

THE READER AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN IN JOHN 4:1-42

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THE READER AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN IN JOHN 4:1-42

by

Carla E. P. Jenkins

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Religious Studies
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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ABSTRACT

Literary criticism, which has gained wide acceptance in the field of biblical studies, is still considered a new development in Johannine studies. This thesis attempts to examine the implications of literary criticism for Johannine studies through a detailed analysis of one section of the text, John 4:1-42, focusing on three aspects: the narrator, characters (particularly the Samaritan woman), and the function of time within the narrative. By looking at the ways in which each of these elements shapes the response of the reader, I attempt to explain how the text communicates meaning to the reader.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In his article "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,"¹ Wayne A. Meeks examined the Johannine Jesus' role as a revealer who reveals only that he is the revealer, finding in this a puzzle whose solution relied on a reconstruction of the setting which produced the Fourth Gospel. By asking the question, "in what situation does a literary puzzle provide an appropriate means of communication?"² Meeks was led to the answer that the Fourth Gospel was the product of a closed, alienated and isolated community which had produced a text whose closed system of metaphors and reliance on a shared body of knowledge and symbols made it virtually unreadable by an outsider. Jerome Neyrey, analyzing Meeks' article, reiterates that the Johannine Jesus provokes misunderstanding, and in so doing divides the Johannine community from the rest of the world: "in telling a myth of Jesus' descent/ascent, the Johannine Christians learn that, like their alien leader, they too are

¹ Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972), pp. 44-72.

² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

aliens in this world."³

However, Meeks hesitates to conclude that the book is completely unreadable by anyone who does not belong to the Johannine community, admitting the possibility that the reader "will find it so fascinating that he [sic] will stick with it until the progressive reiteration of themes brings, on some level of consciousness at least, a degree of clarity."⁴ This shifts the focus of the question from the social function that the Fourth Gospel had for its original readers to the means by which the text continues to function to convey meaning despite the self-referential character of its metaphors. A literary-critical analysis of the Fourth Gospel, with its focus on the narrative techniques employed by the text, may isolate the means by which, according to Meeks, "the book functions for its readers in precisely the same way that the epiphany of its hero functions within its narratives and dialogues."⁵ Neyrey, too, sees evidence within the text of the Fourth Gospel that outsiders or non-believers may be evangelized, that is, may become insiders/members of the believing community through the words of Jesus or of someone who believes in him (Neyrey uses

³ Jerome H. Neyrey, S. J., *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 116.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

the example of the Samaritan woman and the Samaritans to illustrate his point).⁶ If episodes of such evangelism are contained in the text, a similar evangelization of the reader may take place.

If these observations are correct, if the Fourth Gospel is capable of altering the reader's "symbolic universe"⁷ to such a degree that the reader becomes an insider, one who has grasped the meaning of the book's narrative, then the strategies which effect this change must be embedded in the text. By examining a section of the text (John 4:1-42), I hope to foreground some of the narrative techniques by which the book transforms the reader, an outsider, into a member of the community of the text, one who has grasped its meaning and become an insider.

This thesis, then, will take the form of a literary-critical analysis of John 4:1-42. My examination of John 4:1-42 will focus on "the textual constraints and strategies of the text."⁸ It will not, however, deal with whether or not the author(s) intentionally constructed the text to contain these strategies, or with the author's purpose in producing

⁶ Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, pp. 123-124.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸ Fernando F. Segovia, "Towards a New Direction in Johannine Scholarship: The Fourth Gospel from a Literary Perspective" *Semeia* 53 (1991), p. 16.

the text. The uses to which the text has been put by real, historical readers are also beyond the scope of this thesis. The analysis will be divided into three categories: the intrusive narrator, the characters (particularly the Samaritan woman), and time in the narrative (including the use of external and/or "mixed" prolepses).⁹

The presence of an omniscient, intrusive narrator who is able both to "hear" what the various characters are thinking and to provide this information to the reader, allows the reader to "listen" to the conversations between Jesus and the other characters while at the same time understanding more of these conversations than the characters whom Jesus addresses are capable of grasping. In other words, while the characters addressed by the Johannine Jesus may misunderstand or only partially understand what he says, the reader is allowed to make fewer mistakes of interpretation, as the narrator's intrusions are quick to point out what was really meant. The reader is brought to believe that s/he is the proper recipient of Jesus' teachings since the other characters frequently miss his meaning and remain outside, while the narrator has ensured that the reader is inside.

The text also uses the character of the Samaritan woman,

⁹ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 51.

who herself progresses along a similar path of "conversion," to alter the reader's stance *vis-a-vis* the text from that of an outsider to that of a member of the "community" of insiders. Like the reader, the Samaritan woman begins from a position outside the system of metaphors used by the Johannine Jesus; also like the reader, her admittance to the circle of insiders depends less on her ability to correctly identify the referents of those metaphors than on her acceptance of Jesus' identity as the Messiah.

Narrative time in John 4:1-42, particularly the use of external or mixed prolepses, is the third narrative device which acts to draw the reader within the circle of insiders who grasp the meaning of the text. Culpepper defines a mixed prolepsis as any narrative element which anticipates future events which "begin within the time of the narrative and continue beyond it."¹⁰ Much of the foreshadowing in John 4:1-42 is to some degree fulfilled by the text, but the predictions seem to have a second layer of reference to events which are external to the text.

Meeks is certainly correct to emphasize that the only revelation made by the Johannine Jesus is that he is the revealer; his identity as the revealer is clearly at the heart of whatever meaning the text is attempting to convey.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

However, whereas Meeks' phrasing of the question compels him to seek out the social setting which could have given rise to the text, and within which the self-referential metaphors and story elements of the text would have been familiar (due to their use in other, similar myths known to the community), it is also possible to examine the text's transmission of meaning apart from its original setting. It is true that the reader finds the self-referential system of metaphors in the Fourth Gospel somewhat alien and unapproachable, and that understanding any one of them seems to depend upon understanding all of them. However, it is not ultimately the penetration of the metaphorical system which holds the key to the way in which the text functions. The transformation of the reader's "symbolic universe" depends not on a familiarity with the metaphors but on a reader's ability, like those characters who become believers, to accept Jesus' identity as the Messiah. The Johannine Jesus, in his role as the revealer, does not need to convey any particular knowledge; rather, he functions as the dividing line between believers and non-believers, insiders and outsiders. While a search for the social setting which gave rise to the Fourth Gospel, finding that it is the product of an isolated sectarian community, might logically conclude that the text is therefore "closed" to any reader not belonging to that community, an analysis of the text itself reveals that this is not the case.

The text works to transform the reader into someone who can accept its "truth," and in the act of being read ensures that its audience is a receptive one.¹¹

1.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Literary-critical analysis, with its focus on narrative techniques, is readily applicable to the four gospels, which are easily recognized as more-or-less coherent stories. When applied to the Fourth Gospel (more particularly, to John 4:1-42), however, literary criticism has tended to consist of identification and analysis of particular narrative elements, without fully considering how these elements contribute to the way the text is read.

Adele Reinhartz has analyzed the predictive prolepses of the Fourth Gospel, dividing them into three categories: prolepses which are explicitly internal, referring to events

¹¹ Any mention of the "truth" of the text immediately raises historical questions regarding the situation which produced the text, the intention of the author(s), and the uses to which the text has been put. While such historical questions are beyond the scope of this thesis, there have been attempts to address the text's role as a missionary tract. Among these are W. C. Van Unnik, "The Purpose of St. John's Gospel," *Studia Evangelica: Papers presented to the International Congress on "The Four Gospels in 1957"* at Oxford, 1957, vol. 1, ed. Kurt Aland et al. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959), pp. 382-411; J. A. T. Robinson, "The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959-60), pp. 117-131; D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987), pp. 639-51.

that are fulfilled within the narrative, prolepses which are external, referring to events that will be fulfilled in a future outside the narrative, and prolepses which refer to an unspecified future time.¹² She provides two examples of this third type of prolepses from John 4 (4:21, "the time is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father," and 4:23, "the hour is coming and now is"). Reinhartz's argument is that "almost every prolepsis"¹³ in John has an internal referent. She uses the presence of these prolepses to discuss the experience and self-understanding of the community that produced the text, but does not examine the effect of predictive prolepses, and their fulfilment within the text or reference to events beyond the text, on the way the text as it stands is read.

Gail R. O'Day, in her book *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*,¹⁴ devotes a chapter to a detailed analysis of John 4:4-42, focusing on the Fourth Evangelist's use of irony to convey "his theology of revelation."¹⁵ For example, she examines the way in which Jesus' conversation with the

¹² Adele Reinhartz, "Jesus as Prophet: Predictive Prolepses in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989), pp. 3-16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Samaritan woman contains two levels of meaning, one of which the Samaritan woman fails to perceive. O'Day notes that there are "two conflicting levels of meaning that the reader must grasp simultaneously in order to interpret irony correctly,"¹⁶ but does not fully explain what narrative techniques are present in the text to enable the reader to grasp both levels of meaning. Similarly, while she notes that the story of John 4 is presented "in such a way that the reader participates in the narrative,"¹⁷ she does not fully analyze the elements in the text which make this participation possible (such as the juxtaposition of statements by the characters with statements by the narrator, which points up the layer of meaning that is hidden from the Samaritan woman). O'Day draws attention to the important point that, in the dialogue of vv. 27-38, the disciples are also shown to misinterpret Jesus, to grasp only one layer of meaning in what he says, while the reader is aware that there are two. Unlike the Samaritan woman, who through conversation with Jesus moves from her position of misunderstanding to one of (arguably incomplete) understanding, the disciples must have their misunderstanding explained to them directly.¹⁸ Even after Jesus' discourse,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

there is no indication that the disciples understand what the reader understands: that "food" has a metaphorical meaning, that the "harvest"--the completion of his work--is already occurring (or is about to occur) with the Samaritans' understanding of who he really is and what he really means. O'Day does not, however, explore the significance for the reader of the contrast between the Samaritan woman's journey to understanding and the disciples' continued failure to understand. What does it mean for the reader that the Samaritan woman, an outsider, is able to come to an understanding of Jesus' identity and meaning, while the disciples, who consider themselves insiders, are left outside?

Jeffrey Lloyd Staley, in his analysis of the rhetorical strategies of John,¹⁹ draws attention to what he calls the "victimization of the implied reader,"²⁰ a device in which the reader is led to formulate a certain understanding of the text, only to be shown that this understanding is incorrect. Staley provides two examples of this strategy at work in John 4, arguing that vs. 4:2 forces the reader to become suspicious of the narrator because it states that not Jesus, but only the disciples, were baptizing (contradicting 3:26, which stated

¹⁹ *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

that Jesus was baptizing). That narrator, according to Staley, forces the reader to identify with the Pharisees, "a group whom he recognizes as outsiders and know-nothings,"²¹ by showing that the reader, like the Pharisees, has been wrongly informed about Jesus' activities. In his second example, Staley points out that in 4:3-42 the reader is subject to a parody of the Old Testament type-scene in which a man becomes betrothed to a woman he meets at a well.²² According to Staley, by failing to fulfil the reader's expectations about how this scene might develop, while at the same time demonstrating to the reader that spiritual relationships and meanings supersede physical relationships and referents, the text "fosters an extremely intimate relationship with the implied reader which subtly instructs him in how to read inter-textually."²³ Staley does not, however, attempt to explain what narrative purpose might underlie this strategy of emphasizing the reader's role as an "outsider" and then drawing the reader to a position of understanding, of being an insider; nor does he relate this to the Samaritan woman's development from outsider to (relative) insider.

Staley's notion of reader victimization is taken up by J.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 98-103.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

E. Botha, who examines the use of this literary device (which he prefers to call reader "entrapment" or reader manipulation) in John 4:1-42.²⁴ While Botha provides further examples of this strategy in John 4:1-42, the most tantalizing aspect of his article is his suggestion that reader entrapment "also serves the purpose of keeping the readers attentive and involving them in the narrative in a way ordinary narratives are unable to do,"²⁵ and that "the manipulation serves in some instances to align the readers with certain characters."²⁶ This notion of the reader's involvement with the text is not developed further, however, and Botha fails to address what the constantly shifting perspective of the reader means about the way the text as a whole must be read, stating only that the reader's expectations are often unmet, and that the text often corrects the reader's evaluation of the meaning of words and events.

Stephen D. Moore²⁷ draws attention to the irony created by the Samaritan woman's failure to understand the second,

²⁴ J. E. Botha, "Reader 'Entrapment' As Literary Device in John 4:1-1," *Neotestamentica* 24, 1 (1990), pp. 37-47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁷ S. D. Moore, "Rifts in (a reading of) the Fourth Gospel, or: Does Johannine irony still collapse in a reading that draws attention to itself?" *Neotestamentica* 23 (1989), pp. 5-17.

"higher"²⁸ meaning of the water she is discussing, a meaning which is evident to the reader. Moore connects this discussion between the Samaritan woman and Jesus to a second occurrence of the theme of thirsting/drinking in 19:28-30, when Jesus himself thirsts (in the physical, mundane sense of the word), and when this physical thirst is satisfied declares, "it is finished." This, according to Moore, creates a problem:

But the sequence is a good deal stranger still when one begins to rethink it deconstructively. The literal, material, earthly level, hierarchically superseded in John 4:7-14 and shifted into the background, is reinstated in John 19:28-30 as *the very condition* (physical thirst, physical death) that enables the Spirit itself, emblem and token of the supramundane order (cf. 14:17), to *effectively come into being*. The hierarchy established in chapter 4 is curiously inverted....²⁹

Moore suggests that, ultimately, it may be the reader who is the victim of the text's irony, and that the text may be therefore impenetrable and "treacherous."³⁰ However, since, as Moore points out, the second "higher" meaning is available to the reader, it would seem likely that the *characters* are the victims of the text's irony, and that this irony is a literary device intended to communicate meaning to the reader. Although the impenetrability of texts is a much-talked-about

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

theory within literary criticism, an analysis of the text that starts from the premise that the literary devices of the text are to some degree penetrable (that is, are arranged in such a way that they convey some meaning to the reader) can probably find an alternative explanation for the text's irony.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

Within Johannine studies, historical questions relating to the composition of the gospel, the identity and number of its author(s)/redactors, and the social setting in which it was produced have dominated the field. Comparatively little has been done with the Fourth Gospel by way of literary analysis, this being a recent "trend" within Biblical Studies. In an article dealing with this shift in focus within Biblical Studies, Fernando F. Segovia points out that:

In many ways, therefore, the traditional paradigm has continued to exercise a predominant role in Johannine studies, far beyond its rate of survival and acceptability in the discipline as a whole; as a result, one still finds very much of a continued search for literary strata, for sources and redactions, and a persistent reading of the Gospel from a compositional, diachronic perspective.³²

One recent example of the persistence of this trend in Johannine studies is Robert Fortna's latest attempt to

³¹ According to Segovia, p. 1, literary criticism did not begin to dominate Biblical Studies until the 1980's.

³² Segovia, "Towards a New Direction," p. 2.

recreate the (hypothetical) previous form of the Fourth Gospel.³³

The increasing application of literary criticism to biblical studies has, however, begun to effect a change in Johannine studies. Increasingly, the methods of literary analysis developed by critics, such as Gerard Genette, Seymour Chatman, Wayne Booth, and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, are being applied to the text of the Fourth Gospel. Among the most comprehensive works analyzing the Fourth Gospel according to the principles of literary criticism are R. Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* and Jeffrey Lloyd Staley's *The Print's First Kiss*. The devotion of a recent edition of *Semeia* to literary analysis of the Fourth Gospel attests to the change in focus that is taking place in Johannine studies.³⁴

This thesis, then, takes the form of a literary-critical analysis of John 4:1-42, using the term literary criticism to refer to the examination of the literary elements and strategies present in the text. This means that the text of John 4:1-42 will be treated as a literary, rather than a historical, unit. The thesis will not deal with questions regarding the historical situation which produced the text,

³³ Robert Tomson Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

³⁴ *Semeia* 53 (1991).

nor with the identity or social locus of the author(s)/redactor(s) who may have contributed to the present form of the text. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss any hypothetical previous forms of the text, or to search for evidence that the text may have been rearranged or rewritten. Instead, the analysis will proceed from the premise that the Fourth Gospel is intelligible and meaningful in its present form,³⁵ and that John 4:1-42 in particular is a cohesive narrative appropriate for literary analysis. By analyzing the components of this narrative, I hope to explain how the text conveys meaning.

To this end I will be dealing with the communication of the meaning of the narrative as it is embedded in the text; it is beyond the bounds of my argument to attempt to suggest what meaning the text may have held for its original readers, or to determine whether the author(s) intended the text to work in this way. That is, whether or not the author(s) made a deliberate, conscious choice to include particular narrative elements and strategies, it is sufficient for my analysis to note that these narrative strategies are present in the text and that they work together to convey meaning. This thesis, then, deals with what Umberto Eco has called the "intention of

³⁵ To specify, the form of the text with which I shall be concerned is the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum graece*.

the text."³⁶ I, therefore, will take the position that meaning is located in the text, whether or not the meaning intended by the author can be recovered.

In referring to the reader of the text, I do not mean to indicate a particular "real," flesh-and-blood reader, nor any of its historical readers, but a textually-created "implied" reader.³⁷ In other words, when I refer to the text's manipulation of the reader, I do not intend to argue that the text is actually read this way, but only that the text sets itself up to be read in this way. Although I will deal with the text's ability to convey meaning to a reader, I nevertheless do not take the extreme position (sometimes taken by reader-response critics) that meaning is entirely the product of the reader or of an interpretive community; meaning is doubtless produced by the interaction of a reader with a text, but this necessitates that the text provide narrative devices capable of conveying meaning with which the reader can interact. The examination of John 4:1-42 that follows will, therefore, focus on "the textual constraints and strategies of the text."³⁸ In particular it will focus on the three

³⁶ Umberto Eco, "Interpretation and History" in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Stefan Collini, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 25.

³⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 7.

³⁸ Segovia, "Towards a New Direction," p. 16.

narrative elements referred to above: the narrator, the characters, and the use of time.

By examining these three elements, I will attempt to argue that the strategy of the text is to emphasize the reader's external position, not in order to stress the impossibility of grasping the text's meaning, but to manipulate the reader into reaching that meaning. By stressing the reader's superior understanding in contrast to the Samaritan woman, by inserting narrative asides that underline the reader's "outside" position, and by setting up prolepses that will not be fulfilled in text-time (and can, therefore, only be fulfilled in some external future occupied by the character, Jesus, but by no other character), the text suggests that its true meaning can only be grasped by the reader, and that this meaning is found in the identification of one of its characters, Jesus.

2.0 THE NARRATOR IN THE TEXT

Before discussing the role played by the narrator in the text of the Fourth Gospel, it is necessary to distinguish the narrator from the author and the implied author. The implied author is ultimately responsible for the arrangement of the text, for the decision to include certain elements and exclude others, but rather than being a real flesh-and-blood author, the implied author is constructed by the reader. That is, the reader pieces together an image of the implied author from the elements of the text, hypothesizing that the standards and norms of the text reflect the standards and norms of the "person" responsible for its creation; this imaginary "person" that the reader puts together is the implied author. The implied author stands on the other side of the text from the reader and has no direct contact with the reader, only here, too, the reader is "implied," a hypothesized "someone" capable of picking up all the text's signals and fitting them together into a complete, composite picture of the author. The implied author by itself¹ has no means of communication, no

¹ I say "itself" rather than "himself" or "herself" because although the reader will probably assign a gender to his/her construct of the implied author, properly speaking it is only an element of the text and is not male or female.

voice.² The implied author is also distinguished from the real author, who created the text (and in doing so created the implied author) and uses it as his/her means of communicating with the reader.

The narrator is the means by which the implied author communicates; the narrator is the text's voice. As such, every text has a narrator, even when the text appears to be merely reporting what took place or what was said by the characters:

Even when a narrative text presents passages of pure dialogue, manuscript found in a bottle, or forgotten letters and diaries, there is in addition to the speakers or writers of this discourse a "higher" narratorial authority responsible for "quoting" the dialogue or "transcribing" the written records.³

Gérard Genette makes a similar point when he argues that there is no true mimesis; no narrative can "show," as opposed to "tell," its story. Even the most highly mimetic narrative text, which appears to merely transcribe conversation and which has no overt indications that the narrator is present, merely creates the illusion of mimesis, for the fact that the narrative is textual means that it is being "reported" or

² Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 87.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

"transcribed."⁴ The voice that reports what was said is that of the narrator.

The necessity of having a narrator through which the implied author may "speak" is a function of written narrative. If the narrative of John 4:1-42 were to be filmed, rather than recorded textually, there would be moments when the narrator would be present--as a voice-over giving such information as in vv. 2-6--and times when the narrator would disappear and allow the characters to speak for themselves as in vv. 22-24. Indeed, in a film, the narratorial voice need not be used at all, since a film is capable of showing whatever actions the narrator tells in the text. Since John 4:1-42 is a narrative text, the narrator's voice is always present; even when the characters appear to speak for themselves, it is actually the narrator's voice that reports what they said.

2.1 NARRATIVE LEVELS

Any narrative may be said to contain at least two levels of narration: the level at which the act of narrating takes place, which is called the extradiegetic level, and the level at which the events being narrated take place, the level of

⁴ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 163-164.

the story, which is called the diegetic level.⁵ In addition, some narratives contain further levels of narration, as characters within the diegetic narrative themselves act as narrators; the second-degree narratives told by these characters are said to take place at a hypodiegetic level.⁶ Within John 4:1-42 there are at least two instances in which the characters act as narrators. The first occurs in vv. 28-29 (ἀφῆκεν οὖν τὴν ὑδρίαν αὐτῆς ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λέγει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα, μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός;) when the Samaritan woman relates a highly compressed account of her encounter with Jesus to the people in the city. The second is Jesus' discourse⁷ in vv. 34-38:

λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐμὸν βρώμα ἐστὶν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον. οὐχ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι Ἐτι τετραμήνός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ θερισμός ἐρχεται; ἰδοὺ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐπάρατε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν καὶ θεάσασθε τὰς χώρας ὅτι λευκαὶ εἰσιν πρὸς θερισμόν. ἤδη ὁ θερίζων μισθὸν λαμβάνει καὶ συνάγει καρπὸν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, ἵνα ὁ σπείρων ὁμοῦ χαίρῃ καὶ ὁ θερίζων. ἐν γὰρ τούτῳ ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθινός ὅτι Ἄλλος ἐστὶν ὁ σπείρων

⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 91.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁷ Although Jesus' discourse may not immediately be recognized as a narrative, it does fit Rimmon-Kenan's definition of narrative as the narration of a succession of events (p. 2); it is "narration" because it is a verbal communication between Jesus and his disciples, and it relates a succession of events (the sower has sown, the fields are ripe for harvest, the reaper gathers fruit and receives wages), although the order in which the events are related is not the same as the order in which they occur.

καὶ ἄλλος ὁ θερίζων. ἐγὼ ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς θερίζειν ὃ οὐχ ὑμεῖς κεκοπιᾶκατε· ἄλλοι κεκοπιᾶκασιν καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν κόπον αὐτῶν εἰσεληλύθατε.

In this discourse Jesus uses metaphors of sowing and harvesting in his speech to the disciples.

The presence of a hypodiegetic level of narration can be explained by examining the function that these narratives serve. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, lists three functions of hypodiegetic narrative: the actional function, the explicative function, and the thematic function.⁸ The first of these, actional function, concerns the ability of the hypodiegetic narrative to advance the action occurring at the diegetic level. The second, the explicative function, occurs when the story told at the hypodiegetic level explains in some way the events at the diegetic level. Finally, when the elements of the hypodiegetic narrative are in some way parallel or analogous to the elements at the diegetic level, the hypodiegetic narrative is said to serve a thematic function.⁹

The hypodiegetic narratives in the text of John 4:1-42 can be shown to serve all three of these functions. For example, when the Samaritan woman relates her narrative to the Samaritans, she advances the action at the diegetic level (the

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

level at which her storytelling occurs) by causing the Samaritans to leave the city to go see Jesus; her narrative therefore serves an actional function. A second example of the actional function occurs when Jesus relates his "harvest" narrative; the process of his narration is itself an action at the diegetic level, occurring at the same time that the Samaritan woman tells her story. Jesus' narrative to the disciples also serves an explicative function, because it to some degree explains the events that are occurring at the diegetic level. That is, it explains, in metaphorical language, what he and the disciples are doing, and what they are trying to accomplish through their actions: a "harvest." This "harvest" metaphor leads to the third, thematic function of Jesus' hypodiegetic narrative. The narrative of the events of the harvest, telling of the sower who labours and the reaper who gathers fruit now that the fields are ripe, is analogous to the events occurring at the diegetic level. Jesus has sown the seeds for the harvest through his encounter with the Samaritan woman, and their conversation (in which he helped her to correctly identify him) is about to produce a "harvest" of believers, the Samaritans.¹⁰

¹⁰ The events/elements of Jesus' hypodiegetic narrative are also analogous to the events occurring at the extradiegetic level, that is, the level at which the narration of the Fourth Gospel occurs; the "sowing" can be seen as parallel to the act of narrating, while the "harvest" is equivalent to the text's transformation of the reader into a

2.2 THE LEVELS OF NARRATORS

In addition to the levels of narrative, the narrator may also be said to be at one of two levels. The narrator who is above the level of his narrative--that is, who relates the narrative but who does not participate in it--is an extradiegetic narrator, while the narrator who also occupies a place within the story he tells--if he/she is a character who participates in events at the diegetic level--is an intradiegetic narrator.¹¹ Genette further points out that the narratee always occupies the same level as the narrator; an intradiegetic narrator addresses his narrative to an intradiegetic narratee, and so forth.¹² For example, when the Samaritan woman tells of her encounter with Jesus, she is an intradiegetic narrator, because she is a character in her own narrative; her listeners, the Samaritans, are intradiegetic narratees.

The categorization of narrators poses an interesting problem for an analysis of the Fourth Gospel: is the narrator of the Fourth Gospel extradiegetic or intradiegetic? There is no indication in the text that the narrator is a character in

member of the believing community.

¹¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, pp. 94-95. Further distinctions are possible, such as hypodiegetic and hypohypodiegetic narrators, but these are not pertinent to an analysis of the Fourth Gospel.

¹² Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 259-260.

his narrative, until chapter 21; in v. 24 (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, καὶ οἶδμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν) the narrator¹³ is said to know a "disciple" who "testifies," that is, bears witness to the truth of the events narrated. In order for the narrator to be in any way in contact with such a disciple, the narrator would have to "exist" on the same level as ~~the~~ that disciple, or in other words, would have to be an intradiegetic narrator. This contradicts the narrator's omniscient quality in the rest of the narrative.

An omniscient narrator is one who has knowledge of everything pertaining to the narrative, including characters' unvoiced thoughts, their motivations, events that occur when a character is alone and no other character is there to observe them, and events that occur simultaneously in different locations.¹⁴ The narrator of John 4:1-42 is obviously an omniscient narrator, able to report both what the Pharisees heard and what really happened (vv. 1-2), that Jesus feels tired (v. 6), the unvoiced questions of the disciples (v. 27), and the simultaneous conversations between the woman and the Samaritans in the city (vv. 28-30) and between Jesus

¹³ Although the text says "we know" there is only one narrator; even if the narrator seems to speak for a group of people, there is only one narratorial voice responsible for telling the story.

¹⁴ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 95.

and the disciples at the well (vv. 31-38). Such a narrator must be extradiegetic, since only a narrator occupying a level "above" the events narrated would have access to all this information. If, as is claimed in 21:24, the narrator is intradiegetic, his omniscience in the rest of the narrative remains difficult to explain.¹⁵

The narrator is able to know everything that relates to his narrative because of his position in time with respect to the events narrated. The narrator's distance from the events means that the importance and outcome of each event is already known; the narrator can therefore dwell on the important events and pass over the trivial.

The sense of the narrator's complete control of the story, exemplified by his omniscience and omnipresence, is also intensified by his retrospective view. The events which he describes took place in the past and he relates them in the past tenses of the Greek language. He is therefore in the position to create a coherent narrative which omits less salient features of the story in favour of highlighting what is important for understanding....¹⁶

The narrator's perspective has the effect of involving the

¹⁵ To answer that the narrator receives his information from the disciple mentioned in 21:24 is unsatisfactory, since the problem of explaining the narrator's omniscience remains. At no point earlier in the text are attempts made to explain the intradiegetic narrator's extensive knowledge, or the apparent omniscience of the disciple of 21:24; for example, the text does not claim that the disciples later reported their unvoiced questions (4:27) to anyone, or that the Pharisees reported their misinformation (4:1).

¹⁶ Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), p. 40.

reader in the events being narrated; because the narrator already knows the outcome of the narrative, each event gains something of the significance of the whole.

The narrator's "post-Easter perspective"¹⁷ means that he is aware of the significance of the Samaritan woman's tentative identification of Jesus (John 4:29: Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα, μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός;) and of the Samaritans belief in Jesus (John 4:42: τῇ τε γυναικὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Οὐκέτι διὰ τὴν σὴν λαλιὰν πιστεύομεν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκηκόαμεν καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου). By focusing the reader's attention on this identification of Jesus, by relating in detail the conversation which takes place between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the narrator recreates in the text the process by which the Samaritan characters come to accept Jesus' identity. Just as Jesus guides the Samaritan woman's identification of him, the narrator (whose retrospective perspective is such that, at the moment of narration, Jesus' identity has already been verified by the events that unfolded) is able to guide the reader to make a similar identification.

The Fourth Gospel is an unusual narrative in that it has, in addition to its omniscient narrator, an omniscient

¹⁷ George W. MacRae, quoted in Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 5.

character, Jesus, who is defined by the narrative as the son of God, has awareness of future events (including a future outside the narrative of which he is a part) and of events that precede his life on earth, knowledge of both earthly and heavenly things, and is aware of other characters' thoughts (and of their actions in his absence).¹⁸ Jesus is aware of the Samaritan woman's marital status, for example, even though she tries to conceal her situation (John 4:16-18: λέγει αὐτῇ, "Ὑπάγε φώνησον τὸν ἄνδρα σου καὶ ἐλθὲ ἐνθάδε. ἀπεκρίθη ἡ γυνὴ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Καλῶς εἶπας ὅτι Ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω· πέντε γὰρ ἄνδρας ἔσχες καὶ νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνὴρ· τοῦτο ἀληθὲς εἶρηκας). The narrator's claims for Jesus' omniscience, rather than straining the narrative's credibility, reinforces the stance the narrator takes towards the events he narrates. The narrator and the omniscient character back each other up in their claims for Jesus' identity.

This agreement between the narrator's omniscient perspective and that of his chief protagonist, Jesus, adds enormously to the didactic power of the narrative. A single vision is doubly reinforced.¹⁹

This shared omniscient perspective means that presumably the narrator understands Jesus' speech even when the characters surrounding Jesus do not. Culpepper points out,

¹⁸ Davies, pp. 38-39.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

for example, that in John 11:11 the disciples misunderstand Jesus' metaphor, but the narrator is able to explain it.²⁰ The shared perspective of Jesus and the narrator makes the narrator's interpretation of Jesus' speech highly reliable. In light of the narrator's apparent knowledge of what Jesus' metaphors mean, it seems significant that the narrator omits an explanation of the metaphors in Jesus' discourse in John 4:32-38.

2.3 THE PRESENCE OF THE NARRATOR

A narrator may be classified as either overt or covert: overt narrators are those who draw attention to their presence in the text, while covert narrators are those whose narratorial voice is scarcely perceptible (so much so that Seymour Chatman refers to "non-narrated" stories, those in which the features that betray the narrator's presence are minimal or absent).²¹ Chatman lists four signs that indicate the narrator's presence. These are, in ascending order from the weakest indicator to the strongest, set descriptions (including the identification of characters), temporal summaries, reports of what the characters did not say or

²⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 34.

²¹ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 198.

think,²² and ethos and commentary.²³ Chatman also deals with implicit commentary, such as the presence of an ironic narrator.²⁴

Set descriptions act as indicators of the narrator's presence when they are not mediated by a character. If the setting is described as *seen by the character*, the narrator remains unobtrusive, but if an explicit description is given, from an "outside" perspective (from a perspective that clearly does not belong to one of the characters), then it is obvious that it is the narrator who provides the description.²⁵ The description in John 4:6 (ἦν δὲ ἐκεῖ πηγὴ τοῦ Ἰακώβ. ὁ οὖν Ἰησοῦς κεκοπιακῶς ἐκ τῆς ὁδοιπορίας ἐκαθέζετο οὕτως ἐπὶ τῇ πηγῇ. ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη) of Jesus sitting by the well is clearly provided by the narrator, since there is no other character present to observe the scene that contains Jesus. Although the narrator would be ultimately responsible for communicating the information even if the description of the scene were attributed to another character (if, for example, the text read, "The Samaritan woman saw Jesus sitting by the well"), the narrator's presence is more noticeable in instances when

²² Descriptions of what the characters *did* say or think are included under the category of set descriptions.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-228.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-237.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

the description is provided directly by the narrator.

Chatman includes the narrator's identification of characters under his discussion of set description.²⁶ When a character appears on the scene, the narrator's presence is given away by the identification of that character. In John 4:7 (*Ἐρχεται γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀντλήσαι ὕδωρ. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Δός μοι πεῖν*), when the Samaritan woman comes to draw water, her direct identification as the Samaritan woman (rather than as a woman) reveals that someone is aware of her identity: that someone is the narrator.

Temporal summaries occur when story-events that may be supposed to have taken place over a length of time are narrated very briefly, or when the narrator attempts to account for events that occurred at the same time as other events in the story.²⁷ The Samaritan woman's journey from the well to the city is related in one brief sentence (v. 28: *ἀφῆκεν οὖν τὴν ὕδριαν αὐτῆς ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λέγει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις*); the Samaritans' journey from the city back to the well receives a similar treatment (v. 30: *ἐξῆλθον ἐκ τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτόν*). In v. 31 (*Ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ ἡρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγοντες, Ῥαββί, φάγε*), the narrator explains that the Samaritan woman's conversation with

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-225.

the Samaritans, and the trips to and from the city, occurred while Jesus spoke to the disciples. The narrator is responsible for the decision that certain events warrant only brief descriptions, and it is the narrator who attempted to solve the "problem of transition"²⁸ between the scenes of vv. 27-30 and vv. 31-38.

A description of what the characters did not say or think reveals the presence of a narrator who possesses this knowledge, since unuttered thoughts (or unconscious thoughts) could not be noted by the surrounding characters.²⁹ Thus the reader is made aware that the "voice" of John 4:27 (Καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἦλθαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ὅτι μετὰ γυναικὸς ἐλάλει. οὐδεὶς μὲντοι εἶπεν, Τί ζητεῖς ἢ τί λαλεῖς μετ' αὐτῆς;) is that of the narrator, who is capable of knowing the question that the disciples refrained from asking. Similarly, the narrator's presence is revealed in v. 8 (οἱ γὰρ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἀπεληλύθεισαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἵνα τροφὰς ἀγοράσωσιν); it must be the narrator who offers the explanation of the disciples' whereabouts, since the text does not indicate that Jesus is thinking or speaking about their location, nor that the Samaritan woman knows about them.

Under *ethos* and *commentary* Chatman deals with the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

narrator's attempts to interpret or explain events, and with indications of the narrator's judgements of characters and events.³⁰ The explanation of the disciples' whereabouts in John 4:8, and the comment on social relations between Jews and Samaritans in John 4:9 (λέγει οὖν αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Σαμαρίτις, Πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὢν παρ' ἐμοῦ πείν αἰτεῖς γυναικὸς Σαμαρίτιδος οὕσης; οὐ γὰρ συγχρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίταις), are examples of commentary by the narrator. The interjection in John 4:2 (--καίτοι γε Ἰησοῦς αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐβάπτιζεν ἀλλ' οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ --) is a judgement by the narrator, whose omniscient perspective enables him to evaluate the information heard by the Pharisees and note that it is wrong; a further negative judgement of the Pharisees' ability to know and recognize the truth is implied.

The Johannine narrator, then, displays examples of all of Chatman's signs of overttness. The most notable and the most significant of these are the interjections of the narrator's judgement and information on social norms into narrative. The overt narrator intrudes on the narrative to provide the reader with information concerning the social norms, values and beliefs that exist in the world of the text.³¹ Such information is more reliable when it is provided by the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-228.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

narrator, since characters may distort information, lack certain information, or hold beliefs that are not predominant in the text (of course, narrators can also be unreliable, but there is no indication in the Fourth Gospel that the narrator's information or values diverge from those of the implied author). The inclusion of such information in the text makes of the text a complete world, whose norms and values are accessible to the reader without reference to the sociocultural setting that produced the text. That the narrator includes such information, breaking the flow of narrative events to do so, indicates that the narratee is not expected to possess this information. The implied author's use of such an overt narrator makes the narrative, and the implied author's stance towards the events narrated, accessible to the reader; the reader is able to pick up the cues embedded in the text that indicate what is "normal" in the world of the text and what is extraordinary, and that shape the reader's judgement of the events and characters.

2.4 GENETTE'S NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS

Gérard Genette listed five functions of the narrator, the first of which, the narrative function, referred to the narrator's obvious responsibility for narrating, for actually telling the story, but the remaining four of which were extranarrative functions. These he labelled the directing

function, the function of communication, the testimonial function or function of attestation, and the ideological function.³²

The first of these, the directing function, concerns the narrator's metalinguistic or metanarrative comments that draw attention to the text's "articulations, connections, interrelationships, in short, its internal organization."³³ The best example of this within the Fourth Gospel occurs in chapter 21, in which the exclusion of some material from the narrative is referred to and explained (v. 25: "Ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἃτινα ἐὰν γράφηται καθ' ἓν, οὐδ' αὐτὸν οἶμαι τὸν κόσμον χωρῆσαι τὰ γραφόμενα βιβλία).

The second function, that of communication, is perhaps the most important for the Johannine narrator. This function refers to the narrator's relationship with and effect on the narratee (and, thus, on the implied reader, since all of the narrator's moves are controlled by the implied author, and are therefore ultimately directed at the reader):

The function that concerns the narrator's orientation toward the narratee³⁴--his care in establishing or

³² Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 255-256.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

³⁴ That Genette tends to blur the distinctions between reader and narratee is made clear in his statement that: "The third aspect is the *narrating situation* itself, whose two protagonists are the narratee--present, absent, or implied--and the narrator." (Genette, p. 255) The narratee, if

maintaining with the narratee a contact, indeed, a dialogue...--recalls both Jakobson's "phatic" (verifying the contact) and his "conative" (acting on the receiver) functions.³⁵

Genette mentions the possibility that for certain narrators the function of communication is more important than the basic narrative function. These narrators are "always turned toward their public and often more interested in the relationship they maintain with that public than in their narrative itself...."³⁶ This is certainly true of the Johannine narrator, whose narrative exists not for the sake of telling a story but to bring about a certain effect on the listener/reader (as is clearly stated in 20:31: ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεῦσῃτε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ). When the characters within John 4:1-42 act as narrators, they too are concerned primarily with this function of communication: the Samaritan woman telling the Samaritans of her encounter with Jesus, and Jesus telling the disciples of the coming "harvest," are attempting to affect a change within

distinguished from the implied reader and the real reader, is an element of the text; it is always "implied" and can never be "absent." Some of the characteristics that Genette attributes to the narratee, therefore, such as the ability to respond to textual manoeuvres designed to initiate a dialogue and affect the receiver, I consider more appropriate to a discussion of the reader.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

their listeners, to change their relationship to the narrative, their beliefs, and therefore their very identity.

Genette's third extranarrative function, refers to the relationship the narrator maintains with the material he narrates:

It may take the form simply of an attestation, as when the narrator indicates the source of his information, or the degree of precision of his own memories, or the feelings which one or another episode awakens in him.³⁷

The narrator of John 4:1-42 does not indicate from where he has obtained his information (indeed, he possesses information about characters' unvoiced thoughts and motivations whose source cannot be explained), but his possession of such privileged information indicates that he knows the truth about the information he narrates. The narrator's stance toward his narrative is, therefore, that it is unquestionably true and important for the readers/listeners to hear.

The final extranarrative function, the ideological function, is also important for an analysis of John 4:1-42. While the narrator obviously attempts to communicate a particular ideology to the reader, he does not do so through "the more didactic form of an authorized commentary on the action,"³⁸ but uses indirect means to sway the reader's opinion. This didactic function is the reason the narrator

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

attempts, through sharing inside information and ironies, to gain the reader's trust. The transformation of the reader (from an "outsider" to an "insider," a member of the believing community) is only possible if the reader is willing to follow the narrator's cues.

2.5 THE NARRATOR'S USE OF IRONY

The implied reader's trust in the narrator's reliability and reliance on the narrator's omniscient, retrospective viewpoint allows the narrator to communicate irony to the reader. The reader's attention is drawn to the presence of irony in the text by what Culpepper refers to as the "various nods, winks, and gestures"³⁹ thrown out by the narrator. Specifically, the irony in the Fourth Gospel is underlined by what Gail R. O'Day would classify as intratextual signals of irony, that is, the irony can be detected with reference to the text itself, and a knowledge of the sociocultural or historical context is not needed in order to detect the presence of irony.

Intratextual signals run the full gamut of literary and stylistic techniques. Some of the most important indicators are an abrupt change in style or tone, the use of words with double meanings and textual ambiguity, and the use of rhetorical questions, understatement, overstatement, parody, paradox, repetition, and

³⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 151.

metaphor.⁴⁰

The Johannine narrator's use of irony serves both to increase the reader's reliance on/trust in the narrator, and to help the reader understand the text. In this sense the irony in the Fourth Gospel is performative;⁴¹ that is, it has a role to play in the text's communication of meaning to the reader.

An example of irony in the text is the Samaritan woman's extended conversation with Jesus (John 4:7-26), in which she continually misunderstands what Jesus is saying to her, understands but misses the implications of what is being said, or attempts to conceal information (to be ironic) by speaking obliquely but fails because Jesus understands too well what she has said (for example, that she "has no husband"). The conversation is ironic because it contains two levels of meaning, a straightforward, earth-bound sense and a "higher," metaphorical sense. The Samaritan woman is aware of only one level of meaning, she understands the facts of the situation (for example, discussing water makes sense to her because they are at a well) but does not recognize that Jesus' language is metaphorical. The Samaritan woman begins by asking how it is that Jesus, a Jew, has come to ask her for water, and Jesus responds by initiating a conversation about "living water"

⁴⁰ O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 28.

⁴¹ O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 30.

(ὕδωρ ζῶν); the Samaritan woman, however, does not follow this leap into metaphor and continues to be concerned with the literal, factual elements of the situation: Jesus has no bucket with which to draw water.

In verse 19 (λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ) the Samaritan woman identifies Jesus as a prophet and reorients the conversation, turning from the mundane concern of fetching water from the well to the issue of worship, which she is aware is the subject of disagreement for Jews and Samaritans (v. 20: οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν, καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ). In her new attempt to enter into discussion with Jesus she again grasps the bare facts of the conversation but misses the full implication of what is being said. She realizes that Jesus' discussion of a time when "true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (v. 23: ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν) is related to the Messiah, and obediently produces her store of knowledge on the subject (v. 25: λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Οἶδα ὅτι Μεσσίας ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός. ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν ἅπαντα), but fails to identify Jesus. Jesus' conversation has revealed that he knows what sort of worshippers the Father seeks, who the true worshippers are,

and when this true worship will begin, and his possession of this knowledge surely implies that he is the Messiah, but nevertheless he must explicitly identify himself to the Samaritan woman. It is interesting to note that he responds to her inability to understand what he is saying by telling her who he is. This suggests that he is not concerned that she understand what he says, but rather, that she properly identify him.

A second example of the inability of other characters to recognize the metaphorical level of Jesus' conversation occurs when the disciples respond to Jesus' comment that "I have food to eat that you do not know about" (v. 32: ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, 'Εγὼ βρώσιν ἔχω φαγεῖν ἣν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε) by wondering if someone has brought him something to eat. Jesus corrects this misinterpretation of the word "food" (βρώμα) and the following discourse (vv. 34-38) continues to be highly metaphorical. The text does not indicate whether his correction of the disciples' initial misunderstanding enables them to correctly interpret the metaphorical language that follows, or whether they continue to interpret his speech literally.

If the text's irony is produced by the characters' failure to grasp both levels of Jesus' conversation, Gail R. O'Day has suggested that this in turn stems from their lack of knowledge about both levels of Jesus' identity:

The irony of the Logos is essential to the dynamics of

revelation in John, because the source of conflicts and misunderstanding in the Gospel narrative is frequently the inability of those with whom Jesus speaks to comprehend both levels of Jesus' identity at once.⁴²

Therefore the communication of irony to the reader is a mechanism by which Jesus' identity is revealed. The narrator's use of irony is thus not only an element of the story's tone or atmosphere, but is a crucial part of the way in which the text communicates its meaning.

The narrator makes the reader aware of the irony in the text in two ways: 1) the juxtaposition of two levels of meaning in such a way that the reader who tries to interpret the text on only one level will not be able to make sense of the words, and 2) Jesus' response to the disciples signals the reader to be alert for a second, metaphorical level of meaning.

In the first case, Jesus' answers to the Samaritan woman's questions are curiously inappropriate, making it obvious that they are communicating on two different levels. The reader who tries to read vv. 13-14 (ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Πᾶς ὁ πίπων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος τούτου διψήσει πάλιν· ὃς δ' ἂν πίῃ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὗ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μὴ διψήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἑλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον) as a literal response to the Samaritan woman's remark that Jesus has no bucket and the

⁴² O'Day, *Revelation*, pp. 6-7.

well is deep will quickly realize that something other than an exchange of factual information is taking place in the text. Similarly, Jesus' harvest discourse, if read literally, would make little sense as a response to the disciples' urging that he eat something.

Secondly, when Jesus responds to the disciples' misunderstanding of the word "food" (v. 33: *ἐλεγον οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, Μὴ τις ἤνεγκεν αὐτῷ φαγεῖν;*), he explains that by "food" he means something intangible, rather than something to eat (v. 34: *λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον*), thus ensuring that the reader is aware that Jesus' speech can be metaphorical. When Jesus continues his discourse the reader is alerted to the fact that the words he uses (harvest, fields, sower, reaper) have a second layer of meaning that outweighs the obvious sense of the words. As well, the reader that did not previously notice the incongruity between the Samaritan woman's earth-bound concerns and Jesus' responses is made aware, by Jesus' answer to the question about food, that the earlier dialogue was also being conducted on two levels.

The apparent discrepancy between what Jesus says and what the Samaritan woman and the disciples think he means, the division between the two levels of their conversation that makes nonsense of the responses of the earth-bound characters,

recalls Wayne Meeks' analysis of the similar encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus (in John 3:1-10):

Nicodemus plays a well-known role: that of the rather stupid disciple whose maladroitness provides the occasion (a) for the reader to feel superior and (b) for the sage who is questioned to deliver a discourse. The genre is widespread in the Greco-Roman world.... In such contexts, one frequently meets the cliché, "You do not understand earthly things, and you seek to know heavenly ones?" This may serve to mock a student who seeks to know something beyond his powers, or to rebuke an attempt to ascend to heaven."⁴³

The first and primary message of the dialogue is thus simply that Jesus is incomprehensible to Nicodemus. They belong to two different worlds, and, despite Nicodemus' initial good intentions (vs. 2), Jesus' world seems quite opaque to him.⁴⁴

Margaret Davies makes a similar point when she says that the role of characters who misunderstand Jesus is to allow readers to identify with the community of believers who see what the characters miss.⁴⁵ The reader would not, however, be able to see that the characters were missing anything were it not for the narrator's skilful juxtaposition of the characters' straightforward questions with Jesus' metaphorical answers. What Meeks describes as maladroitness questions can only be seen as such by the reader with the help of an intrusive narrator. When the Samaritan woman asks how a Jew has come to ask her, a Samaritan, for water, Jesus' response (v. 10: ἀπεκρίθη

⁴³ Meeks, "The Man from Heaven," p. 53.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference*, p. 364.

Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Εἰ ᾗδεις τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων σοι, Δός μοι πεῖν, σὺ ἂν ᾗτησας αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἂν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν) is clearly not answering the question on the level at which it was asked. Taken on the literal, commonsense level of the Samaritan woman's question, the answer would be nonsense, and the reader cannot help but see this.

Thus, the reader recognizes that the Samaritan woman's understanding is wrong--that "living water" is not something to be drawn out of the well. This is not, however, because the reader knows precisely what the "living water" is. Like most Johannine metaphors, this one remains partially obscured, and the reader senses that the "living water" is something of great significance (such as salvation or knowledge) without having any specific interpretation of the term confirmed by the text. Similarly, the reader knows that, when the disciples wonder among themselves whether anyone has brought Jesus something to eat, they are interpreting "food" inappropriately. Yet even when Jesus tells them what he means by "food" he does not explain himself fully (he does not say who sent him, or tell the disciples what the Father's will is), and his speech contains other words (harvest, fields, reaper, labour) which the reader recognizes as metaphors, but whose meaning is not explicitly explained.

Gail R. O'Day, in *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*,

presupposes that the function of Johannine irony is to move the reader from one level of interpretation to another, or in other words, to have the reader understand the second level of meaning:

Just as every ironic statement requires an act of judgement on the reader's part to size up both levels of meaning and to make the correct move from the literal to the intended meaning, Jesus as revealer presupposes the same dynamic of understanding:

Jesus said, "For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." (John 9:39)

Jesus as revealer challenges customary concepts of perception. The roles of those who see and do not see may be reversed. Those who encounter Jesus' revealing words will either become "blind" to them and be unable to move beyond the literal level or will "receive sight" and be able to make the necessary judgements and movement to comprehend both levels of his statements. The responsibility for the interpretation of Jesus' words is placed on each individual....⁴⁶

This is not, however, within the section of the text discussed above (John 4:7-15 and 4:31-38). Although the narrator makes it clear that the characters are interpreting Jesus' words incorrectly, are taking him too literally, a correct meaning is not always supplied by the text. Jesus tells the Samaritan woman what "living water" does but not exactly what it is, and tells the disciples what he meant by "food" but not what he meant by "harvest." The text's failure to include an explanation of Jesus' metaphors can be interpreted in one of two ways: either the "correct," other-worldly meaning of

⁴⁶ O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 8.

Jesus' speech is assumed to be so readily apparent that no explanation is necessary, or the exact (second-level) meaning of Jesus' speech is not what is important. The first possibility, that the implied author never conceived that any reader would need help in order to correctly interpret the second layer of meaning in Jesus' speech, seems to be ruled out by the characters' difficulties with interpretation. If even the disciples misinterpret Jesus' speech, it seems likely that the reader may also not know what is meant--although the reader has the advantage of knowing that there is a second layer of meaning to look for. What, then, is the function of having the reader know that a second layer of meaning exists, while not necessarily knowing what that meaning is?

The text uses irony to point out that there is an underlying significance to Jesus' speech. The text does not, however, try to explain the meaning of Jesus' speech (although it does show that there can be misinterpretations of what Jesus means, that the Samaritan woman and the disciples come up with the wrong meanings, and that therefore his words do presumably mean something).

What is important for the working-out of the text's intentions for the reader is not that the reader grasp the exact meaning of Jesus' metaphors, nor that the reader understand precisely the second layer of meaning in Jesus' speech that gives rise to the text's pervasive irony. Instead,

it is the reader's understanding that irony is occurring that seems to be of importance to the implied author. It is necessary that the reader come to accept that there are two layers of meaning, one of which is this-worldly, and thus easily understood by all the characters (leading to their inappropriately earth-bound questions), and one of which is other-worldly, and accessible only to Jesus. The other characters, through their contact with Jesus, may come to accept that he is the bearer of other-worldly knowledge, and that his words contain a second level of meaning that reflects this knowledge. Similarly the reader, in becoming aware of the irony in the text, is able to see that Jesus' speech contains multiple meanings. The acceptance of Jesus' identity (which leads, as shall be discussed in the next chapter, to the reader's new identity as an "insider") depends, not on "correctly" interpreting this second, higher layer of meaning, but on understanding that there is a second meaning concealed within Jesus' speech. Jesus' identity is revealed by his possession of other-worldly knowledge, not by his communication of it; his "true followers" are those who recognize and accept that he possesses this knowledge (who, in other words, accept his identity), not necessarily those who share it.

The Samaritan woman is not entirely the victim of the text's irony, however; her questions become less inappropriate

and her attempts to understand Jesus' identity and significance become more accurate. She refuses to passively play the fool and gropes towards the truth. This refusal on the part of the Samaritan woman to be merely an element of the text's irony, and her importance for the reader engaged in a similar quest for the text's truth, lead to the next stage of my analysis: the role of the Samaritan woman in the text.

3.0 CHARACTERS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

As has been mentioned above in Chapter 2, scholars interested in the historical situation in which the Fourth Gospel was created have often pointed to the otherworldliness of the Johannine Jesus, arguing that he is inaccessible and incomprehensible to the other characters, and that this division reflects a similar alienation of the Johannine community from the world around it. Jerome Neyrey, for example, focussing on the "forensic" language of the Fourth Gospel, suggests that the interactions between Jesus and the Jews are confrontations between insiders (Jesus and the true disciples) and the outsiders, in which those who are outsiders are identified by their lack of understanding.

One might go so far as to say that the emphatic defence of Jesus' equality with God functions as a definitive factor permanently separating Jesus and his audience. The perspective of equal to God, then, involves aggressive elements such as a forensic charge and a defense accentuating the scandal of the charge; the perspective relishes the division it causes.¹

However, having outlined this division between insiders and outsiders Neyrey does draw attention to the ability of some characters to cross over, to become insiders through the evangelization of the other characters, and he refers to the

¹ Neyrey, p. 104.

Samaritan woman in this context. This is similar to Meeks' contention that it is possible to "accept" the point of view of the Fourth Gospel, thus becoming an insider of the Johannine community and alienated from the larger world.

Faith in Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel, means a removal from "the world," because it means transfer to a community which has totalistic and exclusive claims.... The language patterns we have been describing have the effect, for the insider who accepts them, of demolishing the logic of the world, particularly the world of Judaism, and progressively emphasizing the sectarian consciousness. If one "believes" what is said in this book, he is quite literally taken out of the ordinary world of social reality. Contrariwise, this can hardly happen unless one stands already within the counter-cultural group or at least in some ambivalent relationship between it and the larger society.²

Neither Neyrey nor Meeks attempts to explain how the transformation of perspective that enables the reader to accept the claims of the Fourth Gospel, to move from being an outsider to being an insider, occurs, although both allow that this transformation can occur. Neyrey points to the Samaritan woman as an example within the text of this type of conversion. The examination that follows of the characters involved in this conversion--Jesus and the Samaritan woman--may reveal their effect upon the reader who witnesses the woman's transformation from outsider to insider.

² Meeks, pp. 70-71.

3.1 JESUS AS A CHARACTER

Jesus' role in the Fourth Gospel is an ambiguous one; in his conversation with the Samaritan woman he reveals himself as the revealer, but this is the extent of his revelations. As the Messiah, he has stated his role as one who has come from God and, therefore, can be expected to bear heavenly knowledge, but he does not share this knowledge with the Samaritan woman. The closest he comes is in expressing his knowledge of the future (4:21-23: λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πίστευέ μοι, γύναι, ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα ὅτε οὔτε ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ οὔτε ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις προσκυνήσετε τῷ πατρὶ. ὑμεῖς προσκυνεῖτε ὃ οὐκ οἴδατε. ἡμεῖς προσκυνοῦμεν ὃ οἶδαμεν, ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν. ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνούντας αὐτὸν), but he does not explain who the true worshippers will be or what is meant by their worshipping in spirit and truth. As has already been mentioned, the Johannine Jesus is an omniscient character, aware of future events (including the future beyond the narrative), and of the thoughts and actions of other characters, even when they are not present. Although he occasionally reveals his omniscience (as in vv. 21-23, and vv. 16-18: Λέγει αὐτῇ, Ὑπαγε φώνησον τὸν ἄνδρα σου καὶ ἐλθὲ ἐνθάδε. ἀπεκρίθη ἡ γυνὴ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Καλῶς εἶπες ὅτι

"Ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω· πέντε γὰρ ἄνδρες ἔσχετε καὶ νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνὴρ· τοῦτο ἀληθὲς εἶρηκας), he does not attempt to pass on his information or instruct the other characters about heavenly things.

Jesus' main action in John 4:1-42 consists of his leading the other characters to identify him correctly; the decision by the other characters either to accept or to reject his identity as the Messiah is the dividing line separating insiders, those who believe, from outsiders. In this sense, Jesus' importance as a character arises not from what he does or says, but from the reaction of the other characters to his presence and speech. Jesus makes certain claims for his identity and knowledge in John 4:1-42, but it is the reaction of the other characters, their division into insiders or outsiders, with which the narrative is primarily concerned.

As Neyrey has pointed out, the Johannine Jesus in his role as Messiah (particularly in his emphasis on equality with God) is an alien character, one which does not seem to belong to the same world occupied by the earthly characters.³ Nevertheless, although Jesus' status as a heavenly character is stressed he is shown having descended to earth, surrounded by human characters whose understanding of who he is is limited. None of the characters surrounding Jesus is like

³ Neyrey, pp. 104, 111.

him, and those who might be expected to understand and accept the presence of a man "from heaven" exclude him:

As we have seen, the depiction of Jesus as the man "who comes down from heaven" marks him as the alien from all men of the world. Though the Jews are "his own," when he comes to them they reject him, thus revealing themselves as not his own, but his enemies...."⁴

The Johannine Jesus is not fully one thing or another: he mingles with the earthly characters, but he is descended from heaven and will return there; he is from God, but walks among men, many of who reject him. Neither of earth nor in heaven, Jesus functions as a liminal character: one who stands poised between two worlds, and is thus uniquely able to initiate members of one world into the other. Victor W. Turner has pointed out that one aspect of the liminal situation is the communication of secret or sacred information:

This aspect is the vital one of the communication of the *sacra*, the heart of the liminal matter.... Jane Harrison has shown that in the Greek Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries this communication of the *sacra* has three main components (1903, 144-160). By and large, this threefold classification holds good for initiation rites all over the world. *Sacra* may be communicated as: (1) exhibitions, "what is shown"; (2) actions, "what is done"; and (3) instructions, "what is said."⁵

It can immediately be noted that while the miracles may

⁴ Meeks, p. 69.

⁵ Victor W. Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*" *Proceeding of the American Ethnological Society* (Seattle: American Ethnological Society, 1964) reprinted in *The Symbolic Analysis of Ritual*, p. 239.

to some degree constitute exhibitions and actions, the Johannine Jesus does not pass on instructions regarding such things as "the real, but secularly secret, names of the deities or spirits... theogony, cosmogony, and mythical history...."⁶ Even in John 4:1-42, where Jesus' only action is conversation with the Samaritan woman, the disciples, and finally the Samaritans, he does not communicate, nor attempt to communicate, such information.

It should also be noted that even the "exhibitions" and "actions" performed by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel do not necessarily have exactly the same function alluded to by Turner, as Jesus does not perform the miracles with the intention of leaving behind a specific set of instructions. That is, the Fourth Gospel does not indicate that Jesus performs his miracles as demonstrations of particular rites and rituals which he intends the disciples to duplicate. Nor does the text suggest that there is sacred information concerning the secret names of God or the history of creation embedded in or symbolized by the miracles for the enlightenment of the disciples. The only information communicated by the miracles is that Jesus is, as he claims, the Messiah, descended from heaven; and the miracles only reenforce this information, since the text emphasizes that

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

those who hear Jesus should believe on the basis of his word, not just because of the miracles.⁷

But in addition to those who reject Jesus there is a second group, capable of accepting Jesus and thus becoming insiders. Meeks suggests that this is dependent upon their ability to understand Jesus, to be "progressively enlightened,"⁸ and argues that this same understanding must be sought by the reader through numerous readings of the text. Meeks nevertheless concludes that the text "could hardly be regarded as a missionary tract, for we may imagine that only a very rare outsider would get past the barrier of its closed metaphorical system,"⁹ and indeed, if even the characters within the text have difficulty interpreting Jesus' metaphors it is difficult to imagine the reader being entirely successful. The barrier of the text's metaphors, however, does not necessarily render the text impenetrable. Instead it seems that the interactions between Jesus and the other characters work to redirect the reader's attention away from the task of interpreting the metaphors, and towards the more readily achievable task of identification and acceptance of

⁷ The Samaritans, for example, ultimately believe because of what Jesus has said (vs. 42), not because of the woman's report that he possesses miraculous knowledge (v. 29).

⁸ Meeks, p. 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*

the character behind the metaphors.

3.2 THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

The Samaritan woman plays a particularly important role in shaping the reader's response to the narrative. Like the reader, she initially stands outside the circle of believers and followers surrounding Jesus, but she is the first to identify him correctly, and her acceptance of his identity opens the way for the Samaritans, who likewise become believers. The narrative's focus on the Samaritan woman's conversion shows the reader that this transformation from outsider to insider is possible; the narrator's display of her mistakes and misunderstandings demonstrates that it is her questioning rather than her ability to understand Jesus' metaphors (for she shows no such ability) that makes the transformation possible. Her identification of Jesus is shared by the reader (who has already been primed by the prologue, and the intrusions of the narrator, to recognize Jesus even when the other characters do not). Her progression through misinterpretations of Jesus' speech to the recognition that it is his identity which is crucial both parallels the reader's reaction to the text and shapes that reaction.

The text of John 4:1-42 is careful to ensure that the reader recognizes that the Samaritan woman is an outsider, one who might be expected to misunderstand Jesus' speech and

identity. She herself questions why Jesus has addressed her, and the text explains her question by commenting that Jews do not have dealings with Samaritans (v. 9: λέγει οὖν αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Σαμαρίτις, Πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὦν παρ' ἐμοῦ πεῖν αἰτεῖς γυναικὸς Σαμαρίτιδος οὔσης; οὐ γὰρ συγχρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίταις). When the disciples return, the text notes that they too are surprised to see Jesus conversing with the Samaritan woman (v. 27: Καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἦλθαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ὅτι μετὰ γυναικὸς ἐλάλει. οὐδεὶς μὲντοι εἶπεν, Τί ζητεῖς ἢ τί λαλεῖς μετ' αὐτῆς;), although this time the unexpected quality of their conversation seems to be based on her gender. The Samaritan woman's role as an outsider is emphasized; clearly the reader is not expected to believe that she would be familiar with Jesus' identity, or with the meaning of the metaphorical language he uses. One might expect that she would remain an outsider, unable to penetrate the meaning of Jesus' speech, but this is not what unfolds.

In fact, it is not this obvious "outsider" who remains outside the meaning of the Johannine Jesus' speech, but rather those who would seem to have an advantage over her. The disciples, who are seemingly not barred from conversing with Jesus, are equally baffled by his metaphorical speech (they take his use of the word "βρώμα," food, much too literally in v. 33, just as the Samaritan woman initially misunderstands his reference to "ὕδωρ ζῶν," living water). Although they are

the expected recipients of Jesus' teaching, they do not use their misunderstanding as an opportunity to question Jesus, instead keeping their questions to themselves (v. 27: Καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἦλθαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ὅτι μετὰ γυναικὸς ἐλάλει. οὐδεὶς μὲντοι εἶπεν, Τί ζητεῖς ἢ τί λαλεῖς μετ' αὐτῆς; , and v. 33: Ἐλεγον οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, Μὴ τις ἤρρεκεν αὐτῷ φαγεῖν;) and remaining passive listeners. The Samaritan woman, in contrast, actively questions Jesus (vv. 9, 11, 12)¹⁰ and offers her interpretations of what he has said (vv. 19, 20, 25),¹¹ and is able through this dialogue to reach a point where Jesus can reveal his identity to her (v. 26: λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι) and she can accept it, albeit hesitantly (v. 29: Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα, μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός;). At this point she has grasped enough of the meaning of what Jesus has told her to persuade others to listen to him (v. 29, and v. 30: ἐξῆλθον ἐκ τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτόν); their

¹⁰ Vs. 9: λέγει οὖν αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Σαμαρίτις, Πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὢν παρ' ἐμοῦ πρὶν αἰτεῖς γυναῖκα Σαμαρίτιδος οὐσης; οὐ γὰρ συγχρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίταις. Vs. 11: λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ, Κύριε, οὐτε ἀντλημα ἔχεις καὶ τὸ φρέαρ ἐστὶν βαθύ. πόθεν οὖν ἔχεις τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν;. Vs. 12: γυνὴ σὺ μείζων εἰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ, ὃς ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν τὸ φρέαρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐπιεν καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ θρέμματα αὐτοῦ;.

¹¹ Vs. 19: λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ, Κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ. Vs. 20: οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν, καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ. Vs. 25: λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ, Οἶδα ὅτι Μεσσίας ἐρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός. ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν ἅπαντα.

eventual acceptance of his identity is the fulfilment within the text of the "harvest" metaphor Jesus uses with his disciples. While the Samaritans are able to believe in his identity and thus become insiders rather than outsiders, there is no clear indication within the text that the disciples grasp his use of the harvest metaphor; they may well remain outside his meaning.

The Samaritan woman's progression from outsider to insider contributes to a second fulfilment of the Johannine Jesus' prediction of a harvest, a fulfilment outside the narrative. By "showing" the reader her progressive questioning and understanding, the narrator allows the reader to reach a correct identification of Jesus, to recognize the truth that underlies her hesitant response (v. 29). Her extended conversation with Jesus also allows the reader to become accustomed to his use of metaphor to signify meaning. Hence when the disciples misunderstand his use of the word "food," the reader, who has already witnessed a similar mistake being corrected, is prepared to recognize that "food" is being used metaphorically. The reader, having followed the woman's progression towards understanding, is able to share the narrator's amusement at the disciples' naive response when they wonder who could have brought him something to eat (v. 33). At the same time, the reader is aware of the correct answer to their question: the Samaritan woman, by accepting

Jesus' identity, has allowed him to "reap" a harvest of believers, and has thus provided the "food" of completing his work.

As we have seen, Meeks, in his discussion of the character of Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel, points out that this type of character (the "rather stupid disciple")¹² was common in Graeco-Roman writings. It is not necessary to look beyond the text of the Fourth Gospel to see that the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus play similar roles. However while Meeks concludes that "the first and primary message of the dialogue is thus simply that Jesus is incomprehensible to Nicodemus,"¹³ and uses this to underline his point that the Fourth Gospel is a closed, impenetrable set of metaphors, the Samaritan woman clearly provides a contrast to this view. While it is not certain that she ever grasps the meaning of the metaphors used by the Johannine Jesus, the Samaritan woman is able to move beyond this initial barrier to the more significant factor, the one dividing line separating outsiders from insiders: the truth of Jesus' identity.

Her progression beyond (and in spite of) the barrier of Jesus' metaphorical language refutes Meeks' contention that the Fourth Gospel "could hardly be regarded as a missionary

¹² Meeks, "The Man from Heaven," p. 53.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 54.

tract, for we may imagine that only a very rare outsider would get past the barrier of its closed metaphorical system."¹⁴ In doing so she demonstrates that the reader, who is similarly baffled by the text's metaphors, can bypass this hurdle and become an insider by shifting focus from what Jesus says to who he is. In this sense much of what Jesus says in John 4:1-42 functions like the false clues scattered throughout a detective story, distracting the reader's attention from the central fact of the narrative, Jesus' identity. The reader who frames the question, "What does Jesus mean by such-and-such?" is left with an unanswerable riddle, one that can be debated and reinterpreted endlessly. The text, however, redirects the reader to the question, "Who could be saying such-and-such?" The Samaritan woman is the principal means by which the text redirects the reader's attention to Jesus' identity. She, like the reader, is able to become an insider and recognize Jesus' importance only when she stops puzzling over what he has said and done and starts asking who he is.

The Samaritan woman's importance to the reader lies in her role as the absolute outsider, the one person neither expected to nor capable of understanding any heavenly knowledge that Jesus may possess. Frank Kermode's observation about the good Samaritan in Luke, is no less true of the

¹⁴ Meeks, "The Man From Heaven," p. 69.

Samaritan woman:

So the story, instead of saying that lay folk can be more charitable than parsons, a commonplace truth, extends the sense of *plésion* quite violently to include the least likely person imaginable, and so, by implication, everybody.¹⁵

It is precisely because the Samaritan woman is the least likely person imaginable that her recognition of Jesus draws the reader within the circle of insiders who grasp the main point of his identity. Baffled by Jesus' metaphorical language, seemingly unable even to understand that he is not speaking literally, her attempt to come to terms with Jesus, to find some place for him within her knowledge of the world is nevertheless successful. The reader of John 4:1-42, regardless of what *background* he/she brings to the text, shares the Samaritan woman's experience of being an outsider, one for whom the referents of Jesus' speech are unclear and his claims (to be the Messiah, to possess heavenly knowledge) cannot be proven. The Samaritan woman's success in piercing his language to reach the essential element, his identity, does indeed imply that "everybody" is capable of similar success. This means, then, that the text's implied reader does not bring a specific body of knowledge and familiarity with Jesus' language and metaphors to the text; rather, the implied reader can be assumed to be sensitive enough to the

¹⁵ Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

implications of the "cosmological tale"¹⁶ outlined in the prologue to recognize the truth of the Samaritan woman's recognition of Jesus, and perhaps even to see the obscurity of Jesus' speech as the result of his possession of heavenly knowledge that cannot be communicated to the other characters.

Meeks' characterization of Nicodemus as a questioner "to whom the reader can feel superior"¹⁷ is also applicable to the role of the Samaritan woman. Her inability to recognize that Jesus is speaking metaphorically is the basis for a shared sense of irony between the narrator and the reader. The reader is superior in the sense that s/he is aware that there are levels of meaning in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, whereas the Samaritan woman is only aware of the literal sense of what Jesus says. The Samaritan woman's lack of knowledge, however, provides the reader with information as she questions Jesus. Her dialogue with Jesus both cues the reader to the irony in the text, notifying the reader that Jesus speaks metaphorically but the other characters tend to interpret him literally, and draws the reader's attention to Jesus' otherworldly identity, the difference between him and the other characters.

¹⁶ Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: the Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press/The Society of Biblical Literature, 1992), p. 19.

¹⁷ Meeks, "The Man from Heaven," p. 53.

Meeks concludes that the primary message to be drawn from Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus is that Jesus, as an otherworldly character descended from heaven, is incomprehensible to Nicodemus¹⁸ (and, by extension, to the other earthly characters). This is not entirely the case with the Samaritan woman who, despite her inability to understand Jesus' metaphors, is able to bridge the gap between earthly and heavenly knowledge by correctly identifying Jesus. Her tentative recognition of Jesus, and the resultant conversion of the Samaritans, suggests that the two worlds posited by Meeks are not, after all, mutually exclusive, but that the earthly characters who encounter Jesus are capable of recognizing and accepting him in his role as the Messiah, descended from heaven.

Even in the instance cited by Meeks, Jesus' response to Nicodemus (3:12-13: εἰ τὰ ἐπίγεια εἶπον ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε, πῶς ἂν εἶπω ὑμῖν τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε; καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) can be seen, not as a rebuke because Nicodemus seeks to understand heavenly things, but as an attempt to redirect Nicodemus' attention from the information which Jesus possesses to the more important matter of accepting Jesus' identity. Jesus may not be mocking

¹⁸ Meeks, "The Man from Heaven," p. 54.

Nicodemus' inability to understand heavenly things, but pointing out his misconception that it is necessary for him to understand heavenly things. Jesus does not seek proof that Nicodemus has understood his metaphorical language and now has heavenly knowledge, but instead asks that Nicodemus accept that Jesus possesses this knowledge--in other words, that Nicodemus recognize and accept Jesus as the Messiah. The difference between the Samaritan woman and Jesus lies, not in her greater understanding of what Jesus says, but in her willingness to accept that what he says reveals who he is. The reader, better informed than the Samaritan woman, is able to share her conclusion with greater certainty:

They can also sympathize with the Samaritan woman's reluctance to identify Jesus as messiah to her fellow Samaritans on the basis of Jesus' extraordinary knowledge (4:29). Her earlier question, "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and he drank from it and his sons and cattle?" (4:12), had been left unanswered, but readers were in a better position than the Samaritan woman to supply an affirmation.... The misunderstandings encourage readers to identify with the believing community in discerning the importance of Jesus which the characters miss.¹⁹

3.3 INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

The narrative of John 4:1-42 revolves around contrast; not "the contrast between the questioner and the one who possesses the information,"²⁰ but the contrast between

¹⁹ Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference*, pp. 363-364.

²⁰ Meeks, "The Man from Heaven," p. 53.

insiders (those who accept Jesus' identity) and outsiders (those who reject or remain unaware of his identity). The text, in presenting this division, plays upon the reader's expectations: those characters who are in closest contact with Jesus, the disciples, are not yet shown to have clearly accepted his identity, while the Samaritan woman's brief contact with him leads to the whole group of Samaritans becoming insiders.

Jesus, in addition to standing in contrast to the earthly characters he encounters, creates the contrast among his listeners by provoking within them a response of either acceptance or rejection. His role as an omniscient, other-worldly character is not to impart particular information, but to separate those who are capable of accepting and believing in such a character from those who are unable to bridge the gap. Neyrey, examining the effects of Jesus' claims for his identity upon his listeners, notes that:

...Jesus defends his equality with God in such a way as to emphasize how radical it is and so to make unbridgeable the chasm between him and his accusers. The remarks about Jesus' equality with God, then, serve a divisive function, separating him from the synagogue, widening the gulf between them, and causing a permanent divorce.²¹

While the Fourth Gospel is, as Neyrey points out, largely concerned with the contrast between Jesus and those who reject

²¹ Neyrey, p. 103.

his identity, it is equally concerned with those who accept his identity, thus creating a chasm between themselves and his enemies. Those who become insiders have themselves gained a new identity and perspective, and are separated from those who remain outsiders.

But something else is happening, for there are some few who do respond to Jesus' signs and words, and these, while they also frequently "misunderstand," are progressively enlightened and drawn into intense intimacy with Jesus, until they, like him, are not "of this world."²²

The Samaritan woman, tentatively naming Jesus as the Messiah to the other Samaritans, has undergone the transformation from outsider to insider, and just as many of the Samaritans who hear the woman's testimony are similarly transformed, the reader who is shown her conversation and knows the correct answers to her questions before she does (v. 12: *μὴ σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ, ὃς ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν τὸ φρέαρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐπιεν καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ θρέμματα αὐτοῦ;*, and v. 29: *Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα, μῆτι οὐτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός;*) follows the woman to become an insider.

Neyrey, following Meeks, also sees the high christology of the Fourth Gospel, in which Jesus' equality with God is stressed, as indicative that the text is concerned with the division of insiders from outsiders.

²² Meeks, "The Man from Heaven," p. 69.

The christological myth, moreover, functions not only to identify Jesus as a unique revealer but to distinguish him from those who belong to this world. And so the descent of Jesus serves as a judgement of the world (9:39) especially by provoking misunderstanding, which proves that the person who does not understand belongs to this world and not to Jesus' world.²³

3.4 THE RESPONSE OF THE READER

In a sense what the text of the Fourth Gospel asks of the reader is a willing suspension of disbelief. Just as the other characters who encounter Jesus are asked to put aside their scepticism regarding yet another itinerant preacher/healer and recognize Jesus as someone unique and entirely "other," the reader is led towards the conclusion that the text deals with an omniscient, alien and pre-existent character. The "cosmological tale" sets out the broad temporal framework, stretching from before creation up to and beyond the future containing the reader, necessary to contain such a character; the intrusions by the narrator inform the reader of this character's identity and reassure the reader that the character really is omniscient, that he does know what the other characters think and his predictions will be fulfilled. But perhaps the most important element in shaping the reader's response is the characters, through which the text is able, rather than merely telling the reader about the

²³ Neyrey, p. 116.

character Jesus, to show the reader correct and incorrect (or adequate and inadequate) responses to Jesus' claimed identity as the Messiah. This is particularly the case in John 4:1-42, in which Jesus is correctly identified for the first time, and his identity accepted, by a group of characters he has just encountered, while the disciples noticeably do not yet "name" him.

The Samaritan woman's progressive questioning of Jesus allows her to understand, if not always what Jesus' means by what he says, at least that the person saying such things must be unique, and leads her to correctly guess as to his identity (v. 29). An even greater acceptance is achieved when the Samaritans set out to prove or disprove her hypothesis, and identify Jesus as the Saviour of the World once they have heard them (v. 42). It is this belief in Jesus' identity, rather than a complete understanding of his predictions, that leads the Samaritans to their new identity as believers, "insiders."

The central importance to salvation of belief in Jesus is brought out by the story of the Samaritan woman and her fellow Samaritans... the dialogue goes on to explain how it is that salvation comes from the Jews: Jesus is a Jew and the woman tentatively accepts Jesus' assertion that he is the Messiah (4.25-26). She then raises with others in the Samaritan city whether he could really be the Christ.... the story shows the gradual awakening of full belief in Jesus as the world's saviour, that is, as saviour not simply of Jews, but, proleptically, of all

humanity.²⁴

In other words, the Samaritans become insiders by recognizing that Jesus is not simply a Jew, but is a radically alien character, a man descended from heaven and "out of place in the world,"²⁵ and the text directs the reader to a similar recognition.

One element leading the reader to share the conclusion reached by the Samaritans, that Jesus is the Messiah, is the reader's identification with the Samaritan woman and the Samaritans. The reader, equally puzzled by some of Jesus' metaphors, feels sympathy for the woman's attempts to understand him. Like the woman approaching the stranger at the well, the reader approaches the text as an outsider. This initial identification with the Samaritan woman is enhanced by the text's refusal to provide any other character with whom the reader can identify. As Davies has pointed out, "the narrative is not focused through any of the characters, it is focused on Jesus."²⁶ In other words the narrator is not personalized; there is no character created through whose eyes the reader watches events unfold, no eyewitness character with whom the reader identifies. And although the narrative is

²⁴ Davies, p. 219.

²⁵ Neyrey, p. 105.

²⁶ Davies, p. 38.

focussed on Jesus, making Jesus the focus of the reader's attention and sympathy, only a very limited identification with Jesus is possible (and then only in his most human moments, as when he is tired in v. 6). Omniscient and otherworldly, equal to God, seeing the future and speaking enigmatically, Jesus is a character to whom the reader responds with unease and awe rather than identification. The text does not encourage the reader to identify with Jesus; while the omniscient narrator provides insight into the thoughts of the other characters, Jesus' thoughts and motives are not revealed. The reader, like the other characters, knows Jesus only through his words and actions, so that Jesus' character is not fully accessible.

The reader might be expected to identify with the disciples, who are the human characters in closest contact with Jesus, but the text of John 4:1-42 makes this impossible. By educating the reader to recognize that Jesus speaks metaphorically, and then portraying the disciples misinterpreting him by looking for literal meaning, the text encourages the reader to feel superior to the disciples. Unlike the Samaritan woman, the disciples are not shown to reach for an answer to the question of who Jesus is, and so the reader cannot share in or applaud their progress.

Greater identification is possible with the Samaritan woman as a human character who, like the reader, must go

through the process of becoming an insider. The rest of the Samaritans, in their immediate recognition of Jesus, also share the perspective of the reader (who was helped by the narrator's comment to a correct identification of Jesus), but they remain an undifferentiated mass, making the woman stand out as an individual with whom the reader can identify.

A second element employed by the text to direct the reader's attention towards Jesus' messiahship is the contrast between the success of the Samaritans and the confusion of the disciples. Jesus responds to the Samaritan woman's questions, not by explaining further what he meant by water, but by revealing who he is (v. 26: λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι). His responses constantly redirect her efforts to gain information (on, for example, "the living water" [v. 11: λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Κύριε, οὐτε ἀντλημα ἔχεις καὶ τὸ φρέαρ ἐστὶν βαθύ. πόθεν οὖν ἔχεις τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν;], or the correct location for worship [v. 20: οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τοῦτοφ προσεκύνησαν, καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱερουσαλύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ]) by hinting at his identity (vv. 10, 14)²⁷ and his possession of heavenly knowledge (vv. 23-

²⁷ Vs. 10: ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Εἰ ᾔδεις τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων σοι, Δός μοι πείν, σὺ ἂν ἤτησας αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν. Vs. 14: ὃς δ' ἂν πίη ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὐ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μὴ διψήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἔλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

24).²⁸ The reader's knowledge of the truth that underlies the woman's question (v. 12: μή σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ, ὃς ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν τὸ φρέαρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐπιεν καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ θρέμματα αὐτοῦ;) and her talk of the Messiah (v. 25: λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Οἶδα ὅτι Μεσσίας ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός. ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν ἅπαντα) similarly shifts the reader's focus to the matter of Jesus' identity; the question of what, precisely, Jesus means by each metaphor recedes into the background.

The text reinforces this shift of the reader's attention by next showing the disciples, who pursue only the meaning of Jesus' words. Absorbed as they are in trying to penetrate his metaphorical language the disciples, quite noticeably now that the woman has raised the question, never reach the issue of whether Jesus is or is not the Messiah. During Jesus' extended metaphorical speech to the disciples in vv. 31-38 (most of which, the reader is inclined to guess, they fail to understand), Jesus speaks of the coming harvest, and the text follows this with the example of the Samaritans. In contrast to the disciples, they hear his words and respond by identifying him rather than puzzling over his speech.

²⁸ Vv. 23-24: ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνῶσι τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνῶντας αὐτόν. πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνῶντας αὐτόν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν.

The text, then, lays before the reader one character who successfully identifies Jesus only when she leaves behind the question of what his metaphors mean, one group of characters so engrossed by their struggle to understand him that they do not even ask if he could be the Messiah, and a third group who provide the response to the woman's question (v. 29: Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα, μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός;) by fully accepting Jesus as the saviour of the world (v. 42: τῇ τε γυναικὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Οὐκέτι διὰ τὴν σὴν λαλίαν πιστεύομεν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκηκόαμεν καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου). The text confirms through these examples that the Samaritans are right to leave behind the pursuit of metaphorical meaning in favour of a belief in Jesus' identity. In so doing the text reassures the reader, who approaches the text as an outsider lacking familiarity with its language and metaphors, that such knowledge is not required to become an insider; what is necessary, the text suggests, is a willingness to accept Jesus' claims for his identity. The final task of the text, then, is to convince its reader that this response is still required; that is, that at the moment when the text is read, the question of Jesus' identity remains to be resolved, this time by the reader rather than the characters.

4.0: TIME AND THE TEXT

The complexities surrounding time in the Fourth Gospel are such that the critical categories devised for the analysis of time in other types of literature may be inadequate when applied to the use of time in Johannine narrative. Nevertheless, an attempt must be made to sort out the various levels of time hinted at in the narrative, for it is around the issue of time that the most interesting, and for the reader the most important, questions arise concerning the relationship between the text and its reader. Why do people continue to read the narrative of the Fourth Gospel as applicable to their own time? Is this mere error on the part of the reader, who imposes his/her own concerns on a text which, a closer reading reveals, contains nothing to foster this illusion of applicability, or is it the result of conventions in the text which suggest that the text refers to a time outside the story?

4.1 CLASSIFICATIONS OF TIME

Discussions of the use of time in narrative frequently refer to the system of classifications devised by Genette in his study of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.¹ As Gail R. O'Day has pointed out, the difficulty in using the

¹ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*.

conventional classifications of literary criticism to discuss time in the Fourth Gospel arises because "the line between narrative future and the future beyond the narrative is not as clear-cut in the Fourth Gospel as Genette's categories would suggest."² This blurring between time within the narrative and time beyond the narrative makes an analysis of the Fourth Gospel difficult. Some discussion of the terms used to analyze time and narrative is thus necessary before an attempt can be made to apply these terms to the Johannine narrative, or to point out why these terms cannot fully explain how time is used in the narrative.

The most basic distinction that can be made is that between story time and narrative time.³ The narrative is the story's signifier, the actual form in which the story is told, with specific words and sentences in a specific order. The story refers to the events relayed by the narrative, the contents of the narrative. It is possible, therefore, to have several narratives which tell the same story (as is the case with folktales, where there may be many narrative versions of the same story, or with the four Gospels, which are widely differing narratives that concern a shared set of events).

² Gail R. O'Day, "'I Have Overcome the World' (John 16:33): Narrative Time in John 13-17," *Semeia* 53 (1991), p. 155.

³ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 53.

Story time, then, concerns the length of time which the events of the story are said to have taken, while narrative time refers to the length of time taken to narrate those events. Discrepancies between story time and narrative time are possible: John 4:3-4 (ἀφῆκεν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν καὶ ἀπῆλθεν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. Ἔδει δὲ αὐτὸν διέρχεσθαι διὰ τῆς Σαμαρείας) takes only an instant of narrative time, but may be presumed to have taken longer in story time (that is, the event is related much more quickly than it occurred).

A slightly more complex system of classification is used by Seymour Chatman, who distinguishes story, narrative text, and discourse.⁴ According to Chatman, story, as above, is used to refer to the events of the narrative; a further distinction is drawn between discourse, the means by which the story is conveyed to the reader/listener, and narrative text, which is used only to refer to the text as a physical object. As Culpepper points out, Chatman's classification has a distinct disadvantage for Johannine studies, as his term, 'discourse,' is used to refer to specific monologues within the Fourth Gospel (such as "the farewell discourse") and may therefore be confusing.⁵ Following Culpepper, no distinction will be made here between narrative text and discourse,

⁴ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 62-63.

⁵ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 53n2.

although it is recognized that narrative time can only be hypothesized, since the narrative as text does not occupy any time, only space. Narrative time is an approximation of the time it takes to narrate events, as we cannot know at what speed the narrator 'speaks,' nor how quickly the implied reader 'reads.'

Just as there can be differences of duration between story time and narrative time, there can be differences of order. While the events of the story may be understood to have taken place in a particular order, the narrative does not always relate the events in the order in which they occurred. According to Genette, the disordering of story events so that the narrative reveals events in an order other than that in which they occurred is characteristic of even the earliest 'Western' literature:

Pinpointing and measuring these narrative *anachronies* (as I will call the various types of discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative) implicitly assume the existence of a kind of zero degree that would be a condition of perfect temporal correspondence between narrative and story. This point of reference is more hypothetical than real. Folklore narrative habitually conforms, at least in its major articulations, to chronological order, but our (Western) literary tradition, in contrast, was inaugurated by a characteristic effect of anachrony. In the eighth line of the *Iliad*, the narrator, having evoked the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon that he proclaims as the starting point of his narrative (*ex hou de ta prôta*), goes back about ten days to reveal the cause of quarrel in some 140 retrospective lines (affront to Chryses--Apollo's anger--plague). We know that this beginning *in medias res*, followed by an expository return to an earlier period of time, will become one of the formal

topoi of epic...."⁶

The Fourth Gospel also follows this pattern of anachrony to some extent, beginning with the Prologue which sums up the whole of Jesus' life and death and places these events within the larger context of eternity (what Reinhartz has called the "cosmological tale"),⁷ and then returning to the events of Jesus' life on earth to relate the "historical tale"⁸ in greater detail.

Anachronies can be further divided into prolepses and analepses. An analepsis occurs when the narrative introduces information about an event that occurred earlier in the story time.⁹ For example, when Jesus reveals his knowledge of the Samaritan woman's five husbands (John 4:18: πέντε γὰρ ἄνδρας ἔσχες καὶ νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνὴρ· τοῦτο ἀληθὲς εἶρηκας) he is referring to events that occurred long before this point in the story. Similarly, the woman's statement in John 4:20 (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν· καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἔστιν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ) is an instance of analepsis, since the worship by her ancestors must have taken place long before her

⁶ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 35-36.

⁷ Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*, p. 36.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 40.

conversation with Jesus. A prolepsis occurs when the narrative alludes to events that have not yet taken place in the story.¹⁰ In John 4:25, the Samaritan woman's statement (Οἶδα ὅτι Μεσσίας ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός· ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν ἅπαντα) can be seen as an example of prolepsis.

Prolepses can either anticipate events which will occur in the future of the narrative, in which case they are classified as internal prolepses,¹¹ or they can refer to events that will only take place in a future outside the narrative, in which case they are labelled external prolepses.¹²

The difficulty in classifying events in the Fourth Gospel can be seen with reference to the example used above (John 4:25). Although the Samaritan woman is referring to a future event (thus making her statement an instance of prolepsis), she is unaware that the event is already occurring. The woman's reference to the future is anachronous only from the perspective of the characters. From the reader's perspective, there is no discordance between her statement and its fulfillment. Other events, while they more clearly refer to the future, cannot be classified as internal or external

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

prolepses, since they may refer both to events that are related later in the narrative and to events that occur in a future outside the narrative. For example, in John 4:23 (ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνούντας αὐτόν) Jesus refers to an event which begins in his present (that is, the present moment of the story) and extends into the future of the narrative. However, the narrative does not indicate that this event (the worship of the Father by true worshippers) comes to an end; therefore, the future that Jesus refers to lies both within and beyond the narrative. Such instances are examples of mixed prolepses.¹³

As Culpepper's analysis of time in the Fourth Gospel proceeds, however, it becomes clear that the Fourth Gospel resists precise categorization by even these refined forms,¹⁴ and Culpepper must also identify "mixed forms." For example, he identifies mixed prolepses as "progressive," that is, "the conditions for their fulfillment are established by the end of the narrative, but their fruition lies beyond it."¹⁴

As Margaret Davies has argued, Jesus displays awareness of a future outside the story related by the Johannine narrative:

Jesus' teaching about the future includes not only future events which are related in the story, but also descriptions of discipleship in a future beyond the story. The farewell discourses (chs. 14-16) predict both the horror of persecution and the joy of belief and give

¹³ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 57.

¹⁴ O'Day, p. 155.

assurances about another helper who will guide them, the spirit of truth. Briefly, too, Jesus glimpses the disciples eschatological resurrection (6:39, 40, 44, 54) and their final dwelling with the Father (14.2).¹⁵

It is when considering mixed prolepses that the inadequacy of any attempt to categorize time in the Fourth Gospel becomes apparent. To say that the prolepses in John 4:1-42 are mixed prolepses is, in a sense, to fail to classify them at all, for while a mixed prolepsis is one that may refer either to the future within the narrative (within story time) or to a future beyond it, or to both, there is no way of determining which is the case in the Fourth Gospel. A specific classification of the future to which a mixed prolepsis refers (that is, as either the future within the narrative or the future beyond it) is impossible. Even if it could be known which future the narrative was intended to refer to, the interpretation of references to the future would still lie with the reader. The presence of a mixed prolepsis encourages the reader to interpret the text as possibly referring to his/her own time, but this interpretation can never be declared 'right' or 'wrong.' The Fourth Gospel's mixed prolepses make this interpretation of the text possible, but our ultimate inability to pinpoint the referent of the prolepses means that the interpretation is always open to change. Thus it can be argued that the prolepses which I see

¹⁵ Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference*, p. 39.

as awaiting fulfillment in the future beyond the text have in fact been fulfilled within the text. Nevertheless, the eternal dimension of the story, the "cosmological tale," strongly suggests that the text intends its story to extend into the future, rather than to end at the moment of its composition.

A link is made between the life of Jesus and the future life of the disciples by the use of the perfect tense to describe God's activity in Jesus' mission. This perfect expresses the continuing effect of a past action into the present. It is used very much more frequently in the Fourth Gospel than in the Synoptics. Turner (1963:83) provides the following numbers for comparison: Matthew 7, Mark 8, Luke 14, but John 77 times. Its frequency in John highlights the enduring significance of Jesus' life.... The Fourth Gospel, then, makes explicit the continuing relevance of the story it tells.¹⁶

4.2 THE QUESTION OF THE PRESENT

In addition to the two possible futures which are suggested by the text, the narrative also contains the further possibility that the "present" may be seen to encompass two possible moments. The first, most obvious "present" is that contained within the story: the moment when the events of the story are taking place. This is the present that the characters of narrative eternally occupy, a present that recurs whenever the act of narration (which, in the case of a text, is the act of reading/ being read) occurs. Any reader of the text, however, will occupy a second present; for the

¹⁶ Davies, p. 57.

reader the moment of narration/reading occurs at a particular point in time. That is, any reader of a text occupies a particular present, rather than the eternal present which is the realm of the text's characters. Whenever the text is read and the characters refer to the present moment, it becomes possible for the reader to interpret that reference in two ways: either the characters are referring to the moment when the reader reads the text or, more commonly, they are referring to the moment within the story when their act of speaking/thinking occurs.

In the case of the Johannine Jesus, an omniscient character possessing a special knowledge that comes from God and extends to a future outside and beyond the text, it is not unlikely that his references to the present may be interpreted in the first way. Given the special characteristics of the Johannine Jesus, the reader may well decide that this character's references to the present should be interpreted as referring to the moment when his/her reading of the text allows the act of narration to occur. This interpretation seems particularly meaningful when the Johannine Jesus states that his prophecies have begun to be fulfilled in the present moment; the double present suggested implicates both Jesus' act of speaking (as in 4:23) and the reader's act of reading in the fulfilment of the prophecy.

In other words, the presence within the narrative of a

character who is omniscient (omniscient in regard to events both within and beyond the narrative he occupies) means that any speech by that character seems to be simultaneously directed at two audiences; both the character being addressed within the narrative and the reader being addressed by the narrative are the recipients of this speech. Indeed, there are cases in the Fourth Gospel in which the present Jesus refers to must be the reader's present, since no other interpretation makes sense.

In structuring time, the Fourth Gospel describes the eternal in language which is fashioned to capture distinctions of time, and it makes the eternal fundamental to its presentation of the story. No part of the story can be understood without reference to the Creator God and her salvific purpose. Moreover, in depicting the significance of Jesus' life for believers, the narrative sometimes includes nonsensical statements: "Now I am no longer in the world" (17.11). Its rhetoric of extreme oppositions involves both obvious contradictions and unresolved tensions.¹⁷

Any reference by the omniscient character to the present will seem to refer to the time of both the characters and the reader. This element of the text means that, from the reader's perspective, Jesus' speeches can best be analyzed as acts of anterior narration.

4.3 ANTERIOR NARRATION IN JOHN 4:1-42

As has already been discussed the narrator of John 4:1-42

¹⁷ Davies, pp. 65-66.

occupies a position in time subsequent to the events being narrated; that is, the narrator looks back on events which have already taken place. A possible exception to this occurs in Jesus' speeches. Although when Jesus speaks, his speech is an event which occurred in the narrator's past, the contents of his speech may refer to events which have not yet occurred at the moment when he speaks. Jesus' speech may refer to future events, events that will occur in the narrator's present or future.

Rimmon-Kenan, following Genette's classification, lists four possible temporal relations between narration and the events narrated: ulterior narration, anterior narration, simultaneous narration, and intercalated narration.¹⁸ Two of these, simultaneous narration and intercalated narration, belong primarily to epistolary novels and to narratives that take the form of diary entries, and are not applicable to the Fourth Gospel. The third, ulterior narration, takes place when events are narrated after they occur; it is the most common form of narration, and accounts for most of the narrative of John 4:1-42. Anterior narration, the narration of events before they occur, is much less common.

It is a kind of predictive narration, generally using the future tense, but sometimes the present. Whereas examples abound in Biblical prophecies, complete modern texts

¹⁸ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, pp. 89-90.

written in the predictive vein are rare.¹⁹

Most of the events narrated in John 4:1-42 have already occurred when the narrator "speaks"; this is obvious from the narrators use of verbs in the past tense ('Ερχεται, ἀπῆλθεν, ἐπίστευσαν). However, Jesus' speech is itself an act of anterior narration. Jesus uses present and future tenses to speak of events that are now occurring or will occur in the future (John 4:21, 23, 35-36). The question remains: to which present and which future does Jesus' speech refer?

The future referred to in Jesus' speech may still be the narrator's past; while the events Jesus predicts may not yet have occurred when the event of Jesus' speech took place, they may well have occurred in the interval between the event of Jesus' speech and the narration of the speech. A clear example of this occurs in John 2:20-22, when the fulfilment of Jesus' prediction lies in Jesus' future (since the events of the crucifixion-resurrection have not yet, for the characters, occurred), but in the narrator's past (since the narrator already knows of the prediction's fulfilment and of the disciples' reassessment of Jesus' speech).

However, Jesus' speech may refer to events that lie in the narrator's present (that is, events that will unfold only as the act of narration occurs) or the narrator's future

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

(after the act of narration has taken place). The moment of narration occurs, not when a text is written or recorded or read for the first time, but every time a text is read; the narrator communicates to the narratee whenever a reader attempts to find meaning in the narrative. Therefore the "present" of the moment of narration is also the reader's present, its "future" is the reader's future, and any prediction that refers to the narrator's present or future will seem, to each and every reader, to refer to his/her own present and future. Thus, when Jesus says, "ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοιοῦτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν" (4:23), it is possible, indeed probable, that the reader will understand this as a prediction to be fulfilled in his/her own present and future, rather than as a prediction which was already fulfilled in the reader's past. Since the events of which Jesus speaks lie in the narrator's present and future, and since the text does not indicate (as it did in John 2:22) that the narrator has already "seen" the prediction fulfilled, there is nothing in the text to discourage the reader from making this interpretation. The use of the narrative's omniscient character to make these predictions, and the failure of the omniscient narrator to explain or refer to the predictions' fulfilment in the "past" (before the act of narration)

encourages the reader to interpret Jesus' speeches as acts of anterior narration.

This means that it is possible that it is the act of narration itself which leads to the fulfilment of the predictions, or at least creates the conditions that enable the predictions to be fulfilled. In other words, the communication between the narrator (speaking for the implied author) and the narratee is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the predictions contained in Jesus' speech.

4.4 THE "COSMOLOGICAL TALE"

Extending a discussion of time in the text of John 4:1-42 to include the moment when the text is read might at first glance seem unwarranted; certainly it seems to stretch the stated boundary of this thesis (the examination of the text itself) to its limits. However, the text of the Fourth Gospel itself contains references to two levels of story time, the second of which does indeed include the reader's own time. The first, narrower, time in which the story takes place is the period of time in which the character Jesus "lives"; more specifically, the narrative focuses on the time in which Jesus lived as an itinerant preacher. But the Johannine text also indicates that there is a second, much broader expanse of story time with which the narrative is concerned. This is the time-setting of the "cosmological tale," the story contained

in the text of the Fourth Gospel that stretches from the beginning of creation to an undetermined future beyond the moment of composition of the time.²⁰ This is the paradox of the Fourth Gospel: its text contains a story whose beginning and end reach beyond the historical period occupied by its author(s).

The historical tales belongs to early first-century Palestine, the ecclesiological tale to a community in the first-century Diaspora. In contrast, the cosmological tale is universal in location and has eternity as its time frame. As such, it constitutes the larger temporal and spatial framework within which the historical and ecclesiological tales are played out.²¹

Just as the characters within the story fit into the historical tale, and the text's author(s) and original readers fit within the ecclesiological tale, the reader of the text also has a place in the Johannine framework, as a part of the cosmological tale which, the text suggests, continues into the future outside the text. The text invites the readers' participation in the events of the unfolding Johannine story by pointing out that the reader has a place in the story and a role to play. The reader's reaction to the events narrated is no less important than the reactions of the characters; the text demands the same response from the reader that Jesus demands from the other characters.

²⁰ Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*, pp. 24-25.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

At the same time that the gospel addresses the Johannine community through the ecclesiological tale, it also provides a broader temporal framework for the tale as well. Just as the historical tale is only one stage in the history of Jesus' relationship with the world, so also is the ecclesiological tale. Because the *parousia* which will bring the cosmological tale to its proper conclusion has not yet occurred, real readers--of all eras--are also invited to place their own individual tales within the context of the cosmological tale.²²

The question of Jesus' identity, then, is posed to the reader at the same time it is posed to the characters. Through the example of the Samaritans and the information provided by the narrator, the text attempts to ensure that the reader will answer this question correctly (that is, will reach the answer intended by the implied author). Time is used within the narrative to reinforce the text's demand for a response from the reader by underlining that the narrative is part of a larger whole, the cosmological tale, to which the reader also belongs. In so doing the text persuades the reader that s/he is the intended recipient of the text's message.

...[T]he Johannine Jesus, looking over the heads of the characters of the gospel narrative towards its readers, gently rebukes Thomas: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."²³

²² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

4.5 THE PREDICTIONS AND THE READER

Two levels of narration take place when Jesus speaks. On the lower, hypodiegetic level, Jesus functions as the "narrator" of his speech, and the other characters (in these examples, the Samaritan woman and the disciples) are the narratees, the recipients of his communication. On the higher, extradiegetic level, the narrator, who is responsible for the entire narrative (including Jesus' speech and that of the other characters) relates the whole narrative to an unnamed narratee. Since this narrator has not, according to his narrative, witnessed the fulfilment of the predictions, Jesus' act of narration to the other characters could not have been sufficient to bring about this fulfilment. Some part of the fulfilment of his predictions lies with the second act of narration, that of the omniscient narrator who tells the story which contains Jesus' telling the characters what will happen. Any part of the predictions that is not clearly shown in the narrative to have been fulfilled before the act of narration occurs will be understood by the reader to still await fulfilment, either while the narrative unfolds (when the reader and the text meet, bringing to life the narrator and narratees) or sometime thereafter. A more detailed examination of the predictions in John 4;1-42 will clarify the reader's possible interpretation that their fulfilment has not yet occurred.

For example, Jesus' declaration "ὁ δ' ἂν πίῃ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὐ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μὲν δειψήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἔλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον" (v. 14) can be said to be partially fulfilled within the narrative with the Samaritan woman's coming-to-understanding and with the conversion of the Samaritans; their acceptance of Jesus' identity may mean that they have received the "living water" referred to. Similarly, Jesus' prediction "ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἀληθεύει· καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνούντας αὐτόν" (v. 23) may refer to the gradual understanding which some of the characters achieve as they are drawn into dialogue with Jesus; their acceptance of Jesus' identity (vv. 41-42) may mean that they now worship in truth. A final example is Jesus' extended speech to the disciples (specifically, vv. 34-35: λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον. οὐχ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι Ἐτι τετράμηνός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ θερισμός ἐρχεται; ἰδοὺ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐπάρατε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν καὶ θεάσασθε τὰς χώρας ὅτι λευκαὶ εἰσιν πρὸς θερισμόν ἤδη). In these verses, he states that his "food" is to complete the work of the one who sent him, that the "fields" are "already ripe for harvest," and that the disciples have been sent to "reap," all of which seem to refer to events within the narrative--in particular, to the

"reaping" of the Samaritans, who, by responding to Jesus and accepting him as the "Saviour of the world" (ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, v. 42), have allowed him to complete his work, to "reap" believers.

Yet all of these examples have an additional significance, a reference outside the text, since, by displaying these examples of characters accepting Jesus' identity and moving inside the circle of believers, the narrator leads the reader to undergo a similar transformation of perspective. Occupying a position above the Samaritan woman, the Samaritans, and Jesus (and able to share the superior viewpoint of the narrator, who is aware of their mistakes and misinterpretations), the reader cannot see less of the truth than the characters. Once the characters have achieved a correct understanding of Jesus' identity and speech, the reader has no choice but to share this understanding, since there is no further intrusion by the narrator or the omniscient character Jesus to correct this understanding. Since the narrative is directed towards the reader, who occupies a point of time outside and beyond the text, the sense that the prophecies of the Johannine Jesus have not been entirely fulfilled within the text draws the reader within the circle of insiders who comprehend the text's meaning. The external fulfilment of the prolepses lies in the reader's admittance to the meaning of the text. It is the act

of narration which occurs when the reader reads the text which makes the final fulfillment of the prolepses possible.

The only way of making sense of 4.23 and 5.25 is to see the first half of the statement "the hour comes" as relevant to the time of the story, and the second half "and now is" as relevant to the time of the narrative.²⁴

In this sense, the prolepses remain continually open to the understanding of its reader, whose acceptance of the text's message is the future "harvest," the gift of "living water," the worship in "truth" which the text predicts. This reinforces the reader's sense that s/he is closer to the truth of the text than any of the characters, since the fulfillment of the prolepses is delayed to a point outside the text--the point which the reader occupies, but which cannot logically be occupied by any of the characters (with the exception of the Johannine Jesus, whose presence is part of the prolepses, and who, therefore, is granted by the text a possible "reality" outside the text). As Adele Reinhartz has pointed out, by making the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies continue into a future beyond the text, the Fourth Gospel ensures that the meaning of the text is still accessible once the events narrated in the text have come to an end:

Hence the crucifixion-resurrection event, which marks the end of the Gospel's temporal framework and the beginning of that of the community, is not to be viewed as a rupture or crisis in the relationship between God and the believer, but as a bridge, or perhaps a ladder, which, by

²⁴ Davies, p. 55.

means of the paraclete, allows revelation to continue.²⁵

²⁵ Adele Reinhartz, "Jesus as Prophet: Predictive Prolepses in the Fourth Gospel" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989), p. 12.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Boris Tomashevsky, in an article on the elements of narrative, drew a comparison between a story and a journey:

A story may be thought of as a journey from one situation to another. During the journey a new character may be introduced (complicating the situation), old characters eliminated (for example, by the death of a rival), or the prevailing relationships changed.¹

Tomashevsky meant, of course, that the situation of the characters within the narrative changes. In the text of John 4:1-42 the situation and the prevailing relationships among the characters do change as the Samaritans encounter Jesus and are able to accept his identity as the Messiah. The text, however, is directed at the reader, and it has been the contention of this thesis that certain elements of the text attempt to change the situation of the reader by inducting the reader into the circle of "insiders" who recognize and accept the identity of the character, Jesus. The narrative of John 4:1-42 is a journey, not just for the characters, but for the reader as well.

In his article, "The Man From Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," Meeks dealt with the exclusivity of the

¹ Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics" in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 70.

literature of the Johannine sect, pointing out that the book seemed to have been designed to be read only by those who were already insiders, who were thoroughly familiar with the information the text contained.

It is a book for insiders, for if one already belonged to the Johannine community, then we may presume that the manifold bits of tradition that have taken distinctive form into the Johannine circle would be familiar, the "cross-references" in the book--so frequently anachronistic within the fictional sequence of events--would be immediately recognizable, the double entendre which produces mystified and stupid questions form the fictional dialogue partners (and from many modern commentators) would be acknowledged by a knowing and superior smile.²

Yet the Fourth Gospel was accepted into the Christian canon, and has been read for centuries by readers who, although certainly not "insiders"--not in the sense of being first-century Johannine Christians--nevertheless continue to find the text meaningful. Meeks' article expressed an awareness of the contradictory nature of the Fourth Gospel, a text that on the one hand contains language and metaphors that seem designed to thwart any effort to pin down the final, definitive meaning of the text, but on the other hand can "bring about a change of world"³ for the persistent reader.

This thesis has attempted to deal with the contradictions inherent in the Fourth Gospel. While acknowledging that much

² Meeks, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

of the text's metaphorical language remains indecipherable and opens to continual reinterpretation, I have attempted to draw attention to a sub-text, a system of strategies by which the text directs the reader away from the intricacies of its "marifold bits of tradition" toward a matter more central to the text's meaning: the acceptance of its claims for the identity of its hero, Jesus. In so doing the text ensures that its meaning remains accessible, even to the reader who is not a member of the community responsible for producing the Fourth Gospel.

In this way, although the text's readers are not "insiders" in the sense used by Meeks--are not, that is, actually members of the Johannine community--they are still capable of entering into a dialogue with the text and becoming insiders in the sense that they grasp the text's meaning and are open to its message. The reader who follows the cues embedded in the text is thus able to move from being an outsider to being an insider--by following the example given in the narrative of the Samaritans, by recognizing that what the narrator fails to explain may not be crucial for an understanding of the text, and by recognizing the significance of Jesus' unfulfilled predictions and the eternal timescape in which the narrative is set. While the exact referents of some of the metaphorical language may be unknown and inaccessible to any but the original readers, the devices and strategies of

the text continue to convey meaning. This thesis has focused on a few of these devices and strategies in an attempt to uncover what Umberto Eco has called the intention of the text.

One could object that the only alternative to a radical reader-oriented theory of interpretation is the one extolled by those who say that the only valid interpretation aims at finding the original intention of the author. In some of my recent writings I have suggested that between the intention of the author (very difficult to find out and frequently irrelevant for the interpretation of a text) and the intention of the interpreter who (to quote Richard Rorty) simply "beats the text into a shape which will serve for his purpose," there is a third possibility. There is an *intention of the text*.⁴

An attempt to discover the text's intention suggests a far different function for the Fourth Gospel than that proposed by scholars focusing on the historical and social context in which the text was produced. Meeks, for example, argued that as the product of an alienated and isolated Christian sect the Fourth Gospel served to reinforce and legitimize that alienation:

One of the primary functions of the book, therefore, must have been to provide a reinforcement for the community's social identity, which appears to have been largely negative. It provided a symbolic universe which gave religious legitimacy, a theodicy, to the group's actual isolation from the larger society.⁵

The presence in the text, however, of strategies that both reassure the reader that a complete understanding of its

⁴ Eco, "Interpretation and History," p. 25.

⁵ Meeks, p. 69.

metaphors is not a prerequisite for grasping the narrative's meaning and ensure that the reader's attention is focused on that meaning indicate that the text has an additional function to that of reinforcing the isolation of its creator(s). The text works to communicate its meaning even to those readers unfamiliar with the information it contains. In fact, the text's assurances to the reader that a complete understanding of its language is unnecessary (through the character of Jesus, for instance, who does not explain his language but instead states his identity, and through the narrator's silence on the matter) make its meaning accessible to precisely those readers who are unfamiliar with the "manifold bits of tradition" so puzzling to the outsider. That is, whether or not it was the intention of the author(s), the text of the Fourth Gospel contains elements which work to convey the narrative's central message, the identity of Jesus, to readers who are not members of the Johannine community, and which prompt a response of belief and acceptance from those readers.

It is important to note, however, that the gospel in general, and 20:30-31 in particular, do not explicitly limit their intended audience to a specific community. Rather, they suggest an open definition of the implied readers as those who see themselves as being personally addressed by the verbs in 20:30-31.... such a general definition creates an opening for the real reader to identify with the implied reader. That is, any reader who is open to the message of the gospel and takes seriously the implied author's statement of purpose in 20:30-31 may in fact see himself or herself as being

directly addressed by the gospel narrative as well as challenged by its theological perspective.⁶

The Fourth Gospel, then, does to some degree function as a "missionary tract"⁷ in that the text itself attempts to communicate its meaning to new readers, and to turn these outsiders into "insiders" who have heard and accepted its message.

⁶ Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*, p. 9.

⁷ Again, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the Gospel's historical role as a possible missionary text. See p. 7, n11, for a list of authors who have dealt with the missionary theory.

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