



Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel

Jo-Ann A. Brant

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Over the past century, academics and dramatists have noted that the Gospel of John displays similar characteristics to Greek dramatic literature. *Dialogue and Drama* presents a detailed and nuanced review from Jo-Ann Brant, a scholar well versed in the study of both Greek tragedy and the New Testament. She argues that the fourth evangelist was thoroughly familiar with the conventions of Greek drama and used them to more effectively present the Gospel's plot.

As in Greek tragedy, dialogue is the major form of action. The hero, Jesus, engages in verbal duels with his opponents in order to provoke a lethal contest, which culminates in his glorious death. *Dialogue and Drama* creates an accessible world for the audience and makes them witnesses of the tragedy, drawing readers into a corporate act of remembering.

Brant casts fresh perspective on the roles of the Jews, Peter, the women around Jesus, and the beloved disciple, proposing an alternative account of the evangelist's dualistic and polemical language and offering new approaches to aspects of the Gospel that have long puzzled readers and dominated scholarly debate. Scholars of literary Biblical criticism and students of drama will find in this text a thorough, engaging, and interdisciplinary study that answers questions left open by prevailing theories and opens new avenues of research yet to be explored.

"*Dialogue and Drama* is a rarity—something genuinely new in Johannine studies. As a literary critic must do, Brant focuses on form rather than content or context, and she provides convincing evidence of parallels between formal aspects of the Gospel of John and those of classical Greek tragedy. She clearly demonstrates how different John is from the Synoptics in this regard, especially in John's use of speech to create action. Always careful to avoid overstating her case, Brant presents a detailed and nuanced study that offers fresh means to explore the complexities and perplexities of the Fourth Gospel. *Dialogue and Drama* opens new vistas on John even for those who are not inclined to abandon the old ones." —David Rensberger, Professor of New Testament, Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta

"Every student of antiquity knows the importance of drama in the cultural life of the Greeks and the Romans. Jo-Ann Brant has now demonstrated that the Fourth Evangelist was thoroughly familiar with the conventions of Greek drama, especially the tragedies. Marshalling the literature on both ancient drama and Johannine studies, and using the insights of structural theorists, she convincingly shows how dramatic conventions make sense of neglected or otherwise puzzling aspects of the Gospel. Readers will find rewarding insights into the functions of John's dramatis personae and the Gospel's often neglected discourses. Most important, we can now read the Gospel with greater sensitivity to the way it was originally heard." —R. Alan Culpepper, Professor of New Testament and Dean, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University

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