

INTRODUCTION

POINT OF VIEW

Point of view is “the way a story gets told.”¹ It is the *mode* or *angle of vision* from which characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events are considered or observed.² But also point of view is the narrator’s *attitude towards* or *evaluation of* characters, dialogue, actions, setting and events.³ Point of view is expressed in many subtle, surprising, and artful ways: the type of setting (architectural, topographical, temporal settings), or the arrangement or configuration of characters and objects within a setting (movement to or away from a central fixed setting such as a well, temple, tomb). It is expressed in words and phrases that deliberately modify or even undermine common, everyday perceptions (“born again/anew”; “living water”). A fresh point of view is presented by characters at the margins of the society (lame man, man born blind, Mary Magdalene), while a jaded point of view is offered by characters that are part of the dominant culture (Pharisees, secular and religious authorities). Frequently, these points of view are in conflict.

The purpose of this study is to elaborate and develop point of view—and the artful ways the narrator expresses point of view—of the gospel. How does the narrator communicate an ideology through point of view? What point of view does he want the reader to adopt?⁴

¹ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993) 165.

² Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) 152 refers to this aspect of point of view as the “*perceptual* point of view.” Some critics separate point of view into two activities, “who sees?” and “who speaks?” The one who speaks is the narrator; the one who sees is the “focalizer.” I have not followed this distinction because, in many instances, the one who sees and the one who speaks are the same in John. For development of the concept of focalization see Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1988) 71–85; Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Levine (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980) 185–211; Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 100–114.

³ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 152 calls this the “*conceptual* point of view.”

⁴ On the reader of the Fourth Gospel see below, pp. 23–26.

How does he use setting, rhetoric, character, and plot to persuade the reader to adopt his evaluative point of view? This study also attempts to make the concept “point of view” accessible to the student in the classroom or to the pastor or biblical scholar that is interested in point of view as commonly conceived: the narrator’s attitude towards his or her work. This study is not a work in literary theory but a practical application of literary theory to the Fourth Gospel.⁵

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE POINT OF VIEW

An “objective” position—called here “objective point of view”—defines a subject’s relationship to some external reality.⁶ This is the “angle of vision” from which characters, dialogue, action, settings, and events are considered or observed. In his glossary of literary terms, M. H. Abrams develops point of view in terms of “angle of vision”: “third-person points of view” or “first-person points of view.” But with the exception of the “intrusive narrator,” who “not only reports, but also comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters,” Abrams gives little attention to the evaluative aspect of point of view—called here “subjective point of view.” Similarly, in his study on literary design in the Gospel of John, R. Alan Culpepper discusses point of view primarily, though not exclusively, in terms of the narrator’s “angle of vision.”⁷ He uses such concepts as “omniscient,” “omnipresent,” and “retrospective” to describe the narrator’s objective relationship to his work. But noticeably missing is an extended discussion of ideological or evaluative point of view. Although he uses Boris Uspensky’s concept of “ideological” point of view to discuss the narrator’s evaluative point of view, this aspect is given far less attention than the narrator’s “angle of vision.” Culpepper, however, is not alone.⁸ Other critics develop

⁵ For a more theoretical approach to point of view with less practical application, see Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1997). Tovey applies F. K. Stanzel’s narrative theory to describe point of view in John.

⁶ The terms “objective” and “subjective” are Susan Sniader Lanser’s. See *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) 16.

⁷ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁸ For example, Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992) 31–43 offers a very illuminating discussion of point of view in the gospel but provides a limited discussion of evaluative point of view.

an objective point of view into a complex study using such terms as “extradiegetic,” “intradiegetic,” “heterodiegetic,” and “homodiegetic.”⁹ These terms are helpful for defining the objective relationship of the narrator to his or her work. But the person on the street or the student in the classroom who wants to know, “What is John’s point of view?” is still left wondering what the point of view of the Fourth Gospel—as commonly understood—is.¹⁰

“Subjective” point of view shifts attention from “angle of vision” to the narrator’s response or evaluation of characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events. As Lanser points out, the objective position—the mode or angle of vision—has traditionally dominated literary studies, whereas the subjective position—attitude towards or evaluation—is what the person on the street thinks when asked, “What is your point of view on . . . ?”¹¹ Wallace Martin recognizes the importance of the subjective aspect of point of view when he says:

We experience narrative not as a compendium of categories but as a total movement, the parts of which are best characterized by the phrase “point of view” in its most common meaning—a set of attitudes, opinions, and personal concerns that constitute someone’s stance in relation to the world.¹²

This work is primarily concerned with the “subjective” aspect of point of view: the narrator’s *attitude towards* or *evaluation of* characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events. Boris Uspensky¹³ and Susan

⁹ The terms are Gérard Genette’s in *Narrative Discourse*. Jeffrey L. Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 38–9 uses Genette to describe the relation of narrator to narratee. See also D. F. Tolmie, *Jesus’ Farewell to the Disciples: John 13:1–17:26 in Narratological Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 145–65.

¹⁰ Of course studies on point of view have progressed since the writings of Boris Uspensky, Susan Lanser, and others. For example, A. G. van Aarde, “Narrative Criticism Applied to John 4:43–54” in *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 101–28 discusses point of view in terms of “angle of vision” and ideological perspective. Also a popular text by David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, Donald Michie, *Mark As Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) refers to the “narrator’s biases, values, and conception of the world,” and speaks of the narrator’s “standards of judgments,” i.e., the beliefs and values implicit in the narrator’s point of view. But unfortunately the discussion of point of view is relegated to merely three pages (43–45).

¹¹ Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 16–17.

¹² *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) 147, italics mine.

¹³ *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. by V. Zavarin and S. Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

Sniader Lanser¹⁴ offer a helpful way to analyze evaluative point of view with their discussions of the five planes on which point of view is expressed: temporal, spatial, phraseological, psychological, and ideological.¹⁵ The terms are defined below with illustrations from the Fourth Gospel.

IDEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

Ideological point of view is “the most basic aspect of point of view,” but it is also “the least accessible to formalization, for its analysis relies, to a degree, on intuitive understanding.”¹⁶ The ideological stance includes the beliefs, norms, evaluations, and value system of the text. An ideological stance may be at the surface level, stated outright, which Lanser calls “explicit ideology.”¹⁷ At the opposite extreme, an ideological stance may be found at “deep-structural” levels of the text and is more difficult to mine.¹⁸ The ideology of the Fourth Gospel is at the surface level, an explicit ideology, and can be determined by a close analysis of other aspects of point of view—phraseological, spatial, temporal, and psychological. For example, in the prologue the narrator says that “the Word became flesh (σάρξ) and lived among us, and we have seen his glory (δόξα), the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (1:14). At the surface an explicit ideology is expressed: the glory is revealed in the flesh; the δόξα in the σάρξ. Although this ideology is voiced by the narrator and appears at the surface level of the text, it is by no

¹⁴ *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Other important discussions of point of view may be found in: Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, 100–14; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 71–85; Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 151–58; Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford, 1966) 240–82; Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, 130–51; J. M. Lotman, “Point of View in a Text,” *New Literary History* 6 (1975) 339–52; Norman Friedman, “Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept,” *PMLA* 70 (1955) 1160–84; Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*; James L. Resseguie, “Point of View in the Central Section of Luke (9:51–19:44),” *JETS* 25 (1982) 41–7; Norman Petersen, “‘Point of View’ in Mark’s Narrative,” *Semeia* 12 (1978) 97–121; D. F. Tolmie, *Jesus’ Farewell*, 170–80.

¹⁶ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 8.

¹⁷ Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 216.

¹⁸ Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 216–17. Lanser cites Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* as an example of embedded ideology.

means evident to the characters within the text. Some characters hold to a very different ideology, namely that judgment by appearances (7:24) or according to the human standards (8:15) is the correct way to evaluate reality when in fact it is a deficient point of view. Therefore, they are unable to see the glory in the flesh. The narrator's ideological stance, on the other hand, is to persuade the reader that "the revelation is present in a peculiar *hiddenness*," which Bultmann calls the paradox that runs through the whole gospel.

The δόξα is not to be seen *alongside* the σάρξ, nor *through* the σάρξ as through a window; it is to be seen in the σάρξ and nowhere else. If man wishes to see the δόξα, then it is on the σάρξ that he must concentrate his attention, without allowing himself to fall a victim to appearances.¹⁹

SPATIAL POINT OF VIEW

The spatial plane of point of view describes the narrator's spatial stance in relationship to his or her textual world. A narrator may adopt the spatial stance of a character, moving with the character throughout the narration. "If the character enters a room, the narrator describes the room; if the character goes out into the street, the narrator describes the street."²⁰ Not only is the narrative viewed from the perspective of the character; the perceptual framework of the character is also adopted. However, a narrator may adopt a more flexible stance either within or outside a narrated scene. An outside stance is a "bird's-eye" perspective from which a narrator surveys an entire scene usually from a stance far above the action. The narrator may also be within a scene but does not adopt the perspective of any one character.²¹ This perspective is similar to the movements of a camera that film a sequential survey of a scene. Even a narrator within a scene may adopt basically two types of narration: 1) A narrator may be a silent, invisible presence who

¹⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 63. For a discussion of the literature on the relationship between "flesh" and "glory" in John see Robert Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975) 185-99.

²⁰ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 58.

²¹ Uspensky calls this the nonconcurrency of the spatial position of the narrator and a character.

observes characters from a particular spatial stance. In a banquet scene, for example, the narrator may describe the guests at the banquet by moving from one character to the next as if the narrator were an actual guest at the table. 2) A second type of narrator is not only invisible but is a roving presence within the scene—similar to a moving camera and montage. An invisible, roving narrator has the advantage of moving freely from character to character, glancing at one and then the next, stopping long enough to focus on certain details, and then moving on to another character or series of events in an entirely different place. This technique allows the narrator to present differing and often conflicting points of view with remarkable ease.

The narrator of the Fourth Gospel is an invisible, roving narrator.²² In Jesus' trial before Pilate, for example, the narrator roves freely between what takes place inside the praetorium and the deliberations outside (18:28–19:16). Further, the invisible, roving narrator may easily take note of the spatial stance of characters within a narrative, which in turn provides clues to the ideological perspective of a narrative.²³ Just as the arrangement of furniture in a classroom says something about the ideology of that setting, so also the arrangement of “furniture” in a narrative setting of the gospels is a clue to the ideology of the narrative. For example, if classroom furniture is arranged in rows with the professor at the “head” of the class, the setting says something about the ideology of the class. It implies that the professor is an “authority” figure who dispenses knowledge to students through lectures. On the other hand, if furniture is arranged in a circle with no one as the “head,” the setting suggests a different ideology—one that is more egalitarian and participatory. In the gospels, the arrangement of the characters with relationship to the “furniture” of a setting is used to elaborate and develop the ideology of the narrative. Characters go in and out of enclosed spaces; they travel to and from a central, fixed location; they go up and down; and they move away or draw near to a key character.

In John 21, the narrator develops the spatial distance between the disciples and Jesus to underscore their cognitive and spiritual dis-

²² Culpepper, *Anatomy*, refers to the narrator as “omnipresent.” Cf. also Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference*, 39–40.

²³ The narrator's ideology and the narrative's ideology are not distinguished in this work.

tance from him. The disciples are physically distant from Jesus—in a boat on the Sea of Galilee several yards from where Jesus is on the shore—but also distant in other ways. They do not recognize him (21:4) even though this is the third time that he has appeared to them (21:14), and they have returned to their former trade, highlighting their spiritual estrangement from him. After developing the landscape of estrangement, the narrator collapses the distance between Jesus and the disciples physically and in other ways. Similarly, the separation of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee from Jesus on the shore in 6:16–21 provides a backdrop not only for the collapse of their physical separation; it also allows the narrator to underscore the ideological importance of Jesus' presence. With Jesus the disciples successfully achieve their goal, but without him they fail.

Spatial movements to and from a fixed location underscore a narrative's ideology. In John 4, the narrator has Jesus remain stationary at the well of Jacob while others—the Samaritan woman and townspeople—travel to and from this fixed location. The spatial arrangement reinforces the narrative's ideology: Jesus is like a well to which the characters come to draw “living water.”

The narrator's development of characters' movements in and out of enclosed spaces may highlight a narrative's ideology. For example, the movements in and out of the garden across the Kidron valley are instructive (18:1–11). The garden is an enclosed open air structure that the disciples and Jesus go in and out, and therefore it is similar to a pen (cf. the sheepfold in John 10:1–6). Although Jesus goes out of the garden where there is danger the disciples remain inside where it is safe. This spatial stance is used to elaborate the ideological perspective that the good shepherd protects his own sheep (cf. 10:15; 18:9). Inside/outside space is also used to demonstrate a character's resolve. The high priest's courtyard is a case in point (18:15–18). An anonymous disciple follows Jesus into the courtyard where there is imminent danger while Peter remains outside. Although Peter goes into the courtyard, his spatial stance inside betrays his ideological commitment: he stands “with them”—the arresting posse—just as Judas stood “with them” in the garden (cf. 18:5). The spatial demarcations demonstrate who is a faithful follower that hears the shepherd's voice and follows Jesus versus a faithless follower that treats the shepherd like a “stranger” (cf. 10:5). More complicated are the inside/outside movements of Pilate during the trial. The demarcations may represent the wavering that

takes place in Pilate's own soul; but more likely, the movements are in keeping with the separation of two distinct realms: light and darkness, truth and falsehood.

TEMPORAL POINT OF VIEW

Temporal point of view "encompasses two aspects of the narrator's relation to the narrative world: the pace of the narration, and the temporal distance between the moment of telling and when the narrated events take place."²⁴ Following Genette, Lanser identifies four possible relationships between the moment of telling and when the narrated events take place:

- (1) *anterior* narration takes place before the events it purports to recount; it therefore most frequently takes the form of plan or prophecy;
- (2) *simultaneous* narration takes place as the story is itself unfolding in time; this mode uses present-tense narration . . . ;
- (3) *interspersed* narration is the mode of the journal or the epistolary narrative; here actions happen between (and during) the moments of narration;
- (4) *posterior* narration, the most common form, in which the events recounted have been wholly completed.²⁵

The narrator of John uses posterior narration to recount events that are viewed from a post-resurrection perspective.²⁶ The following illustrate posterior narration:

- 2:22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.
- 7:39 Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
- 12:16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.
- 20:9 For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

The pace of the narrative may also be an important indicator as to what is ideologically significant. A retardation of narrative pace draws

²⁴ Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 198.

²⁵ Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 198–9.

²⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 27 uses the term "retrospective."

attention to what is taking place. For example, the narrative pace slows down after chapter 13 “until it virtually grinds to a halt at the climactic day.”²⁷ Chapters 1–12 cover a period of two and a half years while chapters 13–19 focus on merely twenty-four hours. The slowing down of pace in the second half of the gospel deliberately highlights the events of the passion. The pace of individual narratives may also be slowed down or speeded up with interesting effects. In John 11, for example, the narration is plodding and deliberate. Jesus delays in going to Bethany and when he arrives at the village, he is met by Martha and Mary outside of town who engage in ponderous conversations that further attenuate the narrative pace, delaying Jesus’ arrival at the tomb. The amount of narrative space devoted to one day decelerates the narrative flow. Whereas sixteen verses cover the previous three to four days (11:1–16), twenty-eight verses (11:17–44) describe the events of a single day. A surfeit of subordinate clauses slows the narration to a deadening pace.

By contrast, the narrative of the empty tomb in John 20 teems with life, a racy, hot-off-the-press account with one event after another recorded in rapid-fire succession.²⁸ Characters come and go to the tomb, run to others and report each new discovery. The superfluity of parataxis augments the frantic pace, isolating and magnifying each discovery at the tomb. The different modes of narration in John 11 and 20 serve separate ideological perspectives. The point of view in John 11 is of an *occupied tomb*, the power of death, and the radical reversal that occurs at the climax. Thus, the ponderous narration allows the drama to build slowly to a dramatic climax. The four-day delay, the separate interviews with the sisters, the cumbersome narration, the intensification of emotions all heighten death’s impact in the narrative. By contrast, the point of view in John 20 is upon an *unoccupied tomb*. The rapid-fire narration highlights each new discovery at the tomb (rolled-away stone, grave wrappings, *soudarion*, angels), and the parataxis allows each action to stand alone while accelerating the narrative to a breathless pace. The heaping up of “ands” (καί) in 20:1–12 permits no one discovery to be subordinated to another while at the same time linking each discovery into one long chain.

²⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 72.

²⁸ C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 141 notes that the story is told “with great dramatic vigour.”

PHRASEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

Phraseological point of view is expressed at the level of speech or discourse.²⁹ It may be determined from the narrator's discourse or from a character's speech. When the narrator enters the narrative and speaks in his or her own voice, then a point of view is expressed. On the other hand, the narrator may use the discourse of a character to express an ideological perspective. A third possibility, noted by both Uspensky and Lanser, occurs when a character's speech infiltrates the narrator's text or the narrator's speech infiltrates a character's discourse. In 3:31–36, for example, it is unclear whether John the Baptist is speaking or the narrator. Similarly, does Jesus speak in 3:13–21 or the narrator? Culpepper labels this as “a classic instance of the blending of the narrator with Jesus' voice.”³⁰ In this example the affinity of the narrator's point of view with Jesus' perspective is clear: the ambiguity concerning who speaks indicates that the narrator has adopted the point of view of the central character.³¹

Characters' Speech

The narrator uses irony, ambiguities, and double entendres to make familiar points of view seem strange. In 7:24, Jesus attacks a common but deficient point of view: “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment”; and in 8:15 he dismantles a similar perspective: “You judge by human standards; I judge no one.” The use of irony is one way the narrator—through characters' speech—dissembles judgment by simulacra and substitutes correct judgment, which is a point of view shared by both Jesus and the narrator. For example, something as simple as a question about Jesus' origins shows how irony, point of view, and characters' speech come together to form a new point of view. In 6:42, the crowd wonders: “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” They judge by appearances, exegete superficially, and in general exude an over-

²⁹ For an application of phraseological point of view to the Gospel of Matthew, see Mark Allan Powell, “Direct and Indirect Phraseology in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 405–17.

³⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 42.

³¹ For a defense of the position that the narrator's point of view coincides with Jesus' perspective, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 34–43.

confidence that begs to be subverted by irony's deflating blow. The demonstrative, "this Jesus," is the first evidence of unwarranted confidence while the emphatic first person, "we know," seemingly strengthens their hand. Rounding out their overconfident position is the lone deictic,³² "now."³³ "How can this one whose origins we are certain of now say that he comes down from heaven." Thus, they claim too much: the divine cannot be revealed in the human and the glory is not manifest in the flesh (cf. 1:14). Their query opens the door wide for irony to enter and to make strange their prosaic point of view: just possibly "this Jesus" has "now" come down from heaven!

Also on the phraseological level Johannine misunderstandings develop, elaborate, or reinforce new ideological points of view. A case in point is a misunderstanding concerning "living water" (ῥῶδωρ ζῶν) in John 4. The woman believes that Jesus is speaking of a flowing stream that will make her task of fetching water easier while Jesus uses the term in a spiritual, non-literal sense. What is made strange in the dialogue of Jesus and the woman is the commonly held conception of what is "living": what humankind calls "living" is a pale substitute for "living." This disparity could not be more clearly summarized than in 4:13–14:

Everyone who drinks (ὁ πίνων) of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink (ὁς δ' ἄν πίη) of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

The water that the woman calls "living" quenches thirst only for a while (ὁ πίνων, a present tense suggesting continual action), and requires frequent trips to a diminishing source; by contrast, the water that Jesus provides is a one time action that quenches thirst once for all (ὁς δ' ἄν πίη, an aorist tense). The naturalized point of view is not the *desire* for thirst-quenching water, but the identification of the thirst-slaking water with ordinary water that sustains life momentarily. The misunderstanding allows a new ideological point of view to surface: what the woman is searching for in mundane water can only be found in what Jesus offers.

Double entendres, which are also a common literary device at the phraseological level, make strange natural, common points of view.

³² Deictics are such words as "here," "now," "this," "there," and "today." See Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, 137 for a discussion.

³³ Some manuscripts (p66, ⚭, A, D, L, Ψ) have οὖν in place of v̄v̄.

For example, Nicodemus's misunderstanding in 3:3 arises from the confusion over ἄνωθεν, which means both being born "again" and "from above." He understands rebirth only in the crass physical terms of re-entering the mother's womb a second time. However, the whole point of using an ambiguous term is to allow a common understanding, even though risibly deficient, to surface. Simply put, Nicodemus believes that salvation is a human effort, and thinks only at the material level, the level of the flesh. The narrator—through Jesus' speech—makes strange this naturalized way of thinking and offers a new way of thinking: salvation is a spiritual act that can only be effected "from above."

In addition to irony, double entendres, and ambiguous terms, an ideological point of view may be expressed in the tone³⁴ of a character's speech. For example, when Jesus "goes up" to Jerusalem for the festival in chapter 7, the tone of his speech likewise "goes up." In 7:10, he "goes up" (ἀνέβη) to the festival, and in 7:14 he "goes up" (ἀνέβη) to the temple to teach. Then at the climactic moment, which reveals his thirst-quenching capabilities, he "goes up" higher by standing (εἰστήκει, 7:37). And as he ascends, the tone of his voice is magnified. In 7:14, the narrator simply notes that he "began to teach"; but by 7:28 his voice rises to a level that adds an air of importance to what he says: he "cried out" (ἔκραξεν) as he was teaching in the temple." And again in 7:37 he "cried out" (ἔκραξεν) when making the all-important announcement for the entire world to hear. In a sense, he finds his own distinctive voice,³⁵ a voice of divine-like magnitude, which culminates in a saying that sets him apart from others: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink" (7:37). The tone of his voice reinforces the ideological perspective of the narrative: Jesus "is now the origin of life-giving water, perfecting all that had been promised by the water celebrations of the feast of Tabernacles."³⁶

In chapter 3, the halting tone and diminishing length of Nicodemus's speech combine to highlight his tenuous point of view. As his per-

³⁴ Tone is the attitude of a speaker to his or her listener. See M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 156.

³⁵ Another character who finds his own voice is the man born blind. See below, pp. 139–44.

³⁶ Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5–12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 87.

plexity over Jesus' words increases, his discourse diminishes in length. In 3:2, he speaks twenty-four words; in 3:4, eighteen words; and in his final speech in 3:9 he utters merely four words.³⁷ Similarly, the cadence of his speech becomes halting as the narrative progresses, reflecting his own uncertainty and puzzlement. In 3:2, the Pharisee speaks with the self-assurance of the first person plural, "we know" (οἴδαμεν), claiming that Jesus is a teacher from God. Although it is possible that he uses the first plural to speak for a group; it is just as likely that it accents his self-importance and confidence in identifying Jesus as a teacher who comes from God.³⁸ While the first plural magnifies Nicodemus's speech in 3:2, subsequent speeches diminish both in tone and in length. His second speech consists merely of queries that accent his increasing perplexity, and his final speech collapses into a four-word query (in the Greek) of deflated consternation: "How can these things be?" (3:9). Further, the repetition of the verb δύναμαι ("be *able*"), which introduces all three of Nicodemus's speeches, underscores his increasing *inability* to comprehend what Jesus says to him.³⁹ In 3:2, the Pharisee says, "No one can (δύναται) do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God"; in 3:4, he wonders, "How can (δύναται) anyone be born after having grown old?"; and in 3:9 he says, "How can (δύναται) these things be?" As his tenuous point of view becomes apparent, Nicodemus withdraws into confused silence. On the other hand, Jesus' speech moves in the opposite direction: commanding more space and capturing a broader audience. If Nicodemus' tone is halting, Jesus' tone is solemn. Three times he prefaces his words with the asseveration, "very truly, I tell you," (3:3, 5, 11). And as his speech commands attention, his discourse becomes longer also. In 3:3, he speaks sixteen words, in 3:5–8, seventy words, and in 3:10–21, two hundred thirty-one words.⁴⁰ The expansion of his speech also corresponds to the broadening of the audience: in 3:3, the Pharisee is addressed; in 3:7 a collective group ("you," plural) is addressed; and in 3:16f., 19 the world is addressed. Thus, the narrator uses the tone and length

³⁷ Noted also by Robert Kysar, "The Making of Metaphor: Another Reading of John 3:1–15," in *What is John?; Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 21–41, 31.

³⁸ See the discussion below, p. 121.

³⁹ Cf. L. P. Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 66.

⁴⁰ Jesus' and the narrator's speech merge here.

of speech to make a tenuous point of view seem strange, on the one hand, and to underscore a correct perspective, on the other.

The narrator may also use names and titles to develop a progressive enlightening or to portray a progressive hardening of characters' response to Jesus.⁴¹ The ideological point of view in John 9 portrays the triumph of light over darkness. The gift of life, which is represented by the giving of sight and light, is counterposed to the rendering of judgment, which is the result of blindness and darkness. Blindness is simply the stalwart refusal to acknowledge that Jesus is from God and unlike physical or spiritual blindness that can be miraculously cured, obdurate blindness is incurable. Names and titles—a telling aspect of the narrative's phraseological point of view—elaborate and reinforce this ideological perspective. A progressive awakening of the blind man not only is evident in the energetic debate with the religious authorities; it is also expressed in the names and titles he uses for Jesus. Initially, he refers to him simply as “the man called Jesus” (9:11); but this is replaced by “prophet” in 9:17, and by “Lord, I believe” in 9:38. Similarly, the naming of Jesus by the religious authorities is progressive, highlighting their increasing obduracy. Initially their view of Jesus is mixed: some say that he is not “from God,” but others wonder how a “sinner” can do such signs (9:16). But their initial lightheartedness is replaced by the consolidated voice of censoriousness in 9:24 (“*we know* that this man is a sinner”). No longer are some willing to hold out the possibility that he may be from God; now he is simply “*this* man” who is a “sinner.”

Naming may reinforce other aspects of point of view. For example, at Jesus' tomb Mary Magdalene is addressed rather impersonally as “woman” by both the angels and Jesus (20:13, 15); but at the moment of awakening she receives her own name, “Mary” (20:16). This phraseological perspective parallels other aspects of point of view that accent her spiritual awakening. Her spatial stance is marked by several turnings, which symbolize her spiritual “turning.” Twice she turns away from the tomb or Jesus and an equal number of times she turns to Jesus. In 20:1, Mary comes to the tomb, sees the stone rolled away, and runs to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple to tell them of the absent Jesus. She then disappears from the

⁴¹ On the importance of naming in general, see Boris Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 20–32.

narrative until she is found standing outside the tomb weeping in 20:11. In 20:14, she turns towards Jesus, and once again she turns towards him when he calls her name (20:16). The second turning is redundant and represents a spiritual turning, her awakening from disbelief to belief in the resurrection.

Narrator's Speech

When the narrator intrudes into the narrative to speak in his own voice he reveals an ideological perspective. The prologue (1:1–18) is a compendium of the gospel's ideology that is expressed at the phraseological level. For example, "the Word became flesh . . . and we have seen his glory" (1:14) is an ideological perspective that becomes a source of conflict for numerous characters. The glory is seen in the flesh and cannot be seen apart from the flesh; yet many of the conflicts in the gospel occur precisely because some see only flesh and miss the glory.

At other times, the narrator intrudes to draw attention to Jesus' division-causing ministry.

- 7:43 So there was a division (σχίσμα) in the crowd because of him.
 9:16 And they were divided (σχίσμα).
 10:19 Again the Jews were divided (σχίσμα) because of these words.

The schisms summarize "the result of the mission of Jesus, since the inevitable effect of his word was to create a division among his hearers: the shining of the light distinguished between those who loved and those who hated it (3.19–21)."⁴²

The narrator also uses annotations to clarify misunderstandings so that the authorial audience is privy to a different point of view. For example, the Jewish authorities ask Jesus for a sign in 2:19–21, and he responds with a puzzling comment: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). The narrator is right at hand to descant: "he was speaking of the temple of his body" (2:21). His annotation not only renders Jesus' opaque response intelligible; it also foregrounds two distinct points of view. One view, represented by the listeners of this dialogue, interprets at the surface level. They think in terms of the concrete ("a sign") and the material (literal "temple") and see the manifest and superficial as exhausting the full

⁴² Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 331.

range of meaning for “temple,” preferring to judge by “appearances” and “according to the flesh.” With his clarifying comment the narrator points out the strangeness of their restricted exegesis. Another form of exegesis—and certainly one that the narrator privileges—avoids literal or superficial judgments and interprets with “right judgment,” seeing the glory in the flesh. The temple is not a building; it is a person.

PSYCHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

Psychological point of view elaborates and develops the point of view that is expressed through behaviors. Uspensky and Lanser describe two ways in which human behavior may be observed by the narrator.⁴³ A narrator may take the point of view of an outside observer; he or she is restricted to what can be materially or objectively observed. This stance is similar to a camera that records the behavior of a person without access to the person’s internal consciousness (thoughts, feelings, or emotions). Or the narrator may look inside the consciousness of a character and describes the feelings, motivations, and thoughts of a character; or the point of view may be described from the point of view of the person himself or herself.⁴⁴ The narrator of the Fourth Gospel adopts an internal stance, providing insight that is unavailable to a narrator who adopts solely an external stance, as the following examples demonstrate:⁴⁵

- 6:15 When Jesus *realized* that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.
- 6:61 But Jesus, *being aware that his disciples were complaining about it*, said to them, “Does this offend you?”
- 6:64 For Jesus *knew from the first* who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him.

⁴³ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 83; Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 207.

⁴⁴ Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 201–15 develops a complex analysis of point of view that describes the narrator’s distance or affinity to each character and event, the quantity of information, subjectivity or objectivity of information, internal or external vision, and depth of vision. The discussion in this study is limited to internal or external vision.

⁴⁵ See Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference*, 31–43 and Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 21–26 for other examples of interior views.

At times a psychological stance summarizes a perspective that conflicts with the narrative's ideological point of view.

7:24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment
8:15 You judge by human standards, I judge no one.

The tendency to judge superficially and according to flesh is major source of conflicts in the gospel and a point of view that is turned on its head by the gospel.

At other times a psychological stance elaborates and reinforces the narrative's ideological perspective. For example, as Jesus moves closer and closer to Lazarus's tomb, there is a progressive movement into the consciousness of characters. The emotions of Mary, "the Jews," and Jesus intensify as the tomb looms larger. When Jesus sees Mary and "the Jews" weeping, he is "greatly disturbed in spirit" and "deeply moved" at their response (11:33). Then the narrator notes that he "began to weep" (11:35) and at the tomb he is again "greatly disturbed" (11:38). The heightening of emotions, which is unusual for this gospel, parallels other aspects of point of view. The narrative pace becomes ponderous, and Jesus' voice rises to majestic levels. All this allows the tomb, its emotional impact, and its dramatic reversal to take center stage. Everything builds to the one climactic moment when Lazarus comes out of the tomb, fulfilling the ideological hope and expectation of the narrative that is expressed in 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live."

RIPE FIGS

A reading of a delightful short story by Kate Chopin, *Ripe Figs*, will illustrate the method that is used in this book. The full text of *Ripe Figs* is cited below.

Maman-Nainaine said that when the figs were ripe Babette might go visit her cousins down on the Bayou-Lafourche where the sugar cane grows. Not that the ripening of figs had the least thing to do with it, but that was the way Maman-Nainaine was.

It seemed to Babette a very long time to wait; for the leaves upon the trees were tender yet, and the figs were like little hard, green marbles.

But warm rains came along and plenty of strong sunshine, and though Maman-Nainaine was as patient as the statue of la Madone, and Babette as restless as a humming-bird, the first thing they both knew it was

hot summer-time. Every day Babette danced out to where the fig-trees were in a long line against the fence. She walked slowly beneath them, carefully peering between the gnarled, spreading branches. But each time she came disconsolate away again. What she saw there finally was something that made her sing and dance the whole long day.

When Maman-Nainaine sat down in her stately way to breakfast, the following morning, her muslin cap standing like an aureole about her white, placid face, Babette approached. She bore a dainty porcelain platter, which she set down before her godmother. It contained a dozen purple figs, fringed around with their rich, green leaves.

"Ah," said Maman-Nainaine arching her eyebrows, "how early the figs have ripened this year!"

"Oh," said Babette, "I think they have ripened very late."

"Babette," continued Maman-Nainaine, as she peeled the very plumpest figs with her pointed silver fruit-knife, "you will carry my love to them all down on Bayou-Lafourche. And tell your Tante Frosine I shall look for her at Touissant—when the chrysanthemums are in bloom."

What is the point of view of this brief story? What ideological stance does Kate Chopin want the reader to adopt? How does she use phraseological, spatial, temporal, and psychological points of view to communicate an ideology? Is there a "correct" point of view voiced by one of the characters, and if so, how does the narrator communicate sympathy for this point of view?

The ideological perspective of the narrative is that growing old or growing up occurs very quickly and is a beautiful process. The narrator is sympathetic to both Babette, who represents youth's impatience with growing up, and Maman-Nainaine, who represents a mature response to the passage of time. But the narrator develops a special affinity to Maman-Nainaine to correct perhaps youth's impatience with growing up. Maman-Nainaine's stable presence within the text is expressed both in her characterization and in the narrative's spatial point of view. Her presence at the beginning and then at the end of the narrative envelops the text and gives her perspective a privileged position. The narrator also uses syntax (an aspect of phraseological point of view) to privilege Maman-Nainaine's point of view. When Babette presents the figs to her godmother, the narrator begins the sentence with an overfull description of Maman-Nainaine while placing Babette's action ("Babette approached") at the end of the sentence. "When Maman-Nainaine sat down in her stately way to breakfast, the following morning, her muslin cap standing like an aureole about her white, placid face, *Babette approached.*" Further, Babette's point of view is spatially enveloped within Maman-

Nainaine's point of view: her perspective is developed in the central portion of the narrative surrounded by Maman-Nainaine's view at the beginning and at the close of the narrative.

The phraseological point of view of the narrative establishes two opposing points of view. Neither character—Maman-Nainaine nor Babette—actually speaks until the end of the narrative and both speeches are marked by an economy of words. Maman-Nainaine says thirty-nine words and Babette speaks merely eight words. The sparseness of words and the climactic position of the characters' speech suggest that the reader should pay especial attention to what they say and how they say it. Both characters begin their speeches with a one-syllable exclamation that reveals their basic stance towards the news of the ripened figs. Maman-Nainaine says, "Ah," which expresses her surprise that the figs have ripened so early, and Babette says, "Oh," which expresses her disappointment that they did not ripen earlier. The "ah" and the "oh" signal two contrasting points of view, which the content of their speeches further demarcates. One is convinced that the figs have arrived too early while the other is equally convinced that they have arrived too late. It is the "how early" and "very late" that establishes at the phraseological level the perimeters of the "debate." Maman-Nainaine's speech, however, is fuller than Babette's, which suggests that her point of view "wins," although this can only be determined by an analysis of other aspects of point of view. Maman-Nainaine's speech adds important information. She says to Babette, "tell your Tante Frosine I shall look for her at Touissant—when the chrysanthemums are in bloom." Through Maman-Nainaine's speech the narrator draws a comparison between Babette's visit to her cousins when the figs ripen and Maman-Nainaine's visit of her sister when the chrysanthemums bloom. The narrator, however, discounts that there is any relationship between the maturing of fruit and Babette's visit to her cousin ("Not that the ripening of figs had the least thing to do with it, but that was the way Maman-Nainaine was"). But this sort of disclaimer forces the reader to consider two types of "ripening": the "ripening" of fruit and the "ripening" that comes with age.

The psychological stance reinforces the phraseological stance. The inner part of the narrative (paragraph 3, which is the longest) provides an inward glimpse into Babette's behavior. Babette, who is "as restless as a humming-bird," "danced out" to the fig trees expecting to find ripened figs, but "each time she came disconsolate away again."

When the fruit ripens, however, she sings and dances “the whole long day.” The glance inward portrays her impatience with the slowness of maturation. The narrator reinforces this view when she says, “it seemed to Babette a very long time to wait.” However, the way the narrator has phrased Babette’s perception (“*it seemed*”) underscores her limited perception, which needs to be corrected or modified by a second, more mature perspective. The other perspective is Maman-Nainaine’s who is “as patient as the statue of la Madone.”

The spatial stance is a shifting perspective that moves from Maman-Nainaine to Babette and then back to Maman-Nainaine. By shifting from old age to youth and then back to old age, youth is not only encompassed within old age; youth also occupies the central part of the narrative and becomes the focal point for the reader. Three full paragraphs (2, 3, and 4) recount Babette’s anticipation, discovery, and presentation of the figs. The spatial stance allows the reader to see Babette move from disconsolation to a joy that makes “her sing and dance the whole long day.” Maman-Nainaine, on the other hand, forms an inclusion around the text, providing a stability that counters Babette’s impatience. The narrative opens with Maman-Nainaine’s granting of permission for Babette to visit her cousins on the Bayou-Lafourche *when the figs ripen*. And it closes with Maman-Nainaine’s words that grant this permission: “you will carry my love to them all down on Bayou-Lafourche.” This stability is reinforced by the narrator’s lofty description of Maman-Nainaine in terms of a statue of reverential status. Her patience is compared to a statue of the Virgin Mary while her “white, placid face” recalls the stony simulacra of Madonna. At breakfast she sits “in a stately way,” while her muslin cap “stands” on her head (not “sits,” as one might expect) like a “radiant light around the head or body of a representation of a sacred personage.”⁴⁶

Similarly, the temporal perspective is progressive, expressing developments that are found on other planes of point of view. The passage of time from spring to summer to autumn frames the action and dialogue of the characters. In spring when the fig trees “were tender yet and the figs were like hard, green marbles” Babette is “as restless as a humming-bird” and impatient. In the “hot summertime,” which arrived before either Babette or Maman-Nainaine knew it, Babette’s expectations soar as she dances out to the fig trees. She

⁴⁶ Definition of “aureole” in *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition.

looks for signs of development “every day,” “walking *slowly* beneath them, *carefully* peering between the gnarled, spreading branches.” But just as an adolescent’s emotions are mercurial—up one day and depressed the next—her joyous dancing turns to disconsolation. The narrator’s pacing of the narrative slows down during the hot, summer time to focus attention on this growing season (not only of the figs, but also of Babette). The longest paragraph, which also sits at the center of the narrative, focuses attention on the anticipations and disappointments of the growing season—for it is the narrative’s concern to elaborate the process of maturation. At harvest time, Babette’s discovery causes her to sing and dance “the whole long day.” The passage of time from spring to late summer figuratively describes her development as a young woman. Growing up seems to take a long time, but before long the hot summer time with its “warm rains” and “strong sunshine” arrives, changing the “little, hard green marbles” into plump purple figs. The allusion to Babette’s maturation is strengthened by the narrator’s description of the way she presents the figs to Maman-Nainaine. She does not *bring* the dainty porcelain platter; rather, she “*bore* a dainty porcelain platter.” The temporal stance of the narrative also frames Maman-Nainaine’s response. She is portrayed as “patient” and “placid” with the passage of time. The ups and downs that Babette experiences are not Maman-Nainaine’s. In fact, the passage of time happens far too quickly for her (“how early the figs have ripened this year”), although she too can celebrate time’s passage, as does Babette: she peels and eats “the very plumppest figs with her pointed silver fruit-knife.” The narrator chooses judiciously the single reference to autumn. Chrysanthemums, very beautiful but late fall flowers that wither with the first frost of winter, underscore Maman-Nainaine’s perspective that growing old is very beautiful—right up to the end.

THE NARRATOR

The narrator of the Fourth Gospel is an invisible, roving narrator who has privileged access to the inner consciousness of characters. He knows their beliefs, emotions, and motivations. He is also what Wayne Booth calls a “reliable” narrator who “speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work,”⁴⁷ making his point of view

⁴⁷ Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 158. Cf. also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 32–33.

congruent with the point of view of the main character, Jesus. In his analysis of the narrator and Jesus, Culpepper summarizes their perspectives: “Both Jesus and the narrator are omniscient, retrospective, and ideologically and phraseologically indistinguishable.”⁴⁸ At times, it is impossible to tell whether the narrator is speaking or Jesus speaks (cf. 3:13–21 or 16–21). Moreover, the narrator makes no pretense at producing an impartial report. He states his ideological perspective outright: to persuade the reader to adopt the point of view of the protagonist, i.e., to believe in him. “But these things are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).

The narrator is the beloved disciple, which means that he is also a character within the narrative.⁴⁹ However, he does not limit his point of view by narrating from the perspective of the beloved disciple. Rather he is self-effacing, distancing himself from the beloved disciple; only twice does he speak in his own voice with reference to himself.⁵⁰ In 21:24, he writes: “This is the [beloved] disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.”⁵¹ And in a parenthetical remark in 19:35 the narrator identifies himself with the beloved disciple: “He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.”

Since the narrator does not pretend to offer an unbiased account, it is important to understand his ideological perspective, which is expressed not only in *what* he says, but also in *how* he says it. This study focuses as much or more on the *how* as the *what*.

⁴⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 36.

⁴⁹ See Staley, *Print's First Kiss*, 37–41. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 47 identifies the beloved disciple with the implied author and D. L. Tolmie, *Jesus' Farewell to the Disciples*, 51–9 identifies him with the real author. I do not make a distinction between the implied author and the narrator in the Fourth Gospel.

⁵⁰ In this gospel the narrator is to be identified with the implied author. See Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art*, 138–43 on the relationship between the narrator, implied author, and beloved disciple. Tovey, however, is incorrect to say the narration is focalized through the beloved disciple's perception. At no point is the narrative presented through the eyes of the beloved disciple; it is presented through the eyes of the narrator, which is why I refer to the narrator as “self-effacing, distancing himself from the beloved disciple.” Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 43 concludes: “there is no reason to suspect any difference in the ideological, spatial, temporal, or phraseological points of view of the narrator, the implied author, and the author.” Staley, *Print's First Kiss*, 13 objects, but Tovey, *Narrative Art*, 50 n. 26 is correct in his refutation of Staley.

⁵¹ To speak of an editor here who is separate from the narrator of John 1–20 needlessly complicates the discussion.

THE READER

Who is the reader of the Fourth Gospel? Literary critics use such terms as “implied reader,” “informed reader,” “ideal reader,” “flesh-and-blood reader,” “super-reader,” “mock reader,” “authorial audience,” “extrafictional reader,” and “resisting reader,” to name a few, to describe the reader of a work.⁵²

To define the reader of a text, we need to ask, “what is the relationship between reader and text?” Is the reader *in the text*, *over the text*, or *with the text*? For some critics the reader is *in the text*—inscribed or encoded in the text, a property of the text, and part of the text’s meaning.⁵³ The critic’s function is simply to interpret the signals transmitted to the inscribed reader of the text. For others, the reader is *over the text*. The reader has total dominance over the text and meaning is created by and in the individual reader.⁵⁴ The reader is not constrained by indicators in the text nor is the reader concerned with authorial intention. Meaning is largely a subjective product of the reader.

Still others view reading as a dialectical process between the reader and the text. This reader—sometimes referred to as an “implied” reader or “informed” reader—interacts *with the text*.⁵⁵ This reader is active, not passive, contributes to the production of textual meaning, and is capable of supplying the portions of a text that are not written, but are implied—the areas of “indeterminacy” or “gaps.”⁵⁶

⁵² See Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, 154 for a listing of types of readers. Cf. also Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 16–21.

⁵³ E.g., structuralism views the reader encoded in the text. For an overview of the positions listed here see James L. Resseguie, “Reader-Response Criticism and the Synoptic Gospels,” *JAAR* 52 (1984) 307–24. Literary critical works on readers and texts include: Jane P. Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Methuen, 1984), Stephen Mailloux, *Interpretive Conventions: The Reader in the Study of American Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

⁵⁴ E.g., David Bleich, *Readers and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism* (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975); Norman Holland, *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

⁵⁵ E.g., Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); idem, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

⁵⁶ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 38–40.

Iser uses the analogy of two people gazing at the night sky to describe the interaction of text and reader:

Both [may] be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The “stars” in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable.⁵⁷

The implied reader selects and organizes the parts of a text and fills in the gaps in his or her own way. This convergence of reader and text results in what Iser calls a “realization” of the text.⁵⁸ That is, the potentiality of the text is not realized until a reader interacts with it, and no two readers will concretize a text in quite the same way—which means, “the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations.”⁵⁹

Who is the reader of the Fourth Gospel? Is the reader *in the text*, *over the text*, or *with the text*? Those who see the reader as *over the text* will seek meaning not in the literary dynamics of authorial intention of the text but in the individual reader. A deconstructive reading of the Gospel of John such as Stephen Moore’s “Are There Impurities in the Living Water That the Johannine Jesus Dispenses?”⁶⁰ privileges the reader over the text.

Narrative critics tend to see the reader *in the text*. Mark Allan Powell and Jack Dean Kingsbury speak for many narrative critics. “Narrative critics generally speak of an *implied reader* who is presupposed by the narrative itself. The implied reader is distinct from any real, historical reader in the same way that the implied author is distinct from the real, historical author.”⁶¹ Jack Dean Kingsbury defines the implied reader as “no flesh-and-blood person of any century. Instead, it refers to an imaginary person who is to be envisaged . . . as responding to the text at every point with whatever emotion, understanding, or knowledge the text ideally calls for.”⁶²

⁵⁷ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 282.

⁵⁸ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 274–75.

⁵⁹ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 280.

⁶⁰ Stephen Moore, “Are There Impurities in the Living Water That the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism and the Samaritan Woman,” *BibInt* 1 (1993) 207–27.

⁶¹ Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 19.

⁶² *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 38; cf. also Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?” in *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 23–49, 26–8.

The reader I envision of the Fourth Gospel shares some similarity to Iser's implied reader and other characteristics with Peter Rabinowitz's authorial reader.⁶³

1) The reader is a flesh-and-blood reader (actual reader) who joins the authorial audience of the Gospel of John, which is the audience envisioned by the author when he writes his gospel. The authorial audience has its own beliefs, commitments, prejudices, and presuppositions, which the real reader must recognize for a successful reading of the gospel. Further, the reader should not expect to arrive at a "pure reading" of the gospel. Instead, the reader who joins the authorial audience should "ask what sort of *corrupted* reader this particular author wrote for: what were that reader's beliefs, engagements, commitments, prejudices, and stampedinings of pity and terror?"⁶⁴ The authorial reader recognizes the beliefs, ideological perspectives, attitudes, engagements, and prejudices of the "corrupted" reader that the author has in mind, and thus is in a position to interpret correctly the Fourth Gospel.

2) The reader shares the same literary, cultural, and social conventions of the authorial audience; and completely understands how these conventions operate. This reader knows and understands the "repertoire" of the text, which "may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged."⁶⁵

3) The reader interacts with the text and is able to fill in the gaps or indeterminacies within the text. This filling-in process, however, is not a subjective task of the reader; rather the reader fills in the gaps *the way the author imagines those gaps should be filled in*. In other words, the reader does not create meaning: he or she discovers what the author intended to be found in the first place. This reader is similar to Iser's reader that fills in gaps in a text; but unlike Iser's reader

⁶³ *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). Rabinowitz also makes a distinction between the narrative audience and the ideal narrative audience. I share with Culpepper the view that the ideal narrative audience and authorial audience are indistinguishable in the Gospel of John. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 208.

⁶⁴ *Before Reading*, 26.

⁶⁵ Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 69.

this reader has a less active role in the creation of meaning in the work. Rabinowitz's authorial reader comes closest to this reader.

I share the idealists' belief that texts are incomplete when we get them and must be put together according to the principles of the reader's interpretive community, but in the case of successful authorial reading, the author and readers are members of the same community, so while the reader does in fact engage in an act of production, *he or she makes what the author intended to be found.*⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Before Reading*, 27–8 (emphasis mine).