

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Fighting for Assistance: John 18:1-24 and the Agonistic Reader**

"[L]iterary criticism was and largely remains a kind of secular theodicy. Every decision made by a great artist could be shown to be a brilliant one; works that had seemed flawed and uneven to an earlier generation of critics . . . were now revealed to be organic masterpieces." Greenblatt

"It is almost as though he had decided to let whatever . . . disunity there is . . . unravel itself and gamble on being able to posit an authorial intention that would pull it all back together again." Moore

"For is it only the desire for a masterful author that makes one into a slavish reader." Foster

"Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest." Jn 18:24

### **Subversive Narrators, Victimized Readers**

I'm back in an arena I know well. The stuff out of which dissertations are made. A brief introduction to a critical issue in literary theory, some historical examples to buttress an otherwise weak-sounding argument, a highly technical exegetical discussion about a rather minor problem in Johannine textual transmission, and I'll be on my way. My goal in all this will be to show conclusively, on the basis of early scribal evidence, that the Fourth Gospel had the effect of undercutting ancient readers' assumptions about the story which was being narrated. And by undercutting readers' expectations regarding the story, I believe that readers' ideological presuppositions were also being challenged.

If I do my work well, you will be convinced at the end that contemporary readers do not need to devise extratextual, rhetorical strategies for resisting the Fourth Gospel's message. The Fourth Gospel and its early copyists initiated that resistant work for us centuries ago. To put my thesis another way: If I do my work well you will see that the type of consciously constructed, resistant reader with which I concluded the last chapter was an unnecessary rhetorical conceit. For my argument in this chapter rests on the assumption that early Christian scribal activity proves the Fourth Gospel contains within itself all the fractures required for fostering its own spectrum of resistant readings. In order to discover all the Fourth Gospel's natural lines of resistances we must not only peer into the text more closely than we have in the past, we must also pay more careful attention to the history of its textual transmission.

Having marked out the lines of my argument, let me begin by briefly introducing the critical issue of narration in biblical literary theory. For in the Fourth Gospel, the narrator is the source of the book's most subversive rhetorical strategies.

With the introduction of contemporary literary theory into the arena of New Testament studies in the late 1970s, attempts to describe gospel narrators in contrast to redactors or authors were forefront on the developing agenda.<sup>1</sup> Issues such as the narrator's omniscience and omnipresence, reliability, and ideological point of view were discussed at length and in contrast to authorial intention and historical reference.<sup>2</sup> The dialogue was fruitful and scholars gained important insights from the exchange. Without raising much controversy, scholars categorized gospel narrators as undramatized, reliable, omniscient, and omnipresent.<sup>3</sup>

But by the mid-1980s other voices were beginning to raise questions about these all-encompassing definitions of biblical narrators and narration which were being generated by the new "narrative critics." Two such questioning voices can be heard: in James Dawsey's 1986 work, The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke,<sup>4</sup> and in my own The Print's First Kiss. Similar studies followed soon thereafter.<sup>5</sup> Stephen Moore documents the beginnings of the debate regarding the nature of gospel narrators in his excellent study of the application of contemporary literary theory to biblical texts. There he uses Robert Tannehill and James Dawsey as dialogue partners over the narrative of the third gospel.<sup>6</sup>

As Moore notes, the narrator whom Dawsey discovers in his meticulous articulation of the various voices in Luke's narrative is one whose view is "in some ways contradictory" to that of Jesus--the latter being a perspective with which the author sides over against that of the narrator.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this "confusion" lies in the author's rhetoric of irony,<sup>8</sup> and Dawsey describes that strategy in the following manner: "One can imagine that the purpose of the irony at play in the views of the narrator and of Jesus

---

<sup>1</sup>For example, see Rhoads and Michie, Mark as Story, 23; Fowler, Loaves and Fishes, 166-167; Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel, 15-49; Pamment, "Focus in the Fourth Gospel," 71-75; Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 50-128; Tannehill, The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts, 6-9; Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 31-37; Powell, What Is Narrative Criticism?, 23-32; Fowler, "Let the Reader Understand", 61-126; and Davies, Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel, 31-43.

<sup>2</sup>The starting point for most of these discussions was Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction (149-165), and Seymour Chatman's Story and Discourse (197-212).

<sup>3</sup>For example, see Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel, 16-34; cf. Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 82-83; Gunn, "New Directions in the Study of the Biblical Hebrew Narrative," 65-71, esp. 69-71; and Gunn, "Reading Right," 53-64.

<sup>4</sup>Dawsey's book was a revision of his 1983 Emory Ph.D. dissertation entitled, "The Literary Function of Point of View in Controlling Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke."

<sup>5</sup>Barry Henaut, "John 4:43-54 and the Ambivalent Narrator"; Willi Braun, "Resisting John"; J. Eugene Botha, "Reader 'Entrapment' as Literary Device in John 4:1-42"; Charles Hedrick, "Authorial Presence and Narrator in John"; Robert Kysar, "Johannine Metaphor--Meaning and Function"; and Robert Fowler, "Let the Reader Understand", esp., 195-227.

<sup>6</sup>Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels, 29-40.

<sup>7</sup>Dawsey, The Lukan Voice, 104, 110, 143-156; cf. Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels, 32; and Darr, "Narrator As Character," 43-60.

<sup>8</sup>Dawsey, The Lukan Voice, 154; see also 123-142.

would . . . be to chafe the audience into a change in perspective."<sup>9</sup> Later, he expands on this notion by saying:

the narrator's misunderstanding of Jesus was the bridge that allowed for full participation in the story and led to decision. The meeting of Jesus and his community would have become possible when the community became so immersed in the character of the narrator that it could be confronted by the incongruity between its words and Jesus' words.<sup>10</sup>

As Moore rightly points out, literary critics have invented a term for what Dawsey claims to have unearthed in Luke's Gospel, some two thousand years prior to its resurrection in the novels of Mark Twain and Henry James.<sup>11</sup> It is the "unreliable narrator" who, as Wayne Booth defines, does not speak for or act in accordance with the norms of the work, "which is to say, the implied author's norms."<sup>12</sup> Moore's challenges to Dawsey's reconstructed Lukan narrator are substantive and compelling: the possibility of a first-century author creating a consistently unreliable narrator such as Dawsey's "Lukan voice" seems indeed remote.<sup>13</sup> But in spite of these criticisms of Dawsey's work and some recent challenges to my own analysis of Johannine narrative strategies,<sup>14</sup> I still believe that my descriptions of the Johannine narrator are accurate.

My work, independent of that of Dawsey, followed a similar furrow but plowed a different field. I chose to focus my attention on the narrator of the Fourth Gospel, digging out the curious corrections and delayed descriptive statements which lie partially exposed in the topsoil of Johannine narrative style. But somewhat differently from Dawsey, I found the Johannine narrator at times contradicting *himself* along with his contradictions of minor characters' statements (Jn 3:22, 26; 4:2) and Jesus' words (7:1, 3-4, 8-9, 10).<sup>15</sup> At other times the narrator withheld information which later would prove essential to the meaning of the text, or the narrator simply prolonged the story beyond its seemingly logical conclusion.<sup>16</sup> Like Dawsey, I described all these embedded, narrative-busting elements as heavily ironized rhetorical ploys.<sup>17</sup> However, in spite of the narrative's contradictions and withheld information, I emphasized that the Fourth Gospel's narrator

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 33.

<sup>12</sup>Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 158; Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 223-237.

<sup>13</sup>Scholes and Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, 264-265; Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 33. Sternberg, commenting on narrators in ancient Hebrew literature, writes: "[J]ust as the narrator is not the victim of irony on the author's part, so does he not indiscriminately traffic in irony at the reader's expense: his ironies, many and diverse, are situational rather than verbal" (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 51).

<sup>14</sup>For example, Culpepper has expressed his reservations in the "Preface to the Paperback Edition" of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (x), as has Moloney in his book review of my dissertation and, more recently, in his *Belief in the Word* (13, n. 51; 82, n. 21).

<sup>15</sup>From a redactional perspective, these texts have been traditionally understood as editorial glosses (e.g., Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 175-176; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:164-165; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 1:422 n. 6; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 116). Some of these texts, like the one which is the focus of the present study, have also undergone textual emendation (e.g., 7:8, 10).

<sup>16</sup>See my analysis of Jn 2:1-12; 5:9; 6:59; 9:14; 10:40; 11:18; 13:1-30; and 20:30-21:25, in *The Print's First Kiss*, 95-105, 107 n. 57.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 83-90, 105-118.

should be characterized as reliable, since he always corrected his "mistakes" or "oversights," thus re-establishing a trustworthy relationship between himself and his narratees/IMPLIED reader.<sup>18</sup>

I believed at the time, and still believe, that characterizing the Johannine narrator as reliable, and yet as one who was willing to use a "victimizing" or "entrapping" strategy to educate his IMPLIED reader, is a better solution to the Fourth Gospel's narratological problems than is arguing for the narrator's pervasive unreliability or confusion.<sup>19</sup> For as Wayne Booth has noted, "most of the great reliable narrators indulge in large amounts of incidental irony, and they are thus 'unreliable' in the sense of being potentially deceptive. But difficult irony is not sufficient to make a narrator unreliable."<sup>20</sup> More recently, other studies in Johannine narrative have seemed to confirm my original conclusions.<sup>21</sup> For example, Stephen Moore says that the reading he enacted of John 4:1-15, 7:37-39, and 19:28-34 implied "that the recipients of the Fourth Gospel are the ultimate victims of its irony,"<sup>22</sup> and both Eugene Botha and Robert Kysar have found numerous instances of "reader entrapment" or "reader victimization" strategies in John 4 and 10.<sup>23</sup>

But granting the point that such a phenomenon could exist in Johannine narrative poetics, what would be its function within the author's overall purpose? Here I argued that in a story designed for insiders (20:30-31), the narrator's contradictions and withheld information--like the strategy of a Socratic *eironeia*--forces the IMPLIED reader into the role of an outsider: the IMPLIED reader is necessarily an error-prone reader who can never feel as though his grasp of Jesus or the life of faith is absolute.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the IMPLIED reader must also be one who learns from his mistakes and hasty judgments, since the

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 116-117. Regarding the relationship between the IMPLIED or encoded reader and the narratee in the Fourth Gospel, I have argued that its narratee is "only tenuously distinguished from the IMPLIED reader" (ibid., 46). Similarly, Robert Fowler observes that in Mark, "the roles of the narrator and narratee are covert and effaced and therefore virtually identical with the roles of the IMPLIED author and IMPLIED reader, respectively; the distance involved in these relationships is absolutely minimal" ("Let the Reader Understand", 33; see also Howell, Matthew's Inclusive Story, 205-211, 243-245; Reinhartz, The Word in the World, 7).

<sup>19</sup>The Print's First Kiss, 98. I borrowed the language of victimization from John McKee (Literary Irony and the Literary Audience 82-87; see also Richter, "The Reader as Ironic Victim," 135-151), while the language of entrapment came from John O'Neill ("The Experience of Error: Ironic Entrapment in Augustan Narrative Satire," 278-290; see also Fish, Is There a Text in This Class?, 21-67; Foster, Confession and Complicity in Narrative, 1-19; and Mailloux, Rhetorical Power, 43-44).

<sup>20</sup>The Rhetoric of Fiction, 159; see also his A Rhetoric of Irony, 233-77.

<sup>21</sup>For example, see Eslinger, "The Wooing of the Woman at the Well," 169-170, 173 n. 16, 175; Reinhartz, "Great Expectations," 72; Henaut, "John 4:43-54 and the Ambivalent Narrator," 300; Braun, "Resisting John," 61-62, 70-71; Grayston, "Who Misunderstands Johannine Misunderstandings?," 9, 14; and Hedrick, "Authorial Presence and Narrator in John," 84-93.

<sup>22</sup>Moore, Literary Criticism of the Gospels, 168. More recently he has argued that "Jesus . . . is the main ironic causality" (Poststructuralism and the New Testament, 62, n. 68).

<sup>23</sup>Botha, "Reader 'Entrapment' as Literary Device in John 4:1-42," 41-45; Kysar, "Johannine Metaphor--Meaning and Function," 94-95.

<sup>24</sup>The Print's First Kiss, 98, 107. My use of masculine pronouns to denote the IMPLIED or encoded reader is purposeful. The shared reading conventions of the ancient Mediterranean world would presume that when the gender of narrators and narratees was unmarked in public texts, these entities (and thus their corresponding IMPLIED authors and encoded readers) would be masculine (ibid., 28, 43; cf. Burnett, "Reflections on Keeping the IMPLIED Reader an 'It,'" Malina and Neyrey, "First-Century Personality," 72-83).

group of characters with whom he shares his errors and confusions shifts from being the Pharisees and Jesus' unbelieving brothers, to being the disciples and, finally, Peter.<sup>25</sup>

To my surprise, I later discovered that my description of the Johannine implied reader closely resembled Robert Fowler's characterization of the Markan reader who, Fowler says, probably operates at a level of faith development "where persons are able to deal comfortably with ambiguity, irony, and paradox."<sup>26</sup>

### Socrates's Irony, Clitophon's Trickery

In Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher, Gregory Vlastos begins his careful study of Socratic irony by noting that, from Aristophanes to Theophrastus, the root *eiron* in Greek literature consistently denotes "sly, intentionally deceptive speech or conduct."<sup>27</sup> Vlastos's argument, however, is that, in the case of Socrates, the word takes on a derivative but crucially different meaning. When describing the central character of Plato's Dialogues, the word *eiron* implies "speech used to express a meaning that runs contrary to what is said--the perfect medium for mockery innocent of deceit."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, part of the enjoyment of reading Plato's Dialogues comes from the reader's knowledge that Socrates is constantly mocking his interlocutors' false wisdom--without their knowing that they are being duped. This gentle mockery or Socratic irony is meant, of course, to lead Socrates's students to knowledge of the truth. Even in the difficult case of the young, virile Alcibiades, who is led to believe that Socrates is sexually attracted to him and so climbs in bed with him (only to find a cold shoulder in his face), Vlastos argues that Alcibiades deceives himself. Socrates simply refuses to do anything to dispel Alcibiades's misconstrual of his doubled language.<sup>29</sup>

It is one thing to argue that, in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is like Socrates, doubling words and phrases at his interlocutors' expense--or even to point out that Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman function as Jesus' Alcibiades. But it is quite another thing to imply that the *narrator* of the Fourth Gospel likewise acts with Socrates's argumentative agenda. Even granting the rather minor point I have just argued for--that the narrator of the Fourth Gospel is reliable rather than unreliable--one is left to ask whether there exists any evidence from the ancient world that authors invented narrators who, while reliable, nevertheless occasionally feign ignorance and suppress their own knowledge for the sake of educating or entertaining their audiences.

In his article entitled "Authorial Presence and Narrator in John," Charles Hedrick

<sup>25</sup>The Print's First Kiss, 98, 102-103, esp. n. 40, 116.

<sup>26</sup>"Let the Reader Understand", 226. See also Fowler's later chapter entitled "An Ambivalent Narrative?," 261-266 (cf. Liebert, "That You May Believe," 67-73; and Durber, "The Female Reader of the Parables of the Lost," 59-78). Descriptions of ideal, first-century readers tend to read like the psycho-biographies of the late twentieth-century biblical scholars doing the literary analysis. The connection should not be overlooked. However, that connection lies at the root of another story; one that will be elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5 (below).

<sup>27</sup>Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher, 25. See also Michael Stokes's discussion of "Platonic questions" (Plato's Socratic Conversations, 7-35; cf. Teloh, Socratic Education in Plato's Dialogues, 24-40; and Swearington, Rhetoric and Irony, 55-94).

<sup>28</sup>Vlastos, Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher, 28.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 43-44.

seems to be searching for exactly this evidence. He observes how, in the Fourth Gospel, "intrusive comments that do not derive from the 'principal narrator' of the showing of the story . . . improve the showing of the story by clarifying what is apparently conceived as obscurity in the story's showing . . . [and, among other things,] correct errors made by the principal narrator."<sup>30</sup> Although Hedrick's discussion exhibits some confusion regarding the narratological distinction between implied authors and narrators, his work is useful, particularly for its attempt to find in other ancient texts Johannine-like "extraneous voices . . . that compete with the principle [sic] narrator of the story."<sup>31</sup>

Hedrick's search for correcting and clarifying narrators in nonbiblical literature takes him to the ancient Greek romance, Leucippe and Clitophon. In this third century CE work attributed to Achilles Tatius, Hedrick finds a voice, other than that of the principal narrator, intruding at various points in the story, giving "learned digressions (diatribes) on various subjects for the moral edification of the (implied) readers."<sup>32</sup> Hedrick's argument is that this secondary interpretive voice, or "hermeneut" as he calls it, is the same phenomenon that biblical scholars have named "redaction" in Johannine literature.<sup>33</sup>

Although Hedrick has pointed out some important narratological congruencies between the Fourth Gospel and Leucippe and Clitophon, he fails to mention an additional point of similarity: The romance contains perhaps the most extravagant examples in ancient literature of a reliable narrator who victimizes his readers. This happens quite graphically on three occasions; and in a fourth and final variation on the strategy, the narrator tellingly lets the reader in on the joke prior to its revelation to the unsuspecting character.<sup>34</sup> Leucippe and Clitophon opens with a detailed description of a votive painting which the unnamed first-person narrator sees during a tour of Sidon. But when another character interrupts the narrator's intense preoccupation with the picture by exclaiming, "How well I know it--for all the indignities Love has made *me* suffer,"<sup>35</sup> the narrator quickly relinquishes his role to Clitophon, the one who "has suffered Love's indignities." The original first-person narrator then becomes the narrative's narratee.

The implied author has made it evident from the opening scene of the romance that a painting can represent prolepsis and prefiguration in a central character's life.<sup>36</sup> So later on, when Clitophon and his lover Leucippe are entranced by a painting of Andromeda and Prometheus as prisoners, chained to rocks, the reader knows that this

<sup>30</sup>"Authorial Presence and Narrator in John," 92.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>34</sup>Leucippe and Clitophon, 3:7-15; 5:7-8; 5:17-19; 7:1-6, 15-16. See also Hägg, Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances, 133-135.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 1:2. It is important to note that Clitophon is introduced singly, and as a man who has suffered much because of love. Thus, the opening scene of the romance overdetermines the narrative's hermeneutic code in order to reinforce the victimization strategy found much later, when Clitophon's lover, Leucippe, appears to die (Hägg, Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances, 124-126, 239-240; for a definition of narrative "overdetermination" and "codes," see below, n. 48).

<sup>36</sup>Of course, dreams also represent prolepsis. For example, Leucippe's mother has a dream that her daughter is butchered by bandits (Leucippe and Clitophon, 2:23; Hägg, Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances, 237-242).

does not bode well for the lovers.<sup>37</sup> Thus the reader is not surprised when, in the next series of events, Leucippe is ritually slaughtered by pirates and cannibalized.<sup>38</sup> Clitophon, the retrospective narrator, reinforces the scene's authenticity with his eyewitness depiction of Leucippe being led to the sacrificial altar.<sup>39</sup> A few paragraphs later, however, the reader discovers that Leucippe's apparent death had been a carefully planned ruse to free her from the pirates. In this text, then, the character Clitophon, the pirates, and the reader have all been unsuspecting victims of Clitophon the narrator's storytelling trickery.

In the next instance of reader victimization, the narrator once again introduces upcoming events with a painting. This time, however, the character Clitophon realizes that the painting he is viewing is an ominous sign, and so he delays sailing to Pharos.<sup>40</sup> But in spite of Clitophon's attempts to ward off disaster, Leucippe again is kidnapped by pirates. This second group of pirates decapitates the unfortunate woman. The narrative episode concludes with the grief-stricken Clitophon burying his lover's headless body on the beach.<sup>41</sup> Neither the reader nor Clitophon discover that Leucippe is still alive until Clitophon receives a letter from her, six months after her apparent death.<sup>42</sup>

The final instance of reader victimization takes place in the sixth month after Leucippe's "second death," when Clitophon sails to Ephesos and takes a tour of the estate of his new wife, Melite. There, in the orchards, a slave woman throws herself at Melite and Clitophon's feet and begs for her freedom. Although the woman gives her name as Lakaina and says that she is from Thessaly, Clitophon thinks she looks much like his erstwhile beloved Leucippe, recently beheaded and buried. But it will another page and a half before Clitophon and the reader know for sure that Lakaina is indeed Leucippe.<sup>43</sup>

The victimizing ploys in *Leucippe and Clitophon* are unusually bold, and they differ in two important ways from the Fourth Gospel narrator's entrapment strategy. In the romance, reader victimizations occur in major plot developments and for no apparent educative purpose. The victimizations seem to function only as entertainment devices, to hold the reader's attention and deepen the narrative's suspense. By way of contrast, the encoded reader's knowledge of Christian tradition made it less likely that the Fourth Gospel's narrator could have freely manipulated that story's major plot.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Fourth

<sup>37</sup>*Leucippe and Clitophon*, 3:7-8.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:15.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:3-5.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:7-8.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:18.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:17-19.

<sup>44</sup>Once again, my understanding of the reader as an "encoded reader" has its roots in my dissertation. There I defined the implied reader as an "intratextual" property of texts which "interconnected with a myriad of other worlds;" as being "denoted in the temporal quality of narrative," yet sensitive to the "text's [overarching] strategies" (*The Print's First Kiss*, 33-36, see also above, 28-29; cf. Fowler, "Let the Reader Understand", 9-58; Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*, 7-14).

I noted earlier that this rhetorical, formalist reader has not been lacking for critics (Wuellner, "Is there an Encoded Reader Fallacy?"; Berg, "Reading in/to Mark"; Tolbert, "A Response from a Literary Perspective"; see also above, 13-16). But as I argued in the preceding chapter, I am now more comfortable with saying that my previously textually-defined "implied" or "encoded reader" is better conceived as a consciously chosen reading strategy rather than as an inherent property of the Johannine text (60-61; see further, Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 71-73; Calinescu, *Rereading*, 44-56; Brooke-Rose, *A*

Gospel's victimization strategy is found only within minor plot developments. Furthermore, like Socratic irony, the Fourth Gospel's victimization strategy is used more to educate the reader than to entertain the reader. Despite these differences, the third-century romance Leucippe and Clitophon proves that an ancient writer could on occasion create a narrative with a reliable narrator who nevertheless could mislead his readers. And Plato's portrayal of an ironical Socrates provides the rhetorical context for using the strategy in more strongly ideological narratives like the Fourth Gospel.

In the discussion below I intend to continue to explore the implications of the Fourth Gospel's subversive narrator along with its strategy of victimizing, or entrapping the encoded reader. But there is an added twist to my argument in this final foray along the borders of formalism. In order to wrest from John 18:12-24 some objective evidence of the Johannine encoded reader, I will use as hermeneutical double agents, ancient textual variants and modern attempts to reconstruct the sources behind the text. First, the double agents will function as spies, exposing the rhetorical strategy of the Johannine narrator. Then they will become my war trophies; my prisoners captured in the exegetical battles of reader criticism--proof that other flesh-and-blood readers have attempted to fight off the covert entrapment strategy of the Johannine narrator.

### **The Menace of Johannine Passion Plotting**

Like ancient Greek romances, the plot structure of the Johannine passion narrative is straightforward, sequential and "syntagmatic" rather than episodic, thematic or "paradigmatic."<sup>45</sup> It opens with a betrayal in a garden (18:1-3) and is followed by Jesus' arrest (18:4-18) and his two questionings (18:19-19:16). The arrest and questionings lead to Jesus' crucifixion and death (19:17-37) and his subsequent burial by a secret disciple (19:38-42). There is, then, a sequence of events which is causally and temporally connected and can be easily followed by the reader.<sup>46</sup>

But beyond the simple analysis of plot or "proairetic code," the passion narrative also exhibits a chiasmic structure<sup>47</sup> which emphasizes or "overdetermines" the author's ideological and argumentative concerns.<sup>48</sup> These concerns comprise the text's

---

Rhetoric of the Unreal, 105).

<sup>45</sup>For a discussion of "syntagmatic" and "paradigmatic" plot arrangement, see Robert Funk, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 17-18, 46. For a broader view of my analysis of Johannine plot structure, see "The Structure of John's Prologue," 241-264.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Smith, John, 99-100; Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel, 89-98; Giblin, "Confrontations in John 18,1-27," 210-215, 230-231.

<sup>47</sup>This type of narrative structuring is probably derived from oral rhetoric (Fowler, Let the Reader Understand), 151-152). Clearly, chiasms are not something contemporary readers hear. We are dependent upon our eyes for noting this phenomenon.

<sup>48</sup>Christine Brooke-Rose defines "overdetermination" as instances when a narrative code's "information (narrative, ironic, hermeneutic, symbolic, etc.) is too clear, over-encoded, recurring beyond pure informational need" (A Rhetoric of the Unreal, 106).

Unless otherwise denoted, when I use the term "author" I mean an "implied author," which is "that pragmatic category of narrative which distances reader from author and forces the role of interpretant upon the reader . . . , that singular consciousness which the reader constructs from the words of a text" (The Print's First Kiss, 29).

"hermeneutic code."<sup>49</sup> As many scholars have noted, the opening and closing scenes (*a* and *a'*) both take place in gardens (18:1-3 and 19:38-42), and both evoke negative images of discipleship.<sup>50</sup> In *a*, the negative image is captured by the epithet, "Judas, who betrayed him" (18:2), while in *a'*, the portrayals of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are more positive, but still less than ideal.<sup>51</sup>

In the next set of frames, *b* and *b'* (18:4-32 and 19:23-37), eight prophecies are fulfilled. In *b*, the four prophetic references are intratextual, as Jesus' and Caiaphas's statements from earlier in the narrative are fulfilled (18:9, cf. 10:28; 17:12; 18:14, cf. 11:50-52; 18:17-18, 25-27, cf. 13:38, 16:32 [here Peter's false testimony is interrupted by Jesus' faithful testimony, vv. 19-24]; 18:31-32, cf. 12:31-33). But in *b'* the four prophetic references are intertextual, since events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion are related to four unnamed texts from ancient Jewish writings (19:23-24, cf. Ps 22:18; 19:28-30, cf. Ps 22:15; 19:31, cf. Ex 12:46 [also Num 9:12; Ps 34:20]; 19:33-34, cf. Zc 12:10). Additionally, in *b'*, the true witness of "he who saw" the lance thrust into Jesus' side (19:35) stands in contrast to Peter's wild-slashing sword and his three-fold denials (*b*).

Finally, the center of the passion narrative's chiasmic structure focuses on the ideological issue of Jesus' sonship ([*d*] 19:7-11) and is framed by the political implications of Jesus' alleged kinship ([*c* and *c'*] 18:33-19:6 and 19:12-22).<sup>52</sup> Within this central framing section there is also an oblique balancing of private and public scenes, with Pilate questioning Jesus inside (18:33-38a; 19:1-3, 9-11), followed by either Pilate's legal judgments or the Jewish leaders' accusations made outside (18:38b-40; 19:4-8; 12-22).<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the plot structure and ideologically contrived, chiasmic symmetry can be set out as follows:

<u>Plot Structure</u>	<u>Chiasmic Symmetry</u>
(1) Betrayal 18:1-3	( <i>a</i> ) in a garden, 18:1-3
(2) Arrest, 18:4-18	( <i>b</i> ) four prophecies fulfilled, 18:4-32
(3) Official questionings, 18:19-19:16	( <i>c</i> ) questions about kingship, 8:33-19:6
	( <i>d</i> ) questions about divine

<sup>49</sup>Brooke-Rose uses the language of "codes," following Roland Barthes (*A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, 38-42; cf. Calinescu, *Rereading*, 211-212).

<sup>50</sup>For example, see Ellis, *The Genius of John*, 254-255.

<sup>51</sup>Sylva, "Nicodemus and his Spices," 148-151; Bassler, "Mixed Signals," 635-646; Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, 130-133; and Countryman, *The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel*, 122.

<sup>52</sup>For example, Raymond Brown (*The Gospel According to John*, 2:857-859), Peter Ellis (*The Genius of John*, 264), and Ernst Haenchen (*John*, 2:186) all note the author's careful balancing of kingship claims, but fail to see that the center of the chiasm focuses upon the ideological issue of Jesus' sonship and takes its dramatic turn when Pilate "grows more fearful" (19:7-8; cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:891). See also Giblin for a slightly different structuring ("John's Narration of the Hearing before Pilate [John 18,28-19, 16a]," 221-239, esp. 222-224).

<sup>53</sup>Brown, (*The Gospel According to John*, 2: 859; Ellis, *The Genius of John*, 258, 260; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2:242; and Haenchen, *John*, 2:186. Donald Senior's observation is more to the point: "The power of the trial of scene is found not in the symmetry of its structure but in the dynamism of the narrative" (*The Passion of Jesus*, 69; cf. 90-91; Schnackenburg; *The Gospel According to St. John*, 259-260).

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| (4) Crucifixion and death, 19:17-37 | sonship, 19:7-11<br>(c') questions about kingship, 19:2-22<br>(b') four prophecies fulfilled, 19:23-37<br>(a') in a garden, 19:38-42 <sup>54</sup> |
| (5) Burial, 19:38-42                |  |

From an authorial perspective--that is, from a static, comprehensive, and wide-angle view of the text--the passion narrative's symmetry reinforces a particular reading and ideological stance over and above its simple plot line: a reading and stance where, in spite of the cacophony of characters and mixed motives that propel Jesus to his death, God's (and thus Jesus') purpose is being accomplished.<sup>55</sup> As early as his discourse on the shepherd and sheep (10:1-30), Jesus had clearly and forcefully laid down the body of his mission before his opponents. There he had spoken of himself as the "good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11; cf. 19:28-31); there he had said that no one could take his life from him, for he had "power to lay it down, and . . . take it up again" (10:18; cf. 19:10-11).<sup>56</sup>

Now, once again, that most explicit revelation of Jesus' purpose is echoed in the unusual clustering of words found in the opening scenes of the passion narrative (18:1-40). For a second time the nouns gatekeeper, gate, courtyard (*aule*), and bandit from the shepherd discourse are used. In this latter context, however, it is to the "other disciple" and Peter that the gatekeeper opens the gate (18:17; cf. 10:3, 18:37).<sup>57</sup> But characters like Judas, who do not enter through the gate (10:1, cf. 18:16), into the courtyard (10:1, cf. 18:15) are thieves and bandits (10:1, cf. 12:6; 18:30). Not coincidentally, Jesus' earlier confrontation with "the Jews" had also taken place during the winter (10:22; cf. 18:1); and the temple (10:22-30) was the place where, as Jesus now says, he had "spoken openly to the world" (18:20).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup>For two other recent assessments of chiasmic structures in the Johannine passion narrative, see Ellis (*The Genius of John*, 247-249, 278-279) and Mlakuzhyil (*The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 228-235, 335-339).

<sup>55</sup>Ignace de la Potterie put it this way: "The careful reader will be struck by two details [in the Johannine passion narrative]: the complete self-awareness of Jesus, several times indicated, and also the majesty with which he goes forward to his Passion" (*The Hour of Jesus*, 16; cf. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 3:218-220; Senior, *The Passion of Jesus*, 31-39, et al.). By way of comparison, note how Jesus' own words in 18.11 and 19.11 confirm the author's ideological stance.

<sup>56</sup>See especially Sabbe, *John 10 and its Relationship to the Synoptic Gospels*, 75-93; cf. Howard-Brook, *Becoming Children of God*, 384.

<sup>57</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:859. By having the gatekeeper open the gate to the "other (beloved?) disciple," the encoded reader is being led to shift his allegiance from the community of Jesus where Jesus was shepherd (10:2-3), to a later community of Jesus where a disciple will be "shepherd" (cf. Neyrey, "The Footwashing in John 13:6-11--Transformation Ritual or Ceremony? 2 -2"; and Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 100-104).

In a few moments, when Jesus is about to die, the encoded reader will see this shift of allegiance more explicitly. There the author will have Jesus transfer his role of "son" to the "beloved disciple" (19:26-27).

<sup>58</sup>Schnackenburg and Fortna both note a number of allusions to Jn 10 in Jn 18--in the form of christological statements--but neither of them mention the "gate" metaphor itself (*The Gospel According to St. John*,

Thus, the strongly overdetermined proairetic code (plot), hermeneutic code (symmetry) and symbolic code (allusions and echoes) all work together to constrict and limit real readers' penchant for aberrant interpretive moves.<sup>59</sup> Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely in the context of the author's attempt to control tightly the encoded reader's sense-making activities that real readers' forward flow of thought has been disturbingly arrested, reading after reading. For there in the high priest's courtyard (18:12-28) a cohort of variant readings rise up and bear witness to the confusion of many real readers: Who is the high priest (*ho archiereus*, 18:19) to whom Jesus has been taken? Is it Annas or Caiaphas? Into whose courtyard have the other disciple, Peter, and readers been admitted?

### Text Criticism as Reception History

In the pre-print era, real readers of the Fourth Gospel were just as often the producers and transmitters of the text as they were its consumers. But as copyists, they could become writers of new texts in ways that contemporary critics cannot, easily fitting George Steiner's description of the contemporary reader-critic who "is judge and master of the text."<sup>60</sup>

Like modern-day commentators, many of those copyists were either well-versed in the synoptic tradition or knew the Fourth Gospel well enough to realize that only Caiaphas had previously been called "high priest" by the narrator. So for either or both of these reasons, many of these pre-print era reader-critics simply "corrected" the text to fit what they knew to be "right." And while certainly not all ancient readers would have been disturbed by the minor discordant refrain of John 18:24,<sup>61</sup> the textual variants are nevertheless vivid testimonials to real readers' readings. They are the silent witnesses to the fact that the narrator's statement and placement of John 18:24 has, for nearly two thousand years, forced readers to reassess their constructions of the interrogation scene.

My purpose here, however, is not to review the numerous text-critical problems of John 18:13-24, nor to summarize the variety of source-critical solutions that have been proposed for this pericope over the past hundred years.<sup>62</sup> Rather, my intention is simply to point out that the history of the text's transmission and of scholars' reconstructed sources speak eloquently to the variety of ways in which some real readers have sought to make

---

2:225-226; The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor, 159).

<sup>59</sup>Following Roger Poole and Harold Bloom, Willi Braun would call this the "menace of the gospel text" ("Resisting John," 63).

<sup>60</sup>Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, 195-198.

<sup>61</sup>For example, see Malina's description of "low context" and "high context" societies ("Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts," 19-21).

<sup>62</sup>For example, see the text-critical studies of Bernard (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, 1:xxvi-xxviii), Mahoney ("A New Look at an Old Problem [John 18, 12-14, 19-24]," 137-144); the theological and literary-critical studies of Chevallier ("La comparution de Jésus devant Hanne et devant Caïphe [Jean 18/12-14 et 19-24]," 178-185), Giblin ("Confrontations in John 18, 1-27," 222-226), and Charbonneau ("L'interrogatoire de Jésus, d'après la facture interne de Jn 18,12-27," 191-210); and the source-critical studies of Fortna (The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor, 155-163) and Matera ("Jesus Before Annas," 38-55).

sense out of a disruptive text.<sup>63</sup>

So instead of using the various manuscript traditions, erasures, and source-critical theories to ascertain the original, or "copy text,"<sup>64</sup> my approach will be to use this data as an empirically verifiable "reception history."<sup>65</sup> From this evidence of real readers' readings I can then move on to show how reader-response criticism's theoretical concern for the reading process might make rhetorical sense out of the narrator's statement and placement of 18:24. From the evidence of real readers' readings I can also make rhetorical sense out of the history of the text's reception, without taking recourse to rewriting John 18:24 or hypothesizing earlier sources.

To paraphrase for the Fourth Gospel what Robert Fowler says of Mark, I will be arguing that modern scholars and ancient readers have unconsciously been impressed by the rhetorical or pragmatic function of the language of the Fourth Gospel, that is, by the ways it is designed to affect the reader. In other words, the pragmatics of the narrative have asserted themselves throughout the centuries, and in spite of modern critical and ancient scribal approaches designed to bypass pragmatics in favor of semantics.<sup>66</sup>

The plethora of variant readings and reconstructed sources for John 18:13-24 share one common concern: to move 18:24 ("Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest") to a position earlier in the text, placing it just after 18:13a or 18:13. Thus, the "original text" would have read something like this: "First they led him [Jesus] to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the the Jews. . . ."<sup>67</sup> In this way the disquieting question, "Who is the high priest before whom Jesus appeared?" is easily and quickly answered--or rather it is no longer a question that would even arise for a reader, since the one and only named high priest in the story is Caiaphas.<sup>68</sup> The reading sequence is thereby "smoothed out," and readers are not forced to

<sup>63</sup>As quoted in Fowler, "Let the Reader Understand", 27-31.

<sup>64</sup>McGann, A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism, 24-26.

<sup>65</sup>For a description of reception theory, see especially Holub, Reception Theory, xi-xiv, and Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, 32-45. For a practical demonstration of its methodology, see Mailloux, Interpretive Conventions, 159-191, and his more recent Rhetorical Power, 36-53.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. "Let the Reader Understand", 53.

<sup>67</sup>Bruce Metzger's and Edwyn Hoskyns's arguments regarding the textual variants are based upon intertextual evidence. Hoskyns simply argues that the variants were "attempts to harmonize the Fourth Gospel with the synoptic tradition" (The Fourth Gospel, 512), while Metzger believes that the order of the Sinaitic Syriac text (18:13, 24, 14-15, 19-23, 16-18, 25-27) is probably governed more directly by Tatian's second-century Diatessaron (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 251-252). Although it has long since disappeared, Fowler describes the Diatessaron as still a "powerful reading grid" in the contemporary Christian world ("Let the Reader Understand", 264-266).

The synoptic/Diatessaron texts provide possible solutions as to why Jn 18:24 was rearranged, but they are not the reason for why Caiaphas is mentioned in the first place; nor do they create the problem of the narrator's *delayed* reference, a reference which could have been placed earlier, after 18:13. The problem of the delayed reference is strictly an intratextual problem (cf. Senior, The Passion of Jesus, 57-63). For some of the narrator's less disruptive delayed references, see Jn 1:28; 6:59; and 11:18.

<sup>68</sup>The noun *archiereus* is normally plural in the Fourth Gospel (7:32, 45; 11:47, 57; 12:10; 18:3, 26, 35; 19:6, 15, 21) and is usually translated "chief priests." This perplexing plural has led most commentators to propose a historical solution to the Fourth Gospel's problematical picture of the Jewish high priesthood.

For some commentators, the ambiguity over the high priestships of Annas and Caiaphas simply reveals the author's ignorance of second temple Judaism: the narrator's phrase "*hos en archiereus tou*

go back and re-read the scene in order to see where and how they missed a nonexistent reference to "Annas who was also called high priest."

But apart from the textual or source reconstructions which seek to rectify a later problem (18:24), there is no ambiguity at the beginning of the scene (18:12-14) and no reason for the reader to question the narrator's veracity. As a matter of fact, when Annas is first introduced, the narrator takes pains to situate him in the story world since Annas is a man hitherto unknown to the encoded reader, and is a curiosity-arousing addition to the narrative.<sup>69</sup> Annas is thus "the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest," a character who had been introduced earlier in the text. Furthermore, as the scene shifts to the attempts of Peter and "another disciple" to get close to the proceedings (18:15-18), the subsequent parenthetical references to the high priest do nothing to disrupt the reader's reconstruction of the events: another disciple, who was known to the high priest (Caiaphas) brings Peter into the courtyard of the high priest's house. Logically, at this point, the reader can only make the gap-filling deduction that Annas must be at Caiaphas's house, for Peter and "another disciple" have followed Jesus (18:15), and the narrator has just finished saying that Jesus had been brought to Annas (18:12).<sup>70</sup> Yet even this somewhat surprising development creates no disturbances in the reading sequence--only in the reader's reconstruction of a sparsely painted scene.

Curiously, once Peter gets inside the high priest's courtyard the narrator's scenic description begins to get more detailed (18:16-18). Now the narrator mentions a number of kinds of people (a woman who is the gatekeeper, slaves, and the police), the weather (it was cold), and the seemingly inconsequential fact that some people were standing around a charcoal fire, warming themselves. This scenic description works to heighten the drama of the story, since it momentarily postpones the inevitable confrontation between Jesus, Annas, and the high priest (18:19-24) which the encoded reader has been led to expect (11:45-52; 18:12-14). But, more importantly, through this most visual scene of Peter's denial, the encoded reader is led to reflect upon the meaning of true discipleship.

Earlier in the story the encoded reader had fully identified with the character Peter. It was he of whom Jesus had said, "You are to be called Cephas" (1:42), and it was he who confessed, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (6:67-69). Yet the

---

*eniautou ekeinou*" (11:49, 51; 18:13), must imply that the author thought Judaism had a rotating high priesthood--perhaps like those found in pagan temples of Asia Minor (Bultmann, The Gospel of John, 410 n. 10; Brown, The Gospel According to John, 1:439; Haenchen, John, 2:75, 167; et al.). Or perhaps Annas is given the title by honor (Brown, The Gospel According to John, 2:820-821). But regardless of these solutions, the fact remains that Caiaphas has been the only person explicitly called high priest (singular noun) in the Fourth Gospel ("*eis de tis eks auton*," 11:49). Because of the earlier reference, Jn 18:15-24 was confusing enough to elicit rewriting the scene.

<sup>69</sup>Annas is obviously unknown to the encoded reader, for he is introduced by the qualifying phrase "the father-in-law of Caiaphas" (18:13; cf. Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel, 213-216; Staley, The Print's First Kiss, 44-45).

<sup>70</sup>Augustine's conjecture: "Annas and Caiaphas lived in different wings of the same palace" which were "bound together by a common courtyard" (Brown, The Gospel According to John, 2:823; Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, 3:239-240), is another way that real readers might at this point fill in the limited scenic frame. However, Augustine's attempt to fill the apparent scenic gap is merely one of many possible readerly reconstructions of the Johannine story world, and should not be treated as though it were a real-world reference.

encoded reader has subsequently learned to disassociate himself from Peter due to his inability to understand what Jesus was about to undergo (13:6-9, 36-38; 18:10-11).<sup>71</sup> In the high priest's courtyard, as in the dramatically visual footwashing and meal scene (13:6-11, 21-30), Peter is not in control of the situation. Here in the courtyard Peter acts like an outsider, both by denying that he had been one of Jesus' disciples (18:17),<sup>72</sup> and by choosing to stand beside the charcoal fire with the high priest's slaves and the temple police (*hoi douloi kai hoi hypertai*, 18:18). Although Peter had depended on another, unknown disciple in order to get inside the courtyard and mingle at the insiders' fire, Peter now seems to have been abandoned. The "other disciple," after performing his narrative function of getting Peter into the courtyard, has mysteriously disappeared. That other disciple will not emerge again until Jesus is near death, at a time when, significantly, Peter is nowhere in sight (19:25-27).<sup>73</sup>

While the character Peter was originally introduced in the gospel as a positive model of discipleship, the police (*hypertai*) are agents--far from fully developed characters

--who are never described positively (cf. 7:32, 45-46; 19:6). They, along with Judas and the cohort, appeared abruptly on the scene as the narrative tension began to rise (18:3). Only once do any of them speak, and that is when one slaps Jesus and asks him, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" (18:21-22). So while the author gives the reader no reason to identify with them, it is precisely with these *hypertai* that Peter has positioned himself. Furthermore, the narrator intensifies the encoded reader's inclination to associate Peter with them by repeating the verbs for standing and warming (*heistekeisan/hestos; ethermainonto/thermainomenos*) in reference to both (18:18, 25), just as he had earlier done with Judas (18:5).<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the Fourth Gospel's encoded reader, who all the while has been discovering what it means to follow Jesus, now places Peter alongside Judas and Jesus' antagonists, and completely disassociates himself from these epitomes of failure. Ironically, it is precisely Peter's first denial that dramatically affirms the encoded reader's faith in Jesus, for Jesus is the one who earlier had predicted that this very thing would happen (13:38). Peter's denial strengthens the reader's conviction that Jesus is knowingly drinking "the cup that the Father has given him" (18:11). Without giving the encoded reader any reason to doubt his portrayal of the story, the narrator has separated the reader completely from Peter as a model of discipleship and at the same time has closely aligned that reader

<sup>71</sup>Just as Peter denies Jesus three times (18:15-18, 25-27) and then is asked three times if he loves Jesus (21:15-19), so also he misunderstands Jesus three times prior to the denials. He misunderstands Jesus' footwashing (13:6-11), Jesus' remarks about leaving (13:36-38), and Jesus' refusal to defend himself (18:10-11).

<sup>72</sup>This is a significant difference from the synoptic gospels, where Peter denies *having ever known* Jesus (Mk 14:66-72; Mt 26:69-75; Lk 22:54-62).

<sup>73</sup>I follow Brown, Haenchen, and many others who believe that "the other disciple" and "the disciple who Jesus loved" are one and the same (Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:822-823; Haenchen, *John*, 2:167).

<sup>74</sup>This behavioral correspondence is similar to that found in Jn 5:19-20. There the narrator positively observed that Jesus made himself "equal to God" because he did the same things that God did. Here, however, is the negative side of that equation (cf. 8:39-47): Peter is equal with the sinister *hypertai* because he does what they do (cf. the use of *histemi* in 3:29; 18:3, 5).

with Jesus. But as we shall see momentarily, the text's subversive narrator will force the encoded reader into his own misconceptions and denials of the story he thought he knew well.

The narrator opens the next scene (18:19-24) with a surprise: Annas, the one to whom Jesus had first been taken, has totally disappeared from the story.<sup>75</sup> But this gap is easily filled. Since the new scene opens with the high priest interrogating Jesus (and since Caiaphas is the only high priest known to the encoded reader, 18:9), the reader must conclude that Annas must have met with Jesus and talked to him while the eyewitness narrator was outside watching Peter deny that he was a disciple.<sup>76</sup>

The scene continues with Jesus' sarcastic response to the high priest (18:20-21), the brutal reaction of one of the temple police (18:22), and Jesus' closing question (18:23). But never in the course of the narrative has the reader been led to suspect what the narrator ostensibly knows: that Jesus is all the while talking with Annas, not Caiaphas. Further-more, the encoded reader's straightforward construction of the scene is additionally confirmed by one of the temple police standing by who asks, "Is that how you answer the high priest" (18:22)?<sup>77</sup>

But of course, as the history of the text and its interpretation make clear, many real readers' sequential sense-making and gap-filling activities are radically undermined by the narrator's final remark: "Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest" (18:24).<sup>78</sup> It is at this point (and at this point only) that the reading process has so often been arrested, with real readers having to turn around and recheck all the knots they had just finished tying.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Brown wants to argue that Annas has not disappeared at this point, saying: "John calls Annas 'the high priest'" (18:15, 16, 19, 22; The Gospel According to John, 2:820). But this observation can only be made retrospectively, *after* the reader has come to v. 24. Based upon a sequential analysis of the reading experience as evidenced by the textual variants, there is no reason for any reader to presuppose Brown's hypothesis. For only Caiaphas has been called *archiereus* (11:49, singular noun).

<sup>76</sup>From an intratextual reading perspective, the encoded reader has been nicely primed to fill in just this sort of gap, since the narrator had earlier described two co-temporal events. For example in Jn 4:27-39, the Samaritan woman's witness to the villagers and Jesus' response to the disciples' unasked questions both take place at the same time (note especially the resumptive function of *oun* in 4:8, 40; cf. 11:7, 20, 21 and 18:9). Furthermore, if the encoded reader's intertextual repertoire includes the knowledge of a Mark-like passion narrative, then the encoded reader is well aware of similar scenes described co-temporally (Mk 14:53-72; see Bultmann, The Gospel of John, 641-642, 647).

<sup>77</sup>As I have noted elsewhere, a similar rhetorical ploy is found in Jn 3:22 where the narrator says that Jesus was baptizing. This is then confirmed by characters in the story (3:26), only to be negated later by the narrator (4:1-3) as a rumor the Pharisees had heard (Staley, The Print's First Kiss, 96-98). A similar rhetorical situation is found in 7:1-10. There the narrator says: "Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea" (7:1-9). This is then confirmed by Jesus when he says, "I am not going to this festival" (7:8; note the textual variants here also!). However, the narrator negates these statements by turning around and saying that Jesus did in fact go up to the festival (7:10; The Print's First Kiss, 107-105). Again, if the author had wanted to make explicit that Annas was intended in 18:22, he could have made the temple police retort, "Is that any way to answer *a* [no article] high priest?" or, "Is that any way to answer *one of the chief priests*?" (cf. 11:49).

<sup>78</sup>Schnackenburg describes the effect in the following manner: "The thoughtful reader comes up against the following stumbling block. . . . Who is this, Annas or the officiating high priest Caiaphas?" (The Gospel According to St. John, 3:228).

<sup>79</sup>Compare, for example, the phenomenon of the two Bethanys in the Fourth Gospel (1:28; 11:1, 18; Staley,

### Reading, Writing, and Fighting

By believing that the narrator's original construction of the scene was accurate (Jesus is with the high priest, Caiaphas), and consequently believing the temple police as well (who are part of the conspiracy to get rid of Jesus), many real readers have suddenly found themselves caught in the wayward strands of an unraveling narrative. For if the narrator's final context-revealing remark (18:24) is to be believed, then either the narrator had betrayed the readers at 18:19, forcing them to trust the brutalizing temple police who likewise had misnamed Jesus' interrogator "the high priest" (18:22), or the text has undergone some corruption or poor editing. Not realizing that the narrator could have a rhetorical purpose for occasionally misleading the encoded reader, many real readers have reverted to righting the text.

Whether real readers tie up the unraveled narrative by rewriting the text or by positing a narrator who occasionally misleads, the textual variants and source reconstructions are empirical evidence that the narrative's discourse has, in the past, disturbed real readers' reading habits and that it still, in the present, disturbs real readers reading. From the perspective of a rhetorically inclined reader-response criticism, then, the belated remark in 18:24 has created a reader who can only make sense out of the preceding scene (18:19-23) by denying and fighting against the construal which the narrator and the temple police originally led him to make (18:13-14, 22).<sup>80</sup>

Only the reader had the unique privilege to be brought inside the high priest's chamber, see one of the temple police slap Jesus, hear him ask Jesus, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" (18:22). And that privileged reader had no recourse but to take each statement at face value. The disciple Peter, like the reader, had also been privileged by being brought inside. Peter had slipped inside the high priest's courtyard with the help of the "other disciple" only to become an outsider by denying Jesus and associating with the police (*hypertai*).

Ironically, by first believing the narrator's (mis)construal of the scene and by then rejecting it, the encoded reader is put in the same company with Peter, the temple police, and Judas, characters from whom the narrator had earlier distanced that reader. The narrator's context-revealing remark in 18:24 forces the reader to acknowledge that he too has become an outsider through his construal of the preceding scene. Like Peter, the reader has had his failure exposed. The reader must feel that he has been victimized and betrayed by his misunderstanding.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the agonistic, rhetorical power of the narrative's discourse has been evoked through the assistance of a momentarily misleading narrator and the brutalizing action of the high priest's assistants (*hypertai*).

In these opening scenes of the Johannine passion narrative, the encoded reader has himself been trapped by the narrator's offhand remark and made to feel the stinging slap

The Print's First Kiss, 105-107).

<sup>80</sup>The rhetorically-oriented reader-response criticism I am following here is closely aligned with Fowler's ("Let the Reader Understand," 9-58; cf. Staley, The Print's First Kiss, 6-49).

<sup>81</sup>Again, the choice of masculine pronouns is deliberate (see n. 24). I have argued elsewhere that this rhetorical ploy of entrapment serves a distinct purpose for the implied author, one which seeks to evoke a particular kind of faith response (Staley, The Print's First Kiss, 116-118; cf. Liebert, "That You May Believe," 69, 71-72).

of the temple police.<sup>82</sup> Thinking he has been following Jesus into Caiaphas's rooms, he has been forced to recognize his own inability to reconstruct the events of the story--not insignificantly, at the same time Peter is failing in his loyalty to Jesus. Here, in the high priest's house, the confrontational, discourse-denying readings of a few ancient manuscripts, an odd assortment of scholars' source-critical reconstructions, and numerous commentators' notes testify to the narrative's rhetorical power at the very moment that the encoded reader is falling victim to that power. In real readers' anxious attempts to find assistance for their readings, to rewrite the text and fight through to some kind of unperturbed closure, these readers have inadvertently lopped off the ear of the assistant standing by to help them.<sup>83</sup>

Later, in Pilate's halls, a badgered Jesus will speak out publically about his followers. But he will not call them by the more familiar and more positive terms *mathetai* ("disciples," 8:31-32; 15:8), *douloi* ("servants"), or *philoï* ("friends," 15:12-15). Ironically and tellingly he will call them *hypertai*, or "followers [who] would be fighting to keep me from being handed over. . . ." (18:36). Not coincidentally, both Peter and many real readers have been just that type of "follower" in John 18:1-24: Peter has cut off the ear of the high priest's slave and denied being a disciple; many real readers have been discourse-denying, Annas-bound *hypertai*. The history of the text's reception reveals the latent desires of a readership whose wild swipes at the text have tried to clean it up and rectify its loose-ended scenes.<sup>84</sup>

For one brief moment, however, the Fourth Gospel's narrator wrestles his Judas-dipped plot from the reader's grasp, and in so doing opens another *thura* (gate) into the high priest's *aule* (courtyard). Here in the high priest's cramped courtyard, the narrator's belated reference to Caiaphas defies the comfortable framework of the previously described scene. Like Clitophon's entrapping narration in *Clitophon and Leucippe*, the Fourth Gospel's narrator stands alongside the disruptive *hypertai* and fights against a simplistic closure to the story by subverting his own straightforward account of the arrest, trial, and death of Jesus. This subversion notwithstanding, the allegiance of the Fourth Gospel's encoded reader is quickly won back and the ironic narrator's reliability is reaffirmed with the recounting of Peter's third denial (18:25-27). Whereas the encoded reader has been made aware of his error (18:24), Peter is still denying Jesus, standing with the *hypertai*, and warming himself by their fire.

So despite the threat of overdetermined hermeneutic, proairetic, and symbolic codes, the reception history of John 18:12-24 reveals that it is still able to incite a riot from its reader. It is a text whose disorderly conduct challenges the reader to draw his or her interpretive weapons; to reach down and pick up the bloodied ear lost in the panic of the midnight commotion. In this gospel, only a readerly response like Peter's, which struggles through the smouldering embers of violent misunderstanding and denial, and

<sup>82</sup>To use Steven Mailloux's words: "Trial thus becomes entrapment" (*Rhetorical Power*, 49).

<sup>83</sup>Jn 18:10, 22, 36. Cf. Fowler, "Let the Reader Understand", 195-227.

<sup>84</sup>In words that fit the Fourth Gospel as well as the Hebrew Bible, Sternberg argues, "the more active and cunning the reader, the greater is his vulnerability to the traps set by the narrative all along. But then so is his enjoyment of the game of art, and so is the insight he carries away with him. Underreaders may get things right, but at the lowest level and for the wrong reasons. In contrast, so far as the implied reader falls victim to the text's misdirections, he gains in understanding even or especially where he went astray: he does right to go wrong and will be rewarded accordingly" (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 272).

the humbling effect of the narrator's misconstrued scenes, can stand one day on the shore of Lake Galilee and feel the weight of the simple words, "Follow me" (21:4, 9, 19).

"Contradiction forces the reader into an interpretive dilemma," writes Dennis Foster. And although Foster is writing about a "confessional turn" in modern literature, his words apply just as well to the Fourth Gospel. He goes on:

the desire to resolve the confusion is aroused while the means to resolve it are undermined. By taking their readers through this dilemma, these books offer the possibility of refusing understanding (the mastery of meaning) as a purpose of narrative. The writers pose as masters of their texts, but only to disclose finally the illusory nature of the category, for both writers and readers. For is it only the desire for a masterful author that makes one into a slavish reader.<sup>85</sup>

Something is obviously not quite right in that last sentence. Either there should be a question mark at the end of the sentence, or else the "is it" ought to be transposed. Was this a proofreading oversight, or Foster's consciously planned "mistake" to trapographically expose his readers' desires for a masterful author? Frankly, I didn't even catch the error the first time I read the paragraph. But now that I see it, I want to correct it. I have a desperate need to make things right.

Is John 18:12-24 the work of a masterful author--a Socratic *eirōn*, a crafty theologian? Or does my reading merely prove that I have been trained to be a good, slavish reader? Or--perhaps more importantly--are there other metaphors for describing readers beyond those of master and slave, resistance and submission?<sup>86</sup> Regrettably, the metaphors of master/slave and resistance/submission have tended to dominate the first three chapters of this book. But in today's postcolonial world I think we must find a way of doing reader-response criticism without having to submit or resist, without having to fight against ourselves and our foundational texts.

Biblical reader-response criticism needs new, non-combative, non-hierarchical metaphors for reading. Or perhaps we biblical reader-response critics should be adding metonymies to our metaphors. And when those metaphors and metonymies are found, I suspect that we will discover a postmodernist, postcolonialist feminist ethic of reading has led us to them. For if postmodernist, postcolonialist, and feminist critics have done anything for contemporary literary theory, they have at least made other theorists aware of the powerful roles that metaphors play in our private and public discourses. Moreover, postmodernist, postcolonialist, and feminist scholars have already added their own critically reflected, wide ranging metaphors and metonymies to the conversations of literary theory. I'd like to try some of them on for size. I want to play dress-up.

In the remaining chapters of this book I revert to childhood and learn to read all over again. I'll pretend to be Merlin,<sup>87</sup> spinning swords with words, and making mud spurt

<sup>85</sup>Confession and Complicity in Narrative, 19. See also Liebert, "That You May Believe," 71-73.

<sup>86</sup>As Donna Haraway points out, "encoded" metaphors like those that I have been using in the last three chapters are particularly problematical today. For example, she argues that "communications sciences and modern biologies are constructed by a common move--*the translation of the world into a problem of coding* [her emphasis], a search for a common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and can be submitted to disassembly, investment, and exchange" ("A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 83, see also 69, 82).

<sup>87</sup>Berg, "Suppressing the Language of (Wo)man," 12.

blood. I want to try alchemy,<sup>88</sup> and splice genes and genres to generate electricity. Maybe I'll build a cyborg.<sup>89</sup>

"One should not mix genres," publishers tells me. "It just doesn't work. It won't sell." But I'm stubborn, and I want to do it anyway. After all, alchemy is a form of gambling.<sup>90</sup> It's easy to convince yourself that the solution you're presently working with--or surely the next one--will be the one that works; the one that smokes out the demons. And cyborgs--well, they don't die so easily either. So I'm going to go ahead and try to break down the confusing compounds of differences and distances that have defined biblical criticism and its readers. I want to discover why the Johannine text matters so much to me. I want to find out why I dissolve so quickly when I read it. I want to renovate--no, reinvent--no, relevelate out of the reverential tool box of readers in texts and texts in readers that we biblical reader-response critics have climbed into. And somewhere beyond that entombing tool box, I think, is where hope lies.

---

<sup>88</sup>The metaphor comes from Patricia Williams (*The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, 256-257). Patricia Hampl writes: "The golden light of metaphor, which is the intelligence of poetry, was implicit in alchemical study. To change, magically, one substance into another, more valuable one is the ancient function of metaphor, as it was of alchemy" (as quoted in Freedman, *An Alchemy of Genres*, 54; see also 18, 20, 77; cf. Miller, *Getting Personal*, xii).

<sup>89</sup>This metaphor comes from Donna Haraway ("A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 65-72). On the relationship between gender and genre, see Mary Gerhart, *Genre Choices, Gender Questions*, 98-101.

<sup>90</sup>Or to put it another way: "Thinking is not the management of thought, as alas it is too often taken to mean these days. Thinking means putting everything on the line, taking risks, writerly risks, finding out what the actual odds are, not sheltering behind a pretend and in any case fallacious and transparent objectivity" (Jouve, *White Woman Speaks with Forked Tongue*, 5).