

Preface

JESUS' STORY HAS BEEN retold in various forms and fashions for centuries. Jesus novels, a subset of the historical fiction genre, are one of the latest means of not only re-imagining the man from Galilee but also of rewriting the canonical Gospels. This work explores the Christological portraits constructed in four of those novels while also using the novels to examine the intertextual play of these Gospel rewrites with their Gospel progenitors.

Chapter 1 offers a prolegomenon to the act of fictionalizing Jesus that discusses the relationship between the person and his portraits and the hermeneutical circle created by these texts as they both rewrite the Gospels and stimulate a rereading of them. It also establishes the “preposterous” methodology that will be used when reexamining the Gospels “post” reading the novels. Chapters 2 to 5 offer four case studies of “complementing” and “competing” novels and the techniques they use to achieve these aims: Anne Rice’s *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*; Neil Boyd’s *The Hidden Years*; Nino Ricci’s *Testament*; and José Saramago’s *The Gospel according to Jesus Christ*. Chapter 6 begins an examination of a specific interpretive circle based upon Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Beginning with the synoptic accounts of that event, the chapter then turns to how Jesus’ testing has been reinterpreted and presented in two of the novels. Returning to the Gospel of Matthew’s version of the Temptation, chapter 7 offers a “preposterous” examination of that pericope, which asks novel questions of the text and its role with Matthew’s narrative context based on issues raised by the Gospel rewrites. This monograph concludes by suggesting that Jesus novels, already important examples of the reception history of the Gospels, can also play a helpful role in re-interpreting the Gospels themselves.