾳ), doing the very thing he commanded Peter and the disciples not to do.

Jesus's response is strong, and clearly evokes a negative response towards Peter's actions. But this is also a response to a singular action of Peter, not reflective of his potential characterization to this point, nor determinative of his overall characterization in the entire performance. As it relates to “disciples” as a group, Jesus's response is directed at Peter alone (singular) not the disciples (plural). When weighed together with the predominantly positive characterization of the disciples thus far, this one statement, albeit strong and intentional, is not a sufficient condemnation of them as a group. It certainly does not cohere with their characterization to this point, continuously being depicted as being aligned with and being defended by Jesus. Jesus rebukes Peter to keep his identity secret, and Peter rebukes Jesus,

¹⁰⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the elements that the performer must consider when determining whether a statement like Peter's confession is sincere, ironic, etc. see Iverson, “A Centurion's Confession,” 329-50.

attempting to “maintain” an ideal that Jesus himself has set.¹⁰⁹ A singular misstep is not constitutive of an overall negative portrayal of a character—especially when the script has gone to great lengths to reflect and protect against throughout. If a single action carries such weight, Mark’s characterization of Jesus and other characters become equally problematic.

Such moments within the script require discernment on behalf of the performer, but also highlight the necessity of developing a more complex sense of characterization in performance—one flaw or failure is not *necessarily* constitutive of one’s entire characterization, but rather may serve a more immediate and/or illustrative purpose. Similar considerations must also be made for the portrayal of Jesus in Mark. For example, one might consider Jesus’s action in 1:41, where he is angry with someone who approaches him for healing, as being a key point of his character.¹¹⁰ Likewise, in 7:24-30 Jesus appears to respond negatively, initially rejecting the Syrophenician woman’s request to help her daughter. Again, in 14:36 Jesus seems to question God’s will, in

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Lane, who suggests “Peter’s reaction was therefore understandable, but presumptuous, and it is not allowed to stand” (*Mark*, 304).

¹¹⁰ This reading of ὀργισθεῖς (anger) in 1:41 is not represented in the NA28, and thus requires a brief discussion. The NA28 retains the use of σπλαγχνισθεῖς (compassion), presumably as it has the “most” and “best” textual support. Meanwhile ὀργισθεῖς only appears in a few Western texts, including D (Codex Bezae) and multiple Old Latin MSS (a ff² r¹). Despite this fact, the principle *lectio difficilior potior* (the more difficult reading is to be preferred) has carried significant weight in this conversation. The argument goes that it is more plausible that a scribe changed the term from ὀργισθεῖς to σπλαγχνισθεῖς rather than vice versa. Additionally, a reading of ὀργισθεῖς here seems to cohere with Jesus’s later ἐμβριμησάμενος (upbraid, lit. snort, warn sternly) of the healed person. Thus, despite its lack of attestation in some of the more significant manuscripts, ὀργισθεῖς has become the preferred reading of many commentators. For example, Morna D. Hooker, says that ὀργισθεῖς is “almost certainly the correct reading” (*St Mark*, 79). For other commentators who take ὀργισθεῖς as the preferred reading see, among others: Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: MacMillan, 1952), 187; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 92. Marcus, *Mark*, 206. Bart Ehrman has perhaps made the strongest case for ὀργισθεῖς in “A Leper in the Hands of an Angry Jesus,” in idem. *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 120-41. For a response to Ehrman and an argument in favor of σπλαγχνισθεῖς as original see: Peter J. Williams, “An Examination of Ehrman’s Case for ὀργισθεῖς in Mark 1:41,” *NovT* 54 (2012): 1-12. Whether the reader agrees or not that ὀργισθεῖς is original, Jesus displays similar responses elsewhere in Mark. See for example Jesus’ anger (ὀργῆς) in 3:5, though in this instance it seems a more “justifiable” or “righteous” anger. Similarly, Jesus is ἠγανάκτησεν (indignant) in Mark 10.

private, concerning his impending sentencing and death. In 15:34 Jesus publicly expresses his displeasure at God's abandonment of him. Each of these depictions of Jesus "could" be performed to expose Jesus's character(ization), and thus these scenes *may* carry disproportionate weight in considerations of his character; yet in no way does the overall presentation of Jesus in Mark suggest that these *should* be performed in this way, nor that the audience *should* depart with such an understanding of these scenes.

An alternative consideration for how this scene might function rhetorically is for a performer to emphasize the incoherence of Peter's characterization. Doing so could reveal to the audience that this is an essential and important scene for the narrative. As Porter discusses, when characters betray their traditional-characterization, this often emphasizes something of import to the singer/author. Betraying traditional characterization allows the author to place their unique stamp on a much larger tradition. This does not mean that it betrays the entirety of the traditional characterization of the person, as the author or performer must assume the audience's familiarity with that character. In other words, it does not shift the audience's perception of that character entirely. Rather, and more simply, it functions as a one-off, which catches the attention of the audience. Not only is Peter perhaps betraying his potential traditional characterization in this scene, but also this is incoherent to his portrayal up to this point in this performance. By taking a traditional characterization approach to Peter's rebuke of Jesus, this emphasizes that Jesus's message in v. 31 will be of special importance as the story progresses. Jesus shares the full details of his mission for the first time to his disciples and explains to them the temporary hardship but ultimate vindication of it. This momentary breach of Peter's character indicates to an audience that Jesus's teaching here is of utmost importance, despite Jesus's desire for his

disciples to keep his mission a secret to outsiders. Thus, Peter's actions here should not be thought to encapsulate or indicate how an audience ought to construct his character, but rather, his uncharacteristic actions have a rhetorical function indicating to an audience that something important is happening at this moment in the performance.

When 8:27-30 and 8:31-33 are experienced in sequence, Peter not only reaffirms the audience's understanding of Jesus's identity, but he also appears to be trying to maintain the very standard that Jesus himself demanded of the disciples. To be clear, such an understanding does not absolve Peter of obstructing Jesus, nor does it make light of Jesus's aligning Peter's actions with that of Satan. However, the linear progression of these scenes coupled with how each is performed might not necessitate the audience's completely negative configuration of Peter.

4.3.3- Mark 9:2–10:52: (Mis)Conceptions of Jesus?

Mark 9:2-13 (Time: 45:28—47:19)¹¹¹

Similar to this treatment of Peter in 8:27-33, where performance evokes a more sympathetic, or at least a more complete understanding of Peter's actions, we might also add to these the case of the transfiguration (9:2-8). Many commentators note the ridiculousness and obtuseness of Peter's request.¹¹² The desire to set up tents or shelters (σκηνάς) to commemorate this noteworthy and transformative event reflects the disciples' (plural) inability to understand the immediate magnitude of the occasion (v. 5). Upon closer investigation, however, the script

¹¹¹ In Mclean's performance, 9:2 is the start of Act 2. While this does not "confirm" my suggestion of 8:14-21, perhaps extended to 9:1, as an intermission of sorts, it is interesting that it appears to function like this in a modern performance.

¹¹² Lane, *Mark*, 319-20; Moloney suggests that Peter referring to Jesus as "rabbi" misses the theophanic experience (*Mark*, 179-80). *Contra* Marcus who states that Peter's statement is completely warranted and acceptable until Mark explains why he is wrong in 9:6 (*Mark*, 638).

attempts to absolve Peter of this ridiculousness, explaining to the audience the reason for such actions.

In v. 6, Peter's request is qualified by pointing out that it was reactive and to a certain extent an act of desperation.¹¹³ Peter, James, and John were terrified, and Peter had no idea (pluperfect) what he should say (subjunctive). Rather than considering this as a fatal blow to the characterization of Peter, highlighting his ignorance, it would be equally feasible in a performance to emphasize the privileged position and positive actions of Peter, James, and John. They are invited specifically by Jesus both to witness and to be witnesses to this event (cf. 5:37-43). Desiring to do something (albeit misguided) to commemorate this monumental occasion, showing their recognition of its importance is not something unexpected for an audience. The disciples hear the voice from the clouds, confirming their already confessed assessment of Jesus (8:27-30) and the audience's understanding as well (1:1). Once again, we find Jesus telling the disciples not to speak about what they have just witnessed, and they begin asking questions among themselves about what Jesus meant about the Son of Man rising from the dead (9:9-10).

Mark 9:14-29 (Time: 47:20-49:24)

Following the Transfiguration, another group of disciples are found arguing with the scribes. The issue is about an exorcism, and why a demon was unable to be cast out. The words

¹¹³ Here, interestingly, Mark gives a reason for the ridiculousness of the question, unlike Matthew and for a different reason than Luke. Among modern interpretations of this scene we might have a case of an imported reading or a conflation with the Synoptics, rather than a reading determined explicitly from Mark's characterization of the disciples in this scene (see discussion on ch.14 below). In Matthew, the disciples' make a similar statement to Jesus, yet their fear comes only after this statement, as the voice from the cloud speaks (cf. Matt 17:6). While Matthew might be "qualifying" Peter's statement, by placing it in the subjunctive (if you desire/will it), the saying itself is not attributed to the same fear as it is in Mark. In Luke, Peter is absolved even further when he says something similar about the shelters, "not knowing what he said," but here too, the statement is not attributed to fear. It is only after the saying, when the cloud envelops them that fear is included (cf. Luke 9:34).

of Jesus in v. 16 and v. 19 are often understood as being against the disciples. However, as the scene unfolds within the script, there seems to be no such indicator that Jesus' words are solely—or even primarily—aimed at the disciples. Jesus responds to a certain person from the crowd, not the disciples (v. 17). The scribes are also present, which suggests they are the target of Jesus' harsh words (v. 19; cf. Jesus comments to the Pharisees in 8:11-12 that also includes this critique of a “generation”). After driving out the demon, Jesus discusses the event with his disciples in private, and his response suggests that the demon's refusal to come out was not due to a flaw of their own (vv. 28-29). Their “failure” was a product of a unique situation.¹¹⁴ Unless a performer carries a preconceived notion of the disciples' negative portrayal into this scene, there is little here that requires a negative portrayal of them.

Mark 9:31-50 (Time: 49:25-51:56)

Additional scenes in Mark 9 are admittedly more problematic. There is another passion prediction where the narrator specifically states that the disciples do not see (ἠγνόουν) Jesus' words concerning his death and resurrection. Not only did they not understand, but they were afraid to ask for clarity (9:32). Whether or not being able to “see” the future is a damnable offense to an audience is unclear, though the disciples' fear of asking for clarification could also be perceived as a negative reflection upon their relationship with Jesus. Following this, the disciples have a private discussion about who among them is the greatest (vv. 33-34). This discussion of greatness is only alluded to, not narrated, yet the disciples remain silent when Jesus confronts them about it (v. 34). Jesus shames them further by bringing up the little children and

¹¹⁴ In retrospect, I wonder whether Jesus' ability here should also be linked to the Transfiguration. While Mark does not narrate Jesus' praying, he takes Peter, James, and John upon the mountain with him. This is a place where Jesus goes to pray at other times in Mark (cf. e.g., 6:46).

using them as an example of greatness (v. 35). John is corrected by Jesus for trying to stop someone doing things in the name of Jesus (vv. 39-40). In each of these scenes, Jesus appears to be correcting the disciples' views. This could indicate that the disciples are no longer aligned with Jesus, and as such, the audience's alignment with them may be brought into question. Questioning this alignment, however, is a far cry from distancing themselves from the disciples.

Mark 10:17-52 (Time: 53:44-59:35)

In Mark 10, we find a series of stories that are often understood as part of the continued harangue against the disciples. Despite their "misunderstanding," however, the disciples are in fact closer to the kingdom of God now than most previous scenes in Mark. Following the encounter with the wealthy man (vv. 17-22) Jesus looks to his disciples and gives additional commentary concerning what has just transpired. In v. 22, the man departs grieving at his wealth. Jesus uses this scene as a platform for discussing kingdom economics with his disciples. Twice within this scene we find the disciples responding to Jesus words with amazement, the second more emphatic than the first (v.24, ἔθαμβοῦντο; v. 26, περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο). The words of Jesus here are quite shocking. He is subverting norms, and to make this fact as clear as possible the script provides cues for the performer. The amazement of the disciples is justified, as Jesus's teaching presumably raises the same amazement from the audience in performance. The disciples' response perhaps mimics that of the audience, highlighting again the shared concerns of an audience and disciples, and the side-by-side placement in performance.

The disciples' question in v. 26 may be read as a challenge to Jesus's statement. The disciples start speaking among themselves concerning Jesus's teaching, and do not respond to him directly. In a performance this question could lean one way or the other. Jesus's response to their question, however, does not imply that he has received their question as a challenge to his

enigmatic words. Rather, it seems to function as a clarification of them. Notice how Jesus responds in other instances in the narrative where someone challenges Jesus's saying among themselves (cf. 2:8-11, 17; 3:23-30; 6:4, etc.). Here in 10:27, Jesus' response does not appear to be of the same sort, nor does it carry the same weight as more explicit challenges to Jesus.

In v. 28, Peter reminds Jesus that they have left everything to follow him. Jesus's response appears affirming, but also clarifying. By suggesting that Peter and the other disciples' sacrifices are not in vain, he recognizes that they too will be rewarded both in the present and future age (vv. 29-31). The audience is also once again reminded of the positive actions of the disciples (cf. 1:16-20) and recalls their initial impressions. If an audience begins to question its alignment with the disciples at the end of chapter 9, by the end of this scene in 10:27-28, they are being reminded of their initial portrayal.

Immediately following this discussion, the disciples are again shown as favorable and privileged with Jesus. Once again, Jesus tells them about what he must suffer in the coming days (vv. 32-34). This third and final passion prediction is followed by the request of James and John to sit at the right and left of Jesus (v. 37). Such discussion, particularly in light of v. 31, appears to demand a negative evaluation. Jesus has just told the disciples that the first will be last and last first (v. 31), then the audience finds James and John jockeying for positions of power within the ranks. Inherent within this request, however, is also their recognition that they will do the things that Jesus is doing, and Jesus's affirmation that they will follow in his footsteps (vv. 38-40). The disciples' response to James and John absolves this blame from being attributed to all disciples (v. 41), but also Jesus's response does not appear to condemn James and John—only correct them. While it is completely plausible for this scene to evoke a negative evaluation of James and

John, it distances their portrayal from that of the disciples as a unit. It seems, rather, that this scene requires the audience to recall James's and John's traditional-characterization, and how Jesus's words to them here drives them to their ultimate martyrdom and sharing in Jesus's mission. At the very least, this scene includes enough nuance to abate a completely negative evaluation of the disciples.

4.3.4- Mark 14:1-16:8: Rejection and Abandonment

Mark 14:1-72 (Time: 1:14:39-1:23:55)

Most of chapters 11–13 suggest a positive, or at least neutral, presentation of the disciples. Their role in the narrative at this point is relatively mitigated to being witnesses (11:14, 20) listening to Jesus (12:43, 13:3-37) and doing what Jesus asks (11:1-17, 11, 19). While chapters 6-8 may serve as the primary evidence for Mark's redactional polemic against the disciples, chapter 14 is perhaps the biggest challenge to an overall positive portrayal of the disciples within a performance. The rebuke of the woman who anoints Jesus (vv. 4-5), Judas's betrayal (vv. 10-12), misunderstanding (vv. 4, 26-31), inability to do what Jesus asks (vv. 37-38, 42), and ultimately Peter's tripartite denial of Jesus (vv. 66-72), each appear to demand a negative portrayal of (at least some of) the disciples. Despite this overwhelming evidence, there are also a few instances where the script appears to alleviate this negativity. Such considerations within the script require us to (re)consider their rhetorical effect within a performance. These very real failures are many, yet the script provides multiple opportunities for the performer to cast the disciples as empathetic characters. We will also consider whether Jesus's foreknowledge

of the disciples' actions absolves them in the eyes of a listening audience, complicating the overwhelmingly negative actions as viewed from a literary perspective.

Mark 14:1-11 (Time: 1:14:39-16:15)

For some readers, arguably, the most damning portrait of the disciples in chapter 14 is in their response to the woman at Bethany (vv. 4-5).¹¹⁵ This indictment against the disciples, however, stems not from the script of Mark, but rather stems from Matthew's and John's version of this story.¹¹⁶ In Mark's script (vv. 3-9) the disciples are never explicitly mentioned. The setting (v. 3, καὶ ὄντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος τοῦ λεπροῦ), referencing Jesus singularly and at a unique location, introduces enough nuance to suggest that one does not need to imply that the disciples (here, the Twelve) are the ones who become indignant to this woman's actions (*contra* 4:35-41, 8:14-21—where the implications are strong, just unnarrated). If a performer carried a predominantly negative portrayal of the disciples, it would be easy to accuse them further here.¹¹⁷ If, however, the performer carried a primarily positive valuation of the disciples to this point, the script leaves room to clarify in performance that this is not in fact the Twelve.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Cf. Marcus, "it is probable that our tale was originally intended to speak about anonymous objectors, but Mark, like Matthew and John, may understand them as disciples... This interpretation accords with the general Markan emphasis on apostolic misunderstanding" (*Mark*, 935). Moloney suggests that the disciples "should be assumed" as this group. He notes that it is "interesting" that they are unnamed here, but he still identifies them as this group (*Mark*, 281). France ultimately identifies this group as the disciples, but notes: "In that case Mark's *τινες* would not differ in fact from Matthew's *οἱ μαθηταὶ*, but the identification is not expressed, so that Mark seems unusually to have missed an opportunity to underline explicitly the disciples' failure to grasp the values of the kingdom of God" (*Mark*, 552-53).

¹¹⁶ Matt 26:8 specifies that it is the disciples (*μαθηταὶ*) who became indignant (*ἀγανακτέω*) in response to this woman's actions; John 12:4 has Judas, one of his disciples (*εἷς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ*) speak against the woman's actions. In Mark, it is more generally certain persons (*τινες*) who became (*ἀγανακτέω*).

¹¹⁷ Cf. e.g., Marcus's reasoning from recognizing the disciples as this group here (*Mark*, 935).

¹¹⁸ I am not suggesting here that Mark does not think this is the disciples, nor that early hearers and readers think this is anyone other than the disciple (see for example the variants in W, *f*¹³, *sy*^p). Rather, I am merely pointing

Following this event at Bethany, we find Judas' betrayal of Jesus (vv. 10-12). On the one hand, this appears to strike a fatal blow to both Jesus and the disciples. One who is closest to Jesus does not know who he is and does not understand his mission. On the other, the question of whether the audience conflates Judas' actions with the characterization of the Twelve is another. From the outset, the audience knows who Judas is and what he will do (3:19). There is no surprise here in the narrative for a listening audience, and as such, their valuation of him has already been made. If the performer has presented the disciples in a positive light thus far in the performance, this scene does detract from that presentation.

Mark 14:13-25 (Time: 1:16:16-1:18:02)

In the events leading up to the Passover, we again find multiple instances of the disciples doing exactly what Jesus asks them to do (vv. 12-16, esp. 16). After preparing the supper and while seated, Jesus informs the disciples of the betrayal that will soon take place. Each of them deny these allegations and are distressed at the thought. The audience already knows that one of them will betray Jesus, and the audience also knows which one it is (3:19). Narrating the other disciples' distress works to absolve the Twelve, distinguishing for an audience between their eventual actions and the actions of Judas. Whether or not the disciples' eventual abandonment at Gethsemane and Judas's betrayal fit within the same category, the script goes a long way to

out that in considering the potentiality of the script in performance, this scene would be excluded as being another instance of the disciples' failure to understand. Given the several "exclusions" thus far in this chapter, at what point do the scales tip to a more positive overall portrayal? How many instances would have to change before this dominant view is successfully challenged? Also, while mentioned by France and Moloney, I do not think enough consideration has been given to the fact that this is a moment where Mark could have tied this "misunderstanding" explicitly to the disciples, yet he does not. It also represents a situation where Matthew and John change something in Mark to make the disciples look *worse* than Mark does, raising questions as to whether later writers are really "rescuing" the disciples from Mark's description or not. Such a reading calls into questions some of these firmly held to assumptions concerning the "more positive portrayals" and "development" of the disciples as characters in the Synoptics and John.

show the opposing attitudes toward their action. Judas's actions are predetermined and intentional, whereas the disciples' eventual abandonment appears spontaneous and unintended. Mitigating factors litter the account of the disciples' abandonment at Gethsemane, while Judas's actions are of his own accord. A performer might emphasize the distress of the disciples, which highlights how out of character their actions appear in Gethsemane. Meanwhile, Judas's actions in 14:10-12 could be portrayed as diabolical and scheming, revealing even further to an audience the differences in perspective. Despite similar end results, the audience might conceive of these two types of betrayal as distinct, arising from different motivations and intentions, and thus not indicative of the character(ization) of the group.

Mark 14:26-31 (Time: 1:18:02-1:18:38)

After the meal is completed, the disciples and Jesus go to the Mount of Olives. Once again, we find a foreshadowing of the disciples' abandonment of Jesus. Jesus's prophecy and this foreshadowing has the potential to lessen the blow for an audience when this abandonment actually occurs (vv. 50-52). This is not to suggest that the actions of the disciples themselves do not warrant a negative evaluation, however, in having Jesus predict and prophesy about this, alluding to Zechariah,¹¹⁹ the rhetorical effect is that while out of character, their abandonment is not a surprise to the audience. This mitigates the significance an audience attributes to their "choice" in this matter. Jesus's death, alone at the cross, has its own significance to the story, and the disciples' fleeing is a necessary component to fulfilling that purpose. Whether their

¹¹⁹ Several commentators, including Marcus, have pointed out the echoes between much of this section (14:24-28) and Zechariah (*Mark*, 969). More recently, Paul Sloan has argued that Zechariah plays a much more formative role outside of just the passion narrative and frames how we understand Jesus in Mark (*Mark 13 and the Return of the Shepherd: The Narrative Logic of Zechariah in Mark*, LNTS 604 [London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2019]).

abandonment constitutes a negative valuation or not, or whether it explains why the disciples did not die along with Jesus, the script makes it clear that each of these actions take place in order to 1) fulfill scripture, and 2) to emphasize the death of Jesus. It is interesting that in what is perhaps the most likely event in the lives of the historical disciples, the script both through descriptive commentary and Jesus's words, goes a long way in absolving the disciples of their actions. If the author wanted to portray *only* a negative valuation of the disciples, it seems odd to go to such great lengths to lessen the audience's surprise or experience of betrayal at this time.

Mark 14:32-52 (Time: 1:18:39-1:21:00)

After predicting their abandonment, Jesus moves the disciples to Gethsemane, taking Peter, James, and John along to be alone with him. Jesus is distressed (ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι) and agitated (ἀδημονεῖν), heightening the emotions running through this scene. Jesus is most vulnerable here (aside from potentially 15:34) and he commands his disciples to remain and watch (both imperatives). After praying, he returns and finds the disciples asleep (v. 37). Jesus's surprise at their sleep, however, is then followed immediately in the script with an acknowledgment of the disciples' exhaustion (v. 38). Narrating their exhaustion is yet another instance where the script provides the performer an opportunity to increase an audience sympathy for the disciples, while simultaneously lessening the blow of what may be perceived as a significant failure on their part. Similarly, in v. 40 when Jesus once again finds them asleep, the script includes details concerning their eyes being weighed down or oppressed (καταβαρυνόμενοι). Jesus's continued astonishment at their actions (a third failing in v. 41) presents problems for any completely positive portrayal, however, it is also indicative of Jesus's own emotional experiences in Gethsemane. The additional descriptors in the script paint the disciples' actions as within a realistic scenario and provide the performer opportunity to evoke

within the audience empathy for them. By explaining *why* the disciples were unable to follow Jesus' imperatives, it perhaps alleviates some of their culpability in performance. It was not their lack of desire, but more realistically and understandably a physical failing.

Once Judas arrives on the scene (vv. 43-52), there are few redeeming qualities for the disciples. Even in wanting to fight for Jesus (v. 47), they end up deserting and fleeing (v.50). In a bit of irony, we even find one among Jesus's followers that flees with nothing on (vv. 51-52). As the disciples left everything to follow Jesus (1:16-20; 2:14; 10:28), so now Judas and this other unnamed one leave everything to abandon him. This ironic and perhaps humorous twist works in favor of a negative portrayal of the disciples. They have abandoned Jesus to face his fate alone.

In Mark 14 we encounter what is perhaps the biggest obstacle to an entirely positive characterization of the disciples, one that has been with us to the present but has gone underdeveloped here: the fact that this story is simply not their story. Each presentation of the disciples' abandonment in Mark 14 has more to do with Jesus' character(ization) than their own. The audience undoubtedly recognizes that the story is simply not about the disciples, but rather about Jesus and his mission. In recognition of this, the audience knows that the disciples cannot follow Jesus here, as their role in this story must also fit within the disciples traditional-characterization. The disciples' story does not end in Mark, but Jesus's necessarily does. Thus, Jesus's mission necessitates facing this trial alone. Highlighting this reality, the script has gone to great lengths throughout to show the disciples as being in-line with Jesus's mission. Despite their ultimate failure to remain with Jesus, both the performer and audience know that their abandonment is necessary for Jesus's mission to succeed (cf. 14:27-28). Despite the narrative necessity of distancing disciples, the script does not let them go entirely at Gethsemane.

Mark 14:53-72 (Time: 1:21:01-1:23:55)

After everyone flees, we discover that Peter has come back, following (at a distance) from Jesus (v. 54). Peter ultimately denies Jesus, but once again the audience already knew that he would (vv. 27-31). The surprise is removed as Jesus has already foretold Peter's denials, yet the emotion in this scene is palpable. As Peter's actions unfold in real time the weight of this betrayal is simultaneously heightened, in relation to Jesus's characterization, but lessened in accordance with Peter's own character(ization). It is perhaps too far to suggest that Jesus's prophetic fulfillment absolves Peter entirely from an audience's evaluation of his action, but Peter's traditional characterization may also contribute to an audience's persistent alignment with him. On top of this, the predominantly positive portrait painted for Peter and the disciples in the earliest stages of Mark stresses the uncharacteristic nature of this event more so than if this scene were experienced alone.

Mark 16:1-8 (1:30:09-1:31:29)

At the end of the script, the disciples' characterization, whether portrayed as positive or negative throughout the performance, ultimately ends with their abandonment of Jesus. Unlike John's disciples who come and attend to his body following his death, the Twelve are nowhere to be seen. Despite this, in the same way that the women are often exonerated from 16:8 by the tradition, the traditional characterization of the disciples must also inform the performance. Even if the story does not narrate the ending, the audience will necessarily fill in the gap in performance. The logic is inherent within the story that the women told someone (how else would anyone know?). If we can assume that the women tell someone, we can assume that it is the disciples that they tell (16:8). If we can assume they tell the disciples, we can also assume that the disciples show up in Galilee as Jesus commanded them (14:28, 16:7). If the women go

and tell, the disciples must also go and see. If the disciples go and see, the audience's final placement of them is no longer in the seat of abandonment, but now they have been reunited, once again seated alongside Jesus in Galilee.

For the sake of this performance, we have presumed an ending of at Mark 16:8. If Mark 16:8 is the not the end of the performance, and the script continues through v. 20, then exoneration is built into the script. If exoneration occurs at the end of the performance, perhaps this reorients how we see the various "negative" valuations near the end of Mark's story. If the performance ends at 16:8, the script does not exonerate them explicitly, but it is likely that the audience is left with a positive valuation of the disciples in light of their traditional characterization.

4.4- To Be or Not to Be? The Rhetorical Effect of Mark's Disciples in Performance

The disciples' characterization in Mark is both complex and ambiguous. Ultimately, a positive and negative binary for assessing characterization is subjective, raising questions as to its usefulness as a metric in *determining* the characterization of Mark's disciples. As limiting as the binary may be for determining character(ization), the compulsion to assess characters by means of positive and negative traits reveals an inherent necessity for employing a more complex notion of character(ization) when configuring Mark's characters in performance. Replacing this binary with a spectrum perhaps gets us closer to how a performance of Mark invites the audience to think on the disciples as characters. As illustrated in our analysis above, the disciples run this spectrum of positive (imitable) and negative (fallible) traits throughout the script of Mark. Each beat and episode contributes to a larger impression, a mental image or representation of the disciples in the minds of the audience. Such constructions are generated by means of the

performer's decisions and their ability to convey certain features, both those explicit within the script and those supplied in performance. Character(ization) does not conclude at the end of the performance but continues to develop long after the final reverberations of a performer's voice have ceased. The script is thus not the end of character(ization), nor is the performance, but rather it is a starting point.

Considerations of the disciples' characterization in performance must attend to the role of a performer, and how performance features both inherent within and external to the script shape that presentation. An audience's linear experience of the disciples' characterization determines on which end of this spectrum they ultimately land. The script offers the performer many options for conveying their characterization. The traditional characterization and script, however, must be starting points for our thinking about characterization in performance, not the end. The end of characterization and the move toward the universalizing of character is what occurs in the minds of audience members during and long after the performance. But even this "end" is subject to continued renegotiation in multiple performances.

4.4.1- An Audience's Configuration of the Disciples

In this performance, we noted how the early stages of Mark's narrative play a significant role in affecting an audience's configuration of the disciples. As silent yet active participants in Jesus's mission, the disciples are constantly shown doing the very things Jesus asks them to do. Not only do they do what Jesus asks, but they too begin to do the very things that Jesus himself does. As willing and loyal followers, they leave all to follow Jesus. Not only do they participate in this ministry, but they function as witnesses of and witness to it (much like the audience). The early stages of this performance built a substantive base for a positive

configuration of the disciples in the minds of the audience. This substantive base, while tested throughout the narrative, is present in the minds of the audience throughout the performance. The script goes a long way in maintaining this initial impression and an audience's alignment with them, through descriptive commentary, metalinguistic commentary, and other rhetorical features. Additionally, the script employs these features to provide the performer opportunities to explain away or absolve the disciples of at least some of their failures in Mark. Each occurrence of these features creates an opportunity in performance for the audience to join alongside the disciples, or to see the events of the story through their eyes. This is further confirmed by how the script anticipates (but cannot determine) the use of performance features external to the script. Our performer's decisions on illocutionary force, paralinguistic features such as tone and gestures, the linearity of performance, and how certain scenes evoke strong emotions within the audience on behalf of the disciples, all in different ways perpetuate the initial portrayal of the disciples. Each of these features has the potential in performance to create a "more" positive portrayal of the disciples in the minds of audiences, creating a specific lens through which an audience must view their "failures" at the end of the story. These failures are not in themselves constitutive of the disciples' overall character (the lenses through which we read back through Mark), but rather, as emphasized by the linearity of performance, they stand in stark contrast to their character(ization) established early in the narrative. As a result, these failures must be weighed against these initial impressions and an audience's initial alignment with the disciples. What we find is that when these "failures" occur, these are moments in the performance where an audience is introduced to something important within the narrative, often something related to Jesus's nature, identity, or mission. Thus, while the disciples do fail at times, and it is narratively

illogical to suggest otherwise, the effect of that failure upon the audience is not that of a distancing from the disciples, nor a totalizing negative evaluation of them as characters. Rather, because this inconsistency occurs within the characters with which an audience most closely aligns, it forces the audience to contemplate and consider the importance of such an “uncharacteristic” moment in the story. Ultimately, the audience’s characterization of the disciples is filtered through the substantive foundation established early in the narrative (perhaps also through their prior knowledge of the traditional characterization of the Twelve) and they come to a better understanding of the purpose of that particular scene. Thus, the positive portrayal early in the narrative, rather than their later failures, allows the audience to intuit that the disciples do in fact make it to Galilee—as they will once again do what Jesus has asks of them. The result of this performance of Mark is that while the audience’s configuration of the disciples’ character(ization) is complex, ultimately, they possess a *more* positive configuration, one that stands in contrast to some literary treatments of their characterization.

4.4.2- So What? The Rhetoric of Mark’s Disciples

While I have suggested that the *result* of this particular performance is that the audience upholds a more positive valuation of the disciples, there is still the question of the rhetorical function of the disciples in Mark. What advantage is there in reassessing the traits of these characters? Just because one *can* perform Mark in this way, *why* should they? And how exactly does performance help us to answer this question of purpose?

As readers, we tend to universalize a character or characters as we consider their actions, and weigh those against what *we* might do. This tendency is natural and part of the reading process. However, it also creates an imbalance in *how* those characters may be realized as

products of a given performance. As characters in performance, we are not experiencing two-dimensional literary representations, but rather as embodied persons, three-dimensional entities. Audiences must first recognize the role of the character within a particular performance and/or narrative, before moving toward an understanding of them in any universalizing sense. Linearity and the condensed time frame of performance expedite both the process of understanding a character's function in a particular moment, but also the second step of considering the characters' universal implications. While the power of characters is their ability to be recognized in a universal way, their *particular* portrayal is also an essential component for configuring characterization.

Unflattering as it may be at times, the disciples in the script and performance of Mark are configured as works in progress. The disciples play a particular role within Mark's story, yet audience's tendency to universalize character(ization) creates a sympathetic connection early in the performance between them and the disciples. Silent yet active participants, the disciples are constantly depicted as doing the things Jesus *asks* them to do. In fact, their greatest successes and failures appear to be doing the things Jesus' tells them that they *will* do. Jesus knows their greatest failures before they happen, but because of this so too does an audience. Despite the disciples' allegiance to Jesus, and their desire to do all he asks, even that is at times not enough. Through financial, mental, or physical limitations, the disciples are unable to do everything Jesus asks of them. Jesus asks the disciples to feed the crowds, but Jesus must do this for them. Jesus asks his disciples to see the importance of events throughout this story, but often they seem incapable of doing so. Jesus asks them to keep watch, but their bodies simply will not allow

them. Their failures in each instance are not from a lack of desire, but of some physical/earthly limitation.

Despite their inability to do the things Jesus's requires of them, within the narrative of Mark, Jesus's continued investment in them speaks to their eventual ability to do so. The disciples are given authority to preach, drive out demons, and heal—something that perhaps their traditional characterization confirms as well. They are given special instructions, which only they (and the audience) receive. They may not have faith “yet,” but Jesus believes they soon will.

While ultimately this is not their story, the disciples are the characters with whom an audience most closely aligns. In each instance where the disciples fail, the narrative provides the audience with some new information about the story's central character, Jesus. When the disciples cannot provide food for the crowds, Jesus does. When the disciples do not understand, Jesus explains—not simply to them, but in performance also to the audience. When the disciples cannot stay awake, flee, and abandon Jesus, it is ultimately something that confirms Jesus's character(ization) which explains *why* these things occur. As such, there are moments within the performance where the disciple's portrayal tells us more about *how* an audience is supposed to understand Jesus than it does about the audience's understanding of the disciples. Yet, it is through these very actions, the failures of the disciples, that the audience comes to recognize Jesus.

Even in failure, the disciples are not characters which evoke a strong negative judgment from an audience, as they represent the group to which an audience aligns most closely. Moments where the audience may begin to consider themselves “above” the disciples are the very moments in performance which most naturally align with a performer's direct address to an

audience. Thus, the supposed “failures” of the disciples become the most rewarding moments in the performance of Mark for an audience. This works not because the audience stands in judgment of them, distanced from the disciples, but rather, it works most prominently because of the audience’s close alignment with them.

In the end, the rhetorical effect of the disciples comes by means of invitation. If an audience is too far removed from the disciples, or if they stand only in judgment of them, they are not privy to Jesus’s invitation *to be* like them, “insiders” to his mission and message. Moments when the disciples’ “uncharacteristic” traits appear are the moments the performance expects the audience *to be* like them the most—works in progress. As Mark’s Jesus works on these works in progress, investing in their future as his followers, so too does the Jesus in performance work on the audience, investing in their future as his followers. In the same way that the performer invites the audience to consider “how” the disciples are configured in this performance, so too does the performance demand the audience consider “how” they themselves are configured in light of Jesus’s mission and message. Imitable yet fallible, the disciples’ failures represent the moments in performance where the audience is to not only being asked “how” to configure the disciples’ character(ization), but also and perhaps more importantly where they are asked “how” they configure themselves.

To be or not to be is perhaps not a question that the disciples’ character(ization) generates for the audience in performance, at least not in the more traditional sense. While at times, the performance asks the audience “how” they configure themselves, the question of imitability is not about a moral choice (right and wrong), but rather one of affiliation. In this performance, the performer assumes the audience has accepted (even if only temporarily) the invitation *to be*

alongside Jesus and the disciples on Jesus's journey to the cross. As the disciples are (presumably) left unaffiliated at the conclusion of Mark, so the audience is left with the question of their own post-performance affiliation. Will the audience take the next step to meet Jesus in Galilee, continuing *to be* aligned with Jesus's mission and doing what he says, or will they choose *to be* removed from Jesus, unaware of the empty tomb? Jesus has confirmed how the disciples will respond, but this choice is left to an audience. As the performance assumes the audience will answer this question for the disciples, so too, through the disciples' character(ization), the performance asks the audience to answer this question for themselves.

CONCLUSION

Alas this journey has reached its final destination. The question which launched this project was relatively simple: How do we make sense of Mark's disciples? After contemplating some of the variables necessary in order to answer this question, it ended with a "hearing" of Mark and the proposal of *a* potential solution to their vexing characterization. The following will briefly rechart our path and offer a few recommendations for future expeditions.

Where We Have Been

The Gospel of Mark, as many other texts, was probably inaccessible as literary work to the majority of persons living in the ancient world. As such, the primary medium of experience by Mark's earliest audiences was most likely via public reading, storytelling, or the more general term used in this project, as performance. Reorienting studies of the Gospel of Mark away from a purely literary paradigm and toward a performance model does not discredit nor discount Mark's literary achievement, nor does it suggest that persons in the ancient world did not also experience Mark in a written medium. Rather, the importance of this shift is an attempt to give due consideration to the variety of ways in which texts might be experienced within an oral/aural milieu. Such considerations not only hope to provide a greater appreciation for and nuance to the complexities of the ancient textual landscape, but also, by distinguishing text and performance this raises a number of new and exciting questions as to *how* meaning is made within the two medias—in particular, how both ancient and modern audiences experience and come to know biblical narratives as script and/or as scripture.

In this project, I have sought to consider the “in-betweenness” of two potential modes of reception for Mark’s Gospel: as performance and as text. While the earliest evidence that we have for Mark’s reception suggests that it was read and engaged with as literature, this evidence postdates the composition of Mark by a considerable margin. This “in-between” time, between Mark’s composition and its first known users, is a silent period without explicit evidence for the primary mode of Mark’s reception. Thus, in light of a growing consensus about the oral milieu in which Mark’s script was composed, speculation as to how the “earliest audiences” experienced Mark’s narrative is warranted. I suggested that the earliest audiences of Mark most likely experienced this gospel in performance, and more specifically in this project as a public reading. If the earliest audience experiences of Mark’s narrative were in an oral/aural event—as opposed to being consumed by individual readers—and if we are attempting to determine what the earliest audiences thought of the disciples as portrayed in Mark’s Gospel, performance dynamics must factor into our analyses. Biblical performance criticism, a relatively new method, attempts to identify and name some of these dynamics, allowing us to reimagine and reconsider the potential of biblical narratives as performance events.

While biblical performance criticism might be considered a relatively new method, its sensitivities are by no means “new” to the field. This project began by looking at some of the predecessors to performance. Biblical performance criticism may be “new,” but its primary tenets were in circulation long before the term “performance” was applied (Chapter 1). David Rhoads was the first to provide the language and terminology, and thus a framework of performance criticism in 2006, yet much of his initial work was a synthesis of ideas already in circulation. Studies on orality, oral traditions, ancient literacy, and ancient rhetoric laid the

groundwork on which Rhoads and future performance critics built. As such, while performance criticism might be viewed as a “relatively” new method in biblical studies, it is well positioned to take up the questions raised by its predecessors and to seek new solutions.

Still being a work in progress itself, biblical performance criticism has developed in a variety of ways following Rhoads. In the midst of such variety (which continues to expand), heretofore there has been little explicit discussion of characters and characterization in performance. This project aids in attending to this gap. In Chapter 2, Iverson’s and Whitenton’s interdisciplinary approaches to character in performance served as exemplars and models for value of interdisciplinarity to this task. Classicists and Shakespearean scholars wrestle with similar concerns, as such I sought to explore in what ways these fields were thinking of how characters work in performance, both as features of a script and in performance events. For this project, this interdisciplinarity provided additional theoretical credence to our task, but perhaps more importantly additional terminology to better reflect on questions of character(ization) within performance events. Explicitly, I discussed the following: traditional-characterization (Porter), serialized narrative (Kozak), classical rhetoric (Curtright), and a “processural” approach (Luke). While none of these carry a one-to-one correspondence to our task of understanding biblical narratives, these cross-disciplinary approaches provide analogous features for consideration. Most importantly, they reveal how character(ization) in performance differs from primarily literary approaches. Even if at times only implicitly, these strange bedfellows informed our “hearing” of Mark and his disciples in a variety of ways.

Chapter 3 shifted gears slightly and turned to object of study. In the end, this may be the most controversial—but also and potentially the most fruitful—contribution of this work. How is

performance criticism different than other approaches, and in particular narrative criticism? For performance criticism, one of the most difficult concepts to articulate is the object of study. The object of study is not the text (as material object), though a text (an object) serves as the basis for our reconstruction. Rather, the object of study is performance, something *similar to yet distinct from* the text. This raised questions as to the ontology of Mark and what exactly one means when they call something the Gospel of Mark. The importance of the distinction might be summed up briefly in this way: performance critics and narrative critics both use the title the Gospel of Mark for their object of study, and yet what they mean with this exact title is actually two completely different things. How can we tell the difference between them?

In the Introduction I suggested that the Gospel of Mark, over time, went through a transition or a development in its reception. Similar transitions and developments have occurred in both the Greek playwrights and Shakespeare's works, between composition and an eventual canonization. Biblical studies have more recently proposed and employed a variety of metaphors for grasping the complexities of the ancient textual landscape, and in my opinion have succeeded in revealing the limits of the modern metaphors of "book" and "text" for thinking about ancient texts. However, despite successes in this arena, the metaphors employed tend to emphasize only one side (the literary) of the varying uses of texts in antiquity. As a way of differentiating between these modes of reception, here in Chapter 3, I suggested the use of dual metaphors of script and as scripture. While previous metaphors had been successful in highlighting biblical texts as literary objects or their literariness, it does not help the performance critic with their object of study. As a way of differentiating between literary and performance approaches, I proposed the dual metaphors of script and scripture. By employing the metaphor of script in our

consideration of Mark, this not only differentiates this work from others who have a more “scriptural” sense of their object, but also it helps us to better understand our object of study in allographic rather than primarily autographic terms.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I turned to Mark’s Gospel and considered the disciples as characters within a hypothetical first-century performance. One of the most significant insights that emerges from this investigation is the challenge that performance levies against an “overtly” negative literary characterization of Mark’s disciples. Such a view has come to a place of prominence within Markan studies, an assumption no longer in need of demonstration. Even if the reader remains unconvinced by the interpretation provided in this particular project, at the very least this work has problematized the assumption of the disciples “overtly” negative characterization.

Many of the scenes in the earliest portions of the script of Mark, as demonstrated here, emphasize the positive traits of the disciples. It is primarily their failure at the end of the Gospel that leaves a negative impression upon readers. As such, within certain literary approaches to Mark, earlier scenes involving the disciples are reevaluated in light of this eventual failure. However, as demonstrated here, performance complicates such a view of characterization and how characters are constructed by audiences within performance events. In particular, and among other performance features, performance criticism allows us to consider the “potentiality” for characterization within a script, the linearity of performance events, and how audiences align and respond to characters.

One of the key insights to performance criticism is that the audience experiences the narrative as mediated by a performer. Audiences do not have direct access to the text (in the

same way modern viewers do not always have access to scripts for plays or TV shows) and thus are subject to a performer's decisions. For a first-century audience in performance, the text is not the sole or even primary bearer of meaning, but rather the performance event itself. In Mark, as with most scripts, the script is less "definitive" when it comes to character than is often assumed by literary approaches. Thus, in a performance context, Mark's characters are open to several "potential" ways of being performed as determined by the performer.

Such considerations not only highlight the performative complexities (and possibilities) of particular characters within Mark's script, but also, it emphasizes the importance of "linearity" for audiences in a performance event. For example, the disciples' interaction with Jesus after the calming of the storm in Mark 4 is a text that is traditionally viewed as conveying a "negative" depiction of the disciples. The disciples do not seem to "understand" who Jesus is, and Jesus' words seem to be rather harsh towards them. When read in light of the disciples' "failures" at the end of Mark, this scene becomes something like a cornerstone for constructing a negative characterization, a scene that foreshadows their eventual failure. However, when considered by means of performance, such evaluations are not so clear. More specifically, when considering the linearity of performance, a "definitively negative" assessment of the disciples within this scene becomes much more difficult to sustain. The disciple's characterization to this point in the script has been one-sided in favor of a positive characterization, aligning an audience to the disciples. If a performer chooses to portray them negatively, it seems at odds with prior events. The audience's view of this scene is as those alongside the disciples in the boat. In this scene we also find one of several moments within Mark where the script goes out of its way to give excessive descriptions which potentially limit the force of a negative characterization. In addition to the

descriptive commentary, Jesus's own assessment of the disciples—which to many literary readers seems “clear”—lacks clarity in relation to its illocutionary force. Linearity in performance, descriptive commentary in the script, and ambiguity in the illocutionary force of Jesus's words all complicate an “overtly” negative assessment of the disciples in this scene.

While this scene is by no means the final word on the disciples in Mark, it shows how one scene may be complicated in light of performance.

Considerations of this and similar scenes within Mark start to chip away at the façade of a definitively negative characterization. If this scene “could” be performed in a way that does not demand an audience's negative evaluation of the disciples, what other scenes have been assumed to do so?

It is impossible, and intellectually dishonest, to suggest that there are no negative moments for the disciples in Mark. But “negative” character traits need not necessarily equate to negative assessments by an audience. Audiences respond to characters in a variety of ways, and audiences often overlook certain moral failings of a character while still being aligned with and upholding a positive view. This, in some ways at least, complicates the positive and negative binary that has dominated literary approaches and discussions of the disciples in Mark. While these terms may be helpful to a certain extent—at least theoretically and in terms of literary models for character(ization)—such a binary fails to capture the complexities of how characters are perceived and constructed by audiences and their function within performance events. Characters are not purely one or the other, but often possess both positive and negative traits. Thus, when we seek to consider how a first-century audience may construct the disciples'

character(ization) in performance, as each episode builds toward a final construction, they must also be weighed against a totalizing rhetorical effect of the character.

After looking closely at the disciples throughout Mark's script, and complicating (though not necessarily refuting) several of the key or cornerstone texts upon which negative arguments are built, I ended with the question of the disciples' rhetorical effect in a performance of Mark. Unflattering as it may be at times, I argued that the disciples in the script and in this particular performance of Mark are configured by the audience as *works in progress*. Audiences would not leave a performance standing in judgement of the disciples—nor would they depart with a denigrated view of their historical personage—but rather, through the character of the disciples the audience is asked to consider their own alignment with Jesus. More pointedly, I suggested that “*to be or not to be*” is perhaps not a question that the disciples' character(ization) generates for the audience in performance, at least not in the more traditional sense of imitability. The question of imitability in Mark is not driven by morals—at least not strictly—but rather affiliation. In this performance, the audience has accepted (even if only temporarily and subconsciously within the performance event) the invitation *to be* alongside both Jesus and the disciples on Jesus's journey to the cross. As the disciples are (presumably) left unaffiliated at the conclusion of Mark, so the audience is left with the question of their own post-performance affiliation. At the conclusion of the performance, it is not the disciple's affiliation which is open to discussion, but rather the audience who must answer this question of affiliation for themselves.

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